FREEBORN COUNTY
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Thursday, December 11th, 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, December 11th, 2025, at 8:30 am.

Attendees

- In attendance: Curt Helland (District Chairman), Vickie Heers (Treasurer), Brad Kramer (Secretary), Casey Madson (Supervisor), Lindsey Cornell (District Manager), Chad Billat (Project Manager), Mark Trnka (Conservation Technician), Senja Viktora (District Technician), Linda Mestnik (Finance & Administrative Specialist), Erin Hettinger (Pheasants Forever - Biologist).
- Absent: Scott Lightly (District Vice-Chairman)

2. Approval of Minutes

- A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on November 13th, 2025, was made by Kramer and seconded by Heers. **MOTION CARRIED.**

3. Treasurer's Report

- Heers reported that the balance in the checking account was $48,563.28, savings $1,036,657.17, 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 Kramer and seconded by Heers. **MOTION CARRIED.**

4. Blue Earth River Watershed Comprehensive Watershed Management plan Resolution

- Cornell presented a summary of the Blue Earth River Watershed Comprehensive Water Management plan Resolution, previously emailed to Board Supervisors. Motion to approve resolution was made by Heers and seconded by Kramer. **MOTION CARRIED**

5. Cost Share & Grant Items

- Cornell presented to the board a well sealing project. Requested approval pending signatures.

Contract Number	Practice	Amount Requested	Encumbered	Fund Source
WBIF-SW-FREE-24-29	Well Sealing	$1,262.50	$1,262.50	C24-0197

  - A motion was made by Kramer to allow Cornell to approve the contract, once signed. The motion seconded by Madson. **MOTION CARRIED**

- Trnka presented to the board a two year 100 acre no till project.

FY25-CD-03	No till	$6,000.00	$6,000.00	P25-0503

  - A motion to approve was made by Kramer. The motion seconded by Heers. **MOTION CARRIED**

- Manager Cornell requested authorization to approve year-end payments, budget adjustments, sign agreement/amendments, and sign final financial reports for BWSR grant payments and vouchers. A motion to provide authority to approve and perform these year end duties was made by Kramer and seconded by Madson. **MOTION CARRIED**

- Manager Cornell requested authorization to approve year end cost share contract amendments, vouchers, and landowner payments that are time sensitive. A motion was made to authorize Cornell to

approve year end contract amendments, vouchers, and landowner payments that are time sensitive by Madson and seconded by Kramer. **MOTION CARRIED**

- Trnka presented to the board a well sealing contract for cancellation.

WBIF-SW-FREE-24-12	Well Sealing	$1,500.00	$1,500.00	C24-0197

  - A motion was made by Kramer. The motion seconded by Madson. **MOTION CARRIED**

6. ProfitProAg Sponsorship request

- Cornell presented a request from ProfitProAg for sponsorship for their February 2026 Conference. A motion was made by Kramer to not approve sponsoring at this time but for Cornell to work with Profit Pro Ag in the future to share with them clear expectations on what the District can and cannot sponsor. The motion was seconded by Heers. **MOTION CARRIED**

7. Tree Open House December 17th

- Viktora requested a raffle drawing prize for $50 towards an existing or new tree order in addition to the refreshments of hot chocolate and donuts for the tree open house. A motion to approve raffle drawing up to $50 tree order value and refreshment expense was made by Heers and seconded my Madson. **MOTION CARRIED**

8. NRCS Report

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

9. Supervisor Reports

- Heers attended the 2025 MASWCD Convention December 1-3 in Bloomington.
- Kramer attended the 2025 MASWCD Convention December 1-3 in Bloomington.
- Helland attended a 1W1P Meeting November 17th in Blue Earth.

10. Manager Report

- Cornell highlighted the change in no staff reports being created for board packets.
- Cornell reminded the Board that Carmen Christensen's temporary part-time position is up as of 12/31/25.
- Cornell updated the board on receipt of our County allocation funding recently received in December.
- Cornell encouraged the Board to share any ideas they may have for resolutions with staff and/or discussed at a board meeting.
- Cornell advised that she has a Manager Cohort meeting on January 8th, 2026 which is the same date as the January board meeting. A motion was made by Madson and seconded by Heers to move the board meeting to Tuesday, January 6th, 2026 at 8:30 am in the morning so that Manager Cornell can be present. **MOTION CARRIED**

11. Staff Reports

- Mestnik provided an update on USAble Life Insurance premium going down 30% in 2026 and the employee short term benefit being reduced by the same amount collected under PFML.
- Viktora presented a training request for U of M Cover Crop Academy for $100 registration plus any potential lodging and travel expenses. Motion to approve was made by Kramer and seconded by Madson. **MOTION CARRIED**

12. Personnel Committee

- A motion to close the meeting to the public to discuss staff was made by Kramer and seconded by Madson. **MOTION CARRIED**

- The personnel committee presented their recommendations to the full board. Kramer made a motion and Heers seconded the motion to approve Cornell for a one step wage increase to step 9 on the wage scale, Billat for a one step wage increase to step 10 on the wage scale, Viktora for a promotion to Outreach & Technical Specialist starting at step 4 on the wage scale, a promotion for Trnka to Conservation Engineer starting at step 6 on the wage scale, and for Mestnik to be reviewed in January for her 6 month probationary period

13. Additional Items

- Mestnik reminded board members of the upcoming requirement for the annual updating/certifying of their statement of economic interest.
- PFML policy reviewed and signed by board supervisors.
- Mestnik provided further information on the District Health Insurance eligibility and interest.

14. Adjournment

- There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Madson. Heers seconded. **MOTION CARRIED**. Next meeting Tuesday, January 6th, 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, January 6th, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Curt Helland 1-6-26

Curt Helland, Board Chairman **Date**