FREEBORN COUNTY
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Thursday, June 11th, 2026, at 8:30 am

1. Call to Order

a. The regular meeting of the Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) was called to order by District Chairman Helland at the district office located at 1400 West Main Street, Albert Lea, MN, on Thursday, June 11th, 2026, at 8:30 am.

Attendees

a. In attendance: Curt Helland (District Chairman), Vickie Heers (Treasurer), *Brad Kramer (Secretary), Casey Madson (Supervisor), Chad Billat (Project Manager), Lindsey Cornell (District Manager), Linda Mestnik (Finance & Administrative Specialist), Mark Trnka (Conservation Engineer), Senja Viktora (Outreach & Technical Specialist), Arica Slechta (Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist), Liz Ludwig (FSA Executive Director Freeborn County), and Nathan Bird (NRCS District Conservationist).

b. Absent: Scott Lightly (District Vice-Chairman)

2. Approval of Minutes of May 14th, 2026

a. A motion to approve the minutes of the previous regular board meeting on May 14th, 2026, was made by Kramer and seconded by Heers. **MOTION CARRIED.**

3. Treasurer's Report

a. Heers reported that the balance in the checking account was $41,355.38, savings $1,365,977.64, CD (Security Bank) $250,000.00, and CD (Merchants Bank) $235,000.00. A motion to approve the treasurer's report and payment of bills was made by Kramer and seconded by Heers. **MOTION CARRIED.**

4. Cost Share & Grant Items

a. **New Requests**

i. Cornell presented two well sealing contracts for approval. Kramer made a motion to approve both contracts. Madson seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

Contract Number	Practice	Project Estimate	Encumbered	Fund Source
WBIF-CW-FREE-24-07	Well Sealing	$2,825.00	$2,825.00	C24-0179
WBIF-CW-FREE-24-08	Well Sealing	$1,412.50	$1,412.50	

ii. Cornell presented a well sealing contract for approval. Madson made a motion to approve the contract. Kramer seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

Contract Number	Practice	Project Estimate	Encumbered	Fund Source
WBIF-SW-FREE-24-34	Well Sealing	$1,412.50	$1,412.50	C24-0197

iii. Trnka presented a multi-species Cover Crop contract and a Strip Till contract. Heers made a motion to approve both contracts. Kramer seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

Contract Number	Practice	Project Estimate	Encumbered	Fund Source
FY25-CD-09	Cover Crops	$10,752.00	$10,752.00	P25-0503
FY25-CD-10	Strip Till	$2,688.00	$2,688.00	

5. FY26/27 DNR Observation Well Contract

a. Cornell requested authorization to sign the 2026-2027 MN-DNR Obwell contract when documents are received. Kramer made a motion to authorize Cornell to sign the contract. Motion was seconded by Madson. **MOTION CARRIED**

6. 2026 SWCD Aid Payment Guidelines | Resolution #2026-1

a. Resolution #2026-1 was brought before the board for the 2026 SWCD Aid Payment Guidelines. A motion was made by Kramer to adopt resolution 2026-1 and seconded by Heers. **MOTION CARRIED**

7. MASWCD Leadership Institute Opportunity

a. Cornell presented the 2026/2027 Leadership Institute training opportunity available to District staff and Supervisors. A motion was made by Madson to approve registering up to two staff members for Leadership Institute. The motion was seconded by Kramer. **MOTION CARRIED**

8. Pheasants Forever updates

a. Quarterly report – previously emailed.

b. Cornell requested authorization for Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist, Arica Slechta, permission to use district vehicles as needed pending insurance verification. Kramer made a motion to approve Arica Slechta to drive district vehicles, as needed, pending insurance verification. Motion was seconded by Heers. **MOTION CARRIED**

c. Cornell presented the previously emailed 2027 Pheasants Forever Local Partner's Agreement with the board. Heers made a motion to approve the 2027 agreement. Kramer seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

9. BWSR/DNR Easement Group Project

a. Cornell requested authorization to sign Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) and other required documents for the BWSR/DNR easement group project, that was presented in the May board meeting. Kramer made a motion to authorize Cornell to sign JPA and other required documentation for the BWSR/DNR easement group project. Madson seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

