

## TRAVERSE SWCD MARCH 2024 BOARD MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 14, 2024 by Chairperson Dennis Zimbrick.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Roll Call**

Supervisors present: Chester Raguse, Jeff Peterson, Dennis Zimbrick, and Doug Frisch attended remotely via Teams. Absent: Greg Hoppe. Staff and others present: Sara Gronfeld, Trudy Determan, Bruce Johnson, Jerod Lennox, Devon Thompson, County Commissioner Dwight Nelson, and NRCS Acting District Conservationist Cole Montgomery.

### **Approve Agenda**

A motion was made by Raguse, second by Peterson to approve the agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Minutes of the January Meeting**

A motion to accept the January meeting minutes as presented was made by Raguse, second by Peterson and carried unanimously.

### **January and February Treasurer's Reports**

A motion to approve the January treasurer's report as presented was made by Raguse, second by Peterson and carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the February treasurer's report as presented was made by Raguse, second by Peterson and carried unanimously.

### **District Technical Manager**

Johnson reported working diligently on many aspects of project planning including tree planting plans, other CRP contracts, feedlot programming, buffer programming, soil health planning, soil health education, training, and was able to take time off for a vacation. Tree planning has been going well: 34 sites are planned; 23,000 trees and 124,000 feet of fabric are scheduled to be installed. (That's over 23 miles of fabric!) The feedlot annual report is complete and was approved by the County Board. Johnson will be attending the Minnesota Association of County Feedlot Officers conference March 26-28. The Highway 75 soil health tour planning is well underway, and progress is steady. The site location has been finalized and the event will be at Doug Jahnke's farm north of Johnson. Doug is excited. General CRP signup is open, and the Continuous CRP batching period closes March 15. Johnson is scheduled to meet with the Bois de Sioux Watershed Attorney and others at 9:00 today. He mentioned the LED lighting retrofit has been completed and Joe Riley Construction staff stopped to gather information about the parking lot and will prepare an estimate for construction work.

A motion was made by Raguse to approve a cost share contract for a shelterbelt, second by Peterson and approved unanimously.

Mark Frafford            \$2,604.00        SHCS-23-06

### **Personnel Policy Recommendation**

Gronfeld discussed a summary of the interview process and the Personnel Committee's recommendation to hire Devon Thompson for the full time District Conservation Technician with a starting wage of \$26.00 per hour with full benefits.

In addition, there was interest by the personnel committee to bring on additional summer help for field work with the intent to offer a seasonal part time position to another applicant. Raguse made a motion to offer seasonal employment for the duration of 3 months at the rate of \$25 per hour without benefits, second by Frisch and approved unanimously.

### **Correspondence**

Gronfeld circulated the correspondence folder. She mentioned thank you notes for payment of state and national dues and newsletters received.

### **NRCS Field Office Report**

Cole Montgomery delivered an update about several programs that the agency has been working on and mentioned Blake Bartz was selected for the District Conservationist position in Wheaton and will begin serving in that role on March 25. Cole was selected to fill the District Conservationist position in Alexandria Minnesota and his last day of service in Traverse County will be Wednesday March 20.

### **District Conservation Technician**

Lennox reported on his activities in February and March. He has been organizing seeding projects for spring installation, attending several training sessions along with preparing equipment for spring and working on tree shearing projects.

### **District Engineering Technician**

Serocki was ill and was not able to attend the meeting. Conservation Technician Devon Thompson introduced himself to the group.

### **Office Report and Grant Updates**

Gronfeld offered a brief update about her work on RIM easement processing and other grant programs. RIM payment rates have been updated. She attended the county board meeting on February 20 and provided an update. All annual reports are complete and submitted for state grants and the updated SSTS upgrade grant application form was approved with new income eligibility rates. She attended the annual Township Association meeting on February 15 and provided an update. Gronfeld met with Jonathan Mathias several times to discuss a section of a wind energy ordinance that may involve the SWCD and expects a draft of the ordinance to be available for review soon.

Gronfeld mentioned she submitted application and the SWCD was approved for a \$30,000 grant to pay for staff time to work on promotion of CRP and other conservation programs. She is working to submit the appropriate documentation for the grant execution with Pheasants Forever. The grant was previously administered by BWSR but is now administered by Pheasants Forever.

The cost of the engineering pod agreement has increased for 2024. In 2023 we received more hours of service than we had budgeted for. Staff had no concern about the increase in cost as the engineering and training services provided are outstanding.

### **Watershed Planning Grants**

Gronfeld mentioned the Upper Minnesota River plan was approved by the BWSR regional committee and will be presented to the state BWSR board in March. Staff are working on developing a budget and a work plan for implementation funding and Traverse County has projects ready for funding.

The Bois de Sioux-Mustinka Policy Committee met on March 7 to discuss supplemental funding for projects and approved a budget. Three projects will be slated for funding for construction in Traverse County soon.

The Local Water plan committee met on February 20 to discuss updates and budgeting for funding. Most of the funds allocated for Lined Waterway Outlets have originated from this source. Funds were set up for additional projects this year. Over 30 outlets are awaiting construction in 2024. The Local Water Planning committee recommended increasing the cost share for well sealing projects from 50% not to exceed \$400 to

\$500. The SWCD board agreed and a motion to increase the cost share to 50% not to exceed \$500 per well was made by Peterson, second by Raguse, and carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Raguse to approve a cost share contract for a well sealing project, second by Peterson and approved unanimously.

Lorrell Holtz-Oxley                      \$500.00                      CLWP-23-02

**Janitorial Contract**

A motion was made to approve a janitorial contract with Kelli Powers by Raguse and second by Peterson and approved unanimously.

**Walk in Access**

A motion to approve a contract to provide landowners with assistance to apply and sign contracts for the DNR Walk in Access program was made by Peterson, second by Raguse and approved unanimously. Payment in the amount of \$250 for each contract will be provided by the DNR.

**Area I Meeting**

The upcoming Area I meeting is scheduled on March 19 in Mahnomen MN. Gronfeld plans to attend and provide an update about the soil health tour this summer.

**Technical Service Area Meeting**

The meeting was held in Mahnomen on February 29. No one was able to attend from Traverse SWCD.

**April Meeting Date**

The February meeting will be held on Thursday, April 11, at 7:00 a.m.

**Other Business**

There was no other business.

**Adjourn**

A motion was made by Raguse, second by Peterson to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 a.m. Motion carried unanimously.

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**DISTRICT SECRETARY**

**DATE**