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MINNESOTA SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Minutes of the Sibley Soil & Water Conservation District, Conference Call on **May 12, 2020**.

The meeting was called to order by Chair – Evenson at 4:00 p.m.

Members Present: Chair, Loren Evenson
Vice Chair, Paul Wiemann
Secretary, Robert Nielsen
Member, Kathleen Thies

Others Present: District Manager, Joel Wurscher
District Technician, Jeremy Buckentin
Watershed Technician/Water Planner, Ron Otto
Conservation Technician, Jack Bushman
District Conservationist - NRCS, April Sullivan
District Conservationist-Team Lead- NRCS, Jacob Stich
Board Conservationist – BWSR, Jenny Mocol-Johnson

After the pledge of allegiance, Wurscher stated that the board meeting would be in accordance to MN Statute 13D.021. Wurscher followed that by announcing the meeting would be conducted by telephone due to the health pandemic and declared emergency. An in-person meeting would not be practical or prudent.

Upon a motion by Thies and seconded by Wiemann, it was moved to approve the May agenda. Ayes Evenson, Wiemann, Thies. Carried.

Upon a motion by Thies and seconded by Wiemann, it was moved to approve the minutes of the April 2020 meeting. Ayes Evenson, Thies, Wiemann. Carried.

Upon a motion by Thies and seconded by Wiemann it was moved to approve 28 paid bills for the month of April totaling \$36,043.20. Ayes Thies, Wiemann, Evenson. Carried.

Upon a motion by Thies and seconded by Wiemann, it was moved to approve the May 2020 Treasurer's report subjected to audit. Ayes Thies, Evenson, Wiemann. Carried.

Old Business: Discussion continued amongst the board and staff relating to Covid-19 related reimbursements. Wurscher gave his updates from the surrounding SWCDs and Sibley County of how they are handling reimbursements. The board stated that it wanted to be fair to staff and Wurscher should use his best judgement when determining bills/invoices for payment. Otto noted that he would like to see the SWCD getting remote access to the server for times when staff have to work from home.

Cost Share: Terry Schwartz's well had been sealed and requested final payment in the amount of \$1,050.00. Upon a motion by Thies and seconded by Wiemann, it was moved to approve the final payment for Clean Water Fund contract (FY19CWF-16) at a rate of \$1,050.00. Ayes Thies, Wiemann, Evenson. Carried.

Fred Wentzlaff's (CAP19-3) structure was completed by Melsha Construction and is requesting payment. The total for the project came in at \$11,586.00, with NRCS paying \$7,184.65 in EQIP funds. To bring Fred's cost share payment up to 75%, the District would have to pay \$1,504.85. Upon a motion by Wiemann and seconded by Thies,

it was moved to approve final payment for contract CAP19-3 in the amount of \$1,504.85. Ayes Evenson, Thies, Wiemann. Carried.

Covid-19: Wurscher gave a brief update of SWCD operations since the April SWCD board meeting. Mocol-Johnson chimed in with an update from a BWSR perspective. She declared that there will be a 10% reduction in grant funds over the biennium. The actual number of reductions will be determined at the BWSR board meeting in June. She also informed the board that Clean Water Council is suggesting \$17 million in reductions for the Clean Water Fund.

Tree Program Sales Recap: A handout detailing a summary of tree program activities was sent out prior to the meeting. Wurscher and Buckentin detailed that all the trees have been sold and picked up. They noted that many requests were made for trees after the program had ended for the year. The district did end up in the black for the year after a dismal start. In addition, 18 plant kits are going to be picked up on May 15th.

NRCS Report: Sullivan updated the board on the status of the EQIP program. She mentioned that she has been very busy working on payments and certifications. In addition, Sullivan has 3 CSP contract renewals and there is a new CRP program coming called CLEAR30.

Supervisor & Staff Report: Otto stated that he has been busy working on WCA. Otto had a virtual Leading Sibley Together Class and the program graduation will not be held until August. Otto announced that after 14 years of service, he will be retiring from the district on June 30th.

Buckentin said he has been mostly working with the tree program and site visits/designs. Buckentin noted that he had visits for approximately 15 sites all dealing with concerns over erosion.

Bushman declared that he had been working on 1WIP related items such as putting together meetings, the RFQ and a watershed logo. He described updating the AIS plan since the current content is very outdated. Bushman commented that he will be resuming water monitoring of High Island Creek starting next week.

Other Business: Wurscher told the board that Kevin Ostermann (District Manager – Nicollet SWCD) had submitted a request to continue shared services of a Farm Bill Technician. This would be effective starting July 1, 2020 and ending on June 30th, 2022. The State covers 90% of this position, while Sibley SWCD would have to pay \$5,872.00 in match over the 2-year time period.

Wurscher mentioned that he is working with NRCS and MASWCD towards acquiring a contribution agreement for CRP and engineering related services.

Next Meeting: June 9, 2020, starting at 4 p.m., location TBD.

Adjourn: Upon a motion by Wiemann seconded by Thies, it was moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:47 p.m. Ayes Wiemann, Evenson, Thies, Nielsen. Carried.

Approved: June 9, 2020

Secretary