10. Admin Laptop

a. Cornell requested authorization for needed replacement of the administrative laptop. Kramer made a motion to approve the purchase for up to $1,000 to purchase a replacement laptop. Heers seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

11. Agenda Reorder

a. On a motion by Kramer, seconded by Heers, the assembly voted to reorder the agenda to take up agenda items 17 through 20 before item number 11. **MOTION CARRIED**

12. 2026 Outstanding Conservationist of the Year

a. Cornell presented the board with a list of 2026 candidates for Outstanding Conservationist of the year. The board nominated one candidate, from the list, of as the 2026 Outstanding Conservations. Heers

made a motion to select the 2026 Conservationist of the Year and Madson seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

13. SE MN Groundwater Protection & Soil Health Initiative

a. Cornell requested board signature for a letter of support for the clean water council for Southeast MN Groundwater Protection & Soil Health Initiative. Madson made a motion to sign the letter of support. Kramer seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

14. Soil Loss Committee Discussion

a. Kramer made a motion to move the Soil Loss Committee discussion to a meeting when all board members are present to discuss. Madson seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

15. MASWCD Resolution #8-2024

a. Cornell shared a copy of Resolution of #8-2024 with the board, previously emailed. Cornell explained the resolution from 2024 to provide clarity after the resolution was referenced in discussion during the May board meeting.

*Supervisor Kramer left meeting

17. NRCS Agency Report

a. Nathan Bird provided an NRCS update on new Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) projects and shared the anticipated signup deadline. Other projects being worked on including but not limited to: Strip Till, Winter Camelina, three CSPs, and CRP establishments. NRCS is working on CRP re-enrollments that are expiring and doing HEL spot checks. Nathan advised that a team lead for the four-county area has been selected and anticipates learning more over the coming weeks on when they will be starting.

18. BWSR Update

a. No BWSR representative was present at the meeting. Annie Gunness is out and Jill Sacket Eberhart is our backup.

19. Supervisor Reports

a. Madson reported no meetings attended since last board meeting.
b. Heers reported no meetings attended since last board meeting.
c. Helland attended the Freeborn County Commissioners Workshop on June 9th, with Manager Cornell, presenting the District's annual county funding request.

20. Manager's Report

a. Manager Cornell provided updates to the board including:
    i. How the Freeborn County SWCD can help promote arsenic testing in Freeborn County that will be facilitated by the Freshwater Society of MN and Freeborn County.
    ii. Reminder of the upcoming Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) Field Day Event on Tuesday, June 16th hosted by Supervisor Lightly on Diversifying a row crop farm.
    iii. UMN Extension, in coordination with the Oat Mafia, Olmsted SWCD, Cascade Creek 319 funding, and the Freeborn Area Soil Health Team, is hosting an area farmers hands-on tour in Byron on July 9th of oat demonstration plots.

21. Staff Report

a. Mestnik provided a brief update to the board on the upcoming biennial MACDE Administrative Conference that she will be attending in Walker, MN on June 17th and 18th.
b. Billat provided the board a summary of the recent MASWCD SE Area 7 Resolutions meeting he attended where there were three resolutions passed, one that was combined, and some that were not voted in.

22. FSA Update

a. Liz Ludwig, Executive Director of Freeborn County FSA, presented the board with updates on a number of items including:
    i. Nominations for County FSA Committee member are being accepted
    ii. Liz provided updates including: Applications for Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF), Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP), Conservation Restoration Programs (CRP), Marketing Assistance Spot Checks (MASC), loan options, base acre updates, pass through entities, and a beginning farmer meeting at MBT in Austin.

23. Adjournment

a. There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Heers. Madson seconded. **MOTION CARRIED**. Next meeting Thursday, July 9th, 2026, at 8:30 AM.

These are preliminary minutes subject to board approval at the next regular monthly meeting of the Board of Supervisors on Thursday, July 9th, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

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Curt Hellan, Board Chairman **Date**