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MINNESOTA SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Minutes of the Sibley Soil & Water Conservation District, Conference Call on March 9th, 2021.

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

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

Others Present: District Manager, Joel Wurscher
Conservation Technician, Jack Bushman
District Conservationist - NRCS, April Sullivan
District Conservationist-Team Lead- NRCS, Jacob Stich
Board Conservationist – BWSR, Jenny Mocol-Johnson

Before the pledge of allegiance, Wurscher stated that the board meeting would be in accordance with Minnesota 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 Grams and seconded by Nielsen, it was moved to approve the March agenda as presented. Ayes Nielsen, Grams, Thies, Evenson, Wiemann. Carried.

Upon a motion by Thies and seconded by Grams, it was moved to approve the minutes of the February 2021 meeting. Ayes Nielsen, Grams, Evenson, Thies, Wiemann. Carried.

While reviewing the bills paid during the last month, Wurscher notified the board that he had received a letter from the IRS stating that the District must pay its Federal tax payments on a bi-weekly or every pay period basis. Up to this point, the District had been making this payment monthly. Wurscher informed the board that no penalty or assessment was made by the IRS. The letter stated that there was a change in the status of the District for FY2020 resulting in this change in frequency of payment. Upon a motion by Thies and seconded by Nielsen it was moved to approve twenty paid bills for the month of February totaling \$25,190.79. Ayes Nielsen, Evenson, Grams, Thies, Wiemann. Carried.

Upon a motion by Nielsen and seconded by Grams, it was moved to approve the March 2021 Treasurer's report subjected to audit. Ayes Nielsen, Grams, Evenson, Thies, Wiemann. Carried.

Old Business: Wiemann asked if letters had been sent to the local Legislators yet, and if not, should the District be sending them to those on the Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee? After

some discussion by the Board, it was determined that Wurscher will send out the letter to the Committee in addition to House Member Gruenhagen and Senator Newman.

1W1P - South Fork Crow: Wurscher discussed with the Board where the South Fork of the Crow is at in the 1W1P process. Wurscher told the board that their 2020 application was unsuccessful and that the group was interested in applying again in 2021 as soon as the RFP opens. Wurscher reviewed with the Board the comments that were made by BWSR staff and what could be improved to increase the chances of a future successful application. Wurscher described that this particular watershed covers portions of Carver, Hennippen, Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Renville, Sibley and Wright Counties. In Sibley County, the watershed is found in Grafton, New Auburn and Green Isle townships.

Tree Program Update: Wurscher reported that tree sales have really picked up in the past two to three weeks. He told the Board that many species of trees are now sold out and that getting additional trees from the nursery has been difficult due to high demand. Up to this point, there had been 79 total orders. Wurscher noted that the tree program work has consumed a lot of Buckentin's time this past month mostly corresponding with customers/nurseries as well as prepping for pick-up. Wurscher informed the Board about a tire issue on the tree planter. Evenson stated that it had been a while since the tires have been replaced on the planter. Wurscher explained to the Board that Buckentin had been looking at a cheaper alternative source for mulch. Evenson warned Wurscher to be careful there is not any black walnut mixed in the mulch with whatever source was used.

NRCS Report: Sullivan started her report by informing the Board about the current Covid-19 policy for USDA. At this point, they are to staff the office at a rate of 25% or less. Staff are not to meet with customers inside/outside of the office, only onsite at the farm. Sullivan then proceeded to give her NRCS programs update. She stated that they had 5 funded for CSP renewals, but has been given a short turn around to get them obligated. Sullivan said there was a snag with the EQIP ranking deadline. She then told the board that since January, she had been working 50% of her time assisting the Area Program Specialist (APS) with area office duties and 50% of her time on field office work. Stich added that the vacant Soil Conservation Technician (SCT) position in Litchfield had closed, but he will not have a name until after the offer was accepted. Stich is hopeful this hiring will provide some much needed help for putting projects on the ground and filling in where work is needed within his area.

Supervisor & Staff Report: See attached monthly reports.

Other Business: Wurscher had several items for the Board. First, he reminded the Board to turn in their 1st quarter expense reports at the end of the month. Next, Wurscher informed the board of two upcoming meetings occurring this month: South Central TSA meeting on March 16th and the Area VI Chairs meeting on March 25th.

Next Meeting: April 13, 2021, starting at 4 p.m., via conference call.

Adjourn: Upon a motion by Grams seconded by Nielsen, it was moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:46 p.m. Ayes Nielsen, Grams, Evenson, Thies, Wiemann. Carried.

Approved: April 13, 2021

Secretary