



**FREEBORN COUNTY**  
**SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
Tuesday, January 6th, 2026, 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 Tuesday, January 6th, 2026, at 8:30 am.
- A staff member noted that the agenda day was inaccurate. The meeting agenda showed Friday, January 6, 2026. A motion was made by Lightly to amend the agenda to Tuesday, January 6, 2026, and was seconded by Heers. **MOTION CARRIED**

#### Attendees

- In attendance: Curt Helland (District Chairman), Vickie Heers (Treasurer), Scott Lightly (District Vice-Chairman), Casey Madson (Supervisor), Lindsey Cornell (District Manager), Chad Billat (Project Manager), Senja Viktora (Outreach & Technical Specialist), Linda Mestnik (Finance & Administrative Specialist), Annie Gunness (BWSR South Region Board Conservationist).
- Absent: Brad Kramer (Secretary) and Mark Trnka (Conservation Engineer)

### 2. Election of Officers

Cornell recommended a board committee change for the 2026 GERBERBA Policy. A motion was made by Heers to update the committee lead for GBERBA Policy to Helland with Madson as the alternate. Madson seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

### 3. Consent Agenda

A discussion was had regarding the Consent Agenda. Lightly made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, motion seconded by Madson. **Results of a roll call vote: Helland, Madson, Heers, and Lightly. All AYE. MOTIONED CARRIED**

- Official Bank Depository as Security Bank Minnesota and signatories (Chair, Treasurer, District Manager)
- 2026 Budget as presented to County Board
- MCIT Insurance for \$9,296
- MASWCD 2026 dues for \$7,654.59
- NACD dues for 2026 \$775.00
- Area 7 TSA/JPB dues for 2026 \$4,000.00
- MACDE State Employee dues for 2026 are \$125.00, and Area 7 SE Employee dues for 2026 are \$50.00
- GBERBA 2026 Membership dues \$663.00
- Envirothon donation for 2026 \$175.00
- Authorized Chairman, Vice Chairman, or District Manager to sign grant agreements, cost share contracts, and payments or other time-sensitive documents as needed
- Authorized District Manager and Finance & Administrative Specialist to make electronic payments, bank transfers, etc., as needed
- Authorized District Manager to purchase supplies/equipment up to \$500.00 per transaction

- Authorized District Manager to approve training requests up to \$1,000.00 per request, including training, lodging, and travel costs.
- Authorized the IRS standard mileage rate in 2026, and Supervisor per diem rates at \$125.00 per day.
- Authorized ads for tree sales 2026

#### 4. Approval of Minutes

- A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on December 11th, 2025, was made by Heers and seconded by Lightly. **MOTION CARRIED.**

#### 5. Treasurer's Report

- Heers reported that the balance in the checking account was \$109,352.46, savings \$912,985.15, CD (Security Bank) \$250,000.00, and CD (Merchants Bank) \$235,000.00. A motion to approve treasurer's report and payment of bills was made by Lightly and seconded by Madson. **MOTION CARRIED.**

#### 6. Certificate of Deposit - Security Bank

- Cornell reported that the CD with Security is maturing and recommended that we re-invest in Security Bank's special 12-month CD. Motion was made to re-invest for a period of 12 months by Heers and seconded by Lightly. **MOTION CARRIED**

#### 7. Letter of Engagement

- Cornell requested that when we receive a letter of engagement from Peterson Company LTD for 2026 audit services, with an estimated cost not to exceed \$5,500, that she be authorized to sign the letter of engagement. A motion was made by Lightly to allow Cornell to sign a letter of engagement so long as the cost does not exceed \$5,500. The motion was seconded by Heers. **MOTION CARRIED**

#### 8. Canva Pro Annual Subscription

- Cornell requested that the district purchase an annual subscription for Canva Pro. Motion was made to approve purchase and seconded by Madson. **MOTION CARRIED**

#### 9. NRCS Report

- No NRCS representative available at time of meeting. Manager Cornell provided an update on NRCS weekly staffing schedule in our office location to the Board.

#### 10. BWSR Report

- Annie Gunness provided updates on soil health through RCPP funding and regional conservation programs.

#### 11. Supervisor Reports

- Helland met with the personnel committee on December 30th, 2025, to review the employee handbook.
- Madson requested that the staff present to the board a goal or project for them to focus on in 2026.

#### 12. Staff Reports

- District Staff and Board Supervisors had a thoughtful soil loss discussion.

#### 13. Personnel Committee

- The personnel committee presented a recommendation to the board to approve Mestnik for a one-step pay rate increase after she completes her six-month probation on January 21st, 2026, issued a district office key, and given 40 hours of annual leave. Madson made a recommendation to approve and Lightly seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

#### 14. Event Reminder

- Freeborn Area Soil Health Team Highway 14 tour stop reminder in Owatonna on February 17th, 2026

#### 15. Adjournment

- There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Lightly. Heers seconded. **MOTION CARRIED.** Next meeting Thursday, February 12th, 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, February 12th, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

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Brad Kramer, Board Secretary

Date