FREEBORN COUNTY
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Thursday, July 9th, 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, July 9th, 2026, at 8:30 am.

Attendees

a. In attendance: Curt Helland (District Chairman), Scott Lightly (District Vice-Chairman), Vickie Heers (Treasurer), Casey Madson (Supervisor), Chad Billat (Project Manager), Lindsey Cornell (District Manager), Linda Mestnik (Finance & Administrative Specialist), and Nathan Bird (NRCS District Conservationist).

b. Absent: Brad Kramer (Secretary), Mark Trnka (Conservation Engineer), and Senja Viktora (Outreach & Technical Specialist).

2. Approval of Minutes of June 11th, 2026

a. A motion to approve the minutes of the previous regular board meeting on June 11th, 2026, was made by Heers and seconded by Madson. **MOTION CARRIED.**

3. Treasurer's Report

a. Heers reported that the balance in the checking account was $49,760.68, savings $1,261,647.22, 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 Madson and seconded by Lightly. **MOTION CARRIED.**

4. Cost Share & Grant Items

a. **New Requests**
Cornell presented a well sealing contract to the board. Madson made a motion to approve the contract and Heers seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

Contract Number	Practice	Project Estimate	Encumbered	Fund Source
WBIF-CW-FREE-24-09	Well Sealing	$1,412.50	$1,412.50	C24-0179

b. Cornell requested board authorization to approve time sensitive Shellbago WBIF cover crop contracts. Madson made a motion to authorize Cornell to approve time sensitive Shellbago WBIF cover crop contracts. Lightly seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

5. Employee Handbook

a. Cornell reviewed the previously distributed draft of the Employee Handbook and highlighted the key revisions with the board. Lightly made a motion to approve the draft and make Employee Handbook, effective immediately. Heers seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

b. Cornell presented the Board with a recommendation to have the board approved Employee Handbook reviewed by Ann Goering's attorney office and provided an estimated cost for the review. Heers made a motion to authorize legal review of the approved Employee handbook at a cost not to exceed $5,000. Lightly seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

6. Authorize Billat to sign/cover Manager duties

a. Cornell recommended that the board authorize Billat to sign for business-related documents and assume managerial responsibilities for the SWCD while Cornell is out on leave. Madson made a motion to authorize Billat to sign for business items and take on managerial duties while Cornell is on leave. Heers seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

7. Security Bank Authorization & Access

a. Cornell recommended to the board that Billat be added as a signer on all Freeborn SWCD Security Bank accounts and obtain on-line access to the accounts during Cornell's leave. Madson made a motion to have Billat added as a signer for all accounts and gain access to the online banking with Security Bank while Cornell is on leave. The motion was seconded by Lightly. **MOTION CARRIED**

8. NRCS Agency Report

a. Nathan Bird (NRCS District Conservationist) provided an agency update on current key focuses and activities, NRCS staffing updates, future goals, and ways NRCS can support landowners and partner with SWCD.

9. BWSR Report

a. Cornell distributed to the board a handout with BWSR updates from Jill Sackett Eberhart. Cornell also shared details about an upcoming August staff training that Jill will be facilitating in Albert Lea. Jill continues to provide great backup to us for Annie Gunness (BWSR South Region Board Conservationist) during her leave. It's anticipated that Annie will return from leave in late September.

10. Supervisor Reports

a. Heers reported no meetings attended since last board meeting.
b. Helland reported no meetings attended since last board meeting.
c. Lightly hosted a June 16th field day, in partnership with Practical Farmers of Iowa, highlighting Winter Camelina and diversifying row crop farming. The event was well attended.

11. Manager's Report

a. Manager Cornell provided updates to the board including: Delegation of duties being assigned to staff to handle during her upcoming leave, estimated timing of her upcoming leave and insurance plan change, manager Cohort training she'll be attending, updated the board on the county allocation deposited in early July and the SWCD Aid allocation that is anticipated to be received soon.

12. Staff Report

a. Cornell provided a 2026 tree sale update on behalf of Viktora
b. Billat provided an update on items that are wrapping up soon including a few CREP projects, seeding projects, grazing plans, and potential new easement opportunities.
c. Mestnik provided a brief update on the 2026 Administrative Conference she recently attended in Walker, MN.

13. Soil Loss Advisory Committee Discussion

a. Madson made a motion to move the soil loss advisory committee discussion to a future meeting when all supervisors are present. Lightly seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

14. August Board Meeting Date

a. Cornell requested to consider moving the August board meeting date to Tuesday, August 4th, 2026 at 8:30 am. Heers made a motion to move the August board meeting date to Tuesday, August 4th, 2026 at 8:30 am. Madson seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

15. Additional Items

16. 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 Tuesday, August 4th, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Brad K. Kramer 8-11-26

~~Brad Kramer, Board Secretary~~ Date