



FREEBORN COUNTY

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Thursday, February 13th 2025, at 8:30 am

1. Call to Order

- 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, February 13th, 2025, at 8:30 am. Guest Ann Gunness, Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) Board Conservationist introduced herself.

Attendees

- In attendance: Curt Helland (District Chairman), Scott Lightly (District Vice-Chairman), Vickie Heers (Treasurer), Brad Kramer (Secretary), Casey Madson (Supervisor), Lindsey Cornell (District Manager), Chad Billat (Project Manager), Brenda Lageson (District Manager), Mark Trnka (Conservation Technician), Senja Viktora (District Technician), Wendy Aarsvold (Administrative Assistant), and Ann Gunness (BWSR)

2. Approval of Minutes

- A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on January 17th, 2024, was made by Heers and seconded by Kramer. **MOTION CARRIED.**

3. Treasurer's Report

- Heers reported that the balance in the checking account was \$30,711.85, savings \$991,313.08, CD (10 month) \$250,000.00, and CD (10 month) \$235,000.00 as of January 31st, 2025. A motion to approve treasurer's report and payment of bills was made by Kramer and seconded by Lightly. **MOTION CARRIED.**

4. Cost Share & Grant Items

- Soil Health Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Cornell provided an update. Program will start with a base grant of \$180,000 for soil health practices. A motion was made by Lightly and seconded by Heers to give authorization to apply for funding once it becomes available. **MOTION CARRIED**
- Billat presented on a Soil Health Questionnaire that staff have been working on. This Questionnaire is funded by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The Grant is held by the Shell Rock River Watershed District. A motion was made by Kramer to spend up to \$4000.00 using staff discretion on gift cards for survey participants; Lightly seconded. **MOTION CARRIED.**

5. 2024 Annual Report/2025 Annual Plan Review

- Viktora presented the 2024 Annual Report and the 2025 Annual Plan for review (previously emailed). Heers motioned to approve both the Report and Plan and submit to BWSR and other interested parties, Kramer seconded. **MOTION CARRIED**

6. NRCS Report

- No NRCS representative available at time of meeting. District Manager Cornell updated the Board on current staffing.

7. BWSR Report

- Ann Gunness, new Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Board Conservationist introduced herself and reported on open grant opportunities.

8. Supervisor Reports

- Lightly reported attending Le Sueur Watershed 1W1P meeting via Zoom on Jan. 24, 2025; where a financial update was given, Cost Share Policy was discussed, and Faribault Co. Project was described. Scott also attended Olmsted County Soil Health workshop in Stewartville MN on Feb.6, 2024.

- Heers reported attending the Cedar/Wasipinicon 1W1P meeting on February 5th, 2025, in Austin MN; where they elected officers, discussed the grant status, the midpoint review with the utilizing a BWSR grant called the Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP), hiring Huston Engineering to develop a tracking system for practices.
- Kramer reported attending Blue Earth River Watershed 1W1P meeting on Jan. 27, 2025 in Blue Earth; reviewed working draft section of plan, and listened to presentation by MCIT explaining differences between forming an entity or work under collaboration. Brad also reported on 2025 MN Lakes Symposium he attended.
- Helland reported attending Technical Service Area (TSA) on Jan. 22, 2022; they elected officers and Curt was elected Chairman, they reviewed financials and had an auditor come in to explain them, staff presented on projects they worked on in previous year. Curt also attended a Soil Health event in Wells on Jan. 25, 2025.

9. Manager Report - previously emailed

- Cornell requested attending upcoming Managers meeting in St. Cloud March 27th - 28th. Heers made a motion to authorize her attendance and reimburse allowable expenses, seconded by Lightly. **MOTION CARRIED**
- Cornell reported NRCS computer policy change.

10. Staff Reports

- Were previously emailed to Board members
- Viktora updated on the name tag and clothing order. She then requested board approval to purchase these items. Heers motioned to authorize staff to proceed with the order, Kramer second. **MOTION CARRIED**
- Viktora reported on Tree Open House. Staff assisted 18 customers who attended.

11. Legislative Day March 4th - 5th

- Manager Cornell requested authorization of staff and supervisors to attend the Legislative Day on March 4th - 5th, 2025. Kramer made a motion authorizing Manager Cornell, Project Manager Billat, Supervisor Helland, and Supervisor Kramer to attend. Lightly seconded. **MOTION CARRIED**

12. Southeastern Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees (SEMACDE) Spring Meeting

- Manager Cornell requested authorization for staff to attend spring SEMACDE on March 26th, 2025 in Harmony. Kramer motioned to authorize to pay registration \$20.00 per person and for 5 staff members to attend. Seconded by Heers. **MOTION CARRIED**

13. Collaborative Local Conservation Group

- Supervisor Kramer presented an idea to create a collaborative of conservation groups. Purpose to bring together resources and promote outdoor activities in the county.

14. Review of Specialty Crops Flyer

- A specialty crops flyer was presented. Suggestions were made to fix minor errors before distribution.

15. Adjournment

- There being no further business, adjournment declared by Chairman Helland.

These are preliminary minutes subject to board approval at the next regular monthly meeting of the Board of Supervisors on Thursday, March 13th, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Brad Kramer, Board Secretary

Date