



112 5<sup>th</sup> Street, PO Box 161  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
(507) 702-7077

## MINNESOTA SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Minutes of the Sibley Soil & Water Conservation District, Conference Call on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

The meeting was called to order by Chair – Wiemann at 4:01 p.m.

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

Others Present: District Manager, Joel Wurscher  
District Technician, Jeremy Buckentin  
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 Nielsen and seconded by Thies, it was moved to approve the April agenda as presented. Ayes Nielsen, Thies, Evenson, Wiemann. Carried.

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

Upon a motion by Thies and seconded by Nielsen it was moved to approve 30 paid bills for the month of March totaling \$26,130.44. Ayes Nielsen, Thies, Evenson, Wiemann. Carried.

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

**Old Business:** Wurscher reported that he sent out letters to the Finance Committee as well as House Member Gruenhagen and Senator Newman as was directed by the Board at the March meeting.

**South Central TSA Match:** Wurscher gave a brief history on contributions to TSA and the projects they are currently working on for the district. Nielsen described the staffing changes that have been made and that he sat on interviews for a CET position. Upon a motion by Nielsen and seconded by Evenson, it was moved to approve the annual match contribution to the South-Central Technical Service Area in the amount of \$3,550.00. Ayes Nielsen, Thies, Evenson, Wiemann. Carried.

**JAA – Ecological Services:** Before the meeting, Wurscher sent out the skills matrix worksheets provided by Lawrence Svien of BWSR. Wurscher described why its important to have JAA and what types of practices it can be utilized for. Upon a motion by Nielsen and seconded by Evenson, it was moved to approve the JAA levels for ecological services as shown in the provided worksheets. Ayes Nielsen, Thies, Evenson, Wiemann. Carried.

**Tree Program Update:** Buckentin gave a short report of the tree program. Buckentin stated that they are up to 100 orders but will be accepting plant kit orders until April 20<sup>th</sup>. He went on to tell the board that 95% of the stock is sold out. In 2021, website sales comprised 43% of the total sales. Buckentin then mentioned that he had sent out order pickup notices through the mail and email.

**NRCS Report:** Sullivan started her report by informing the Board that although the Litchfield position was offered, the person did not accept and that NRCS is working on other arrangements. Sullivan then gave a brief update on NRCS operations with Covid restrictions. Sullivan then moved onto her programs report. She mentioned that NRCS had 13 pre-approved application for the EQIP program. Sullivan told the board that NRCS has been busy with CRP workload consisting of sign-ups, seed certifications, and mid-contract management change requests. Then Sullivan informed the group that they had 19 new CSP applications along with 17 renewals between the two counties. After informing the board that she will be fully transitioned to her new Area Programs Specialist position by June, the board congratulated and thanked her for her time in the County as the District Conservationist. After Sullivan’s report, Stich stated that if they knew of anyone interested, there is a NRCS Agronomist position opening in the Gaylord location. He also notified the board that a Local Work Group (LWG) meeting must be completed by July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**Supervisor & Staff Report:** See attached monthly reports.

**Other Business:** The District received an invoice for the 2021 Area VI MASWCD Dues in the amount of \$400.00. Upon a motion by Thies and seconded by Nielsen it was moved to approve the \$400.00 payment. Ayes Nielsen, Thies, Evenson, Wiemann. Carried.

Wiemann brought up that he had a meeting with Ronald Otto (Township Supervisor) regarding a potential project proposed by Dryden Township. A letter was also given to Wiemann, addressed to the Sibley SWCD Board of Supervisors on behalf of Dryden Township. The letter transcribed events that ~~have~~ had taken place dating back to September 8<sup>th</sup>. The township felt that the SWCD did not take the appropriate actions with what they thought was an application. Bushman described to the board what had occurred and informed them of a meeting held with BWSR relating to this matter. Discussion amongst board members determined that the actions and materials given to the SWCD did not qualify as an application. This resulted in a motion by Nielsen and second by Thies, to have Wurscher send a response letter with the support of the board to Ronald Otto and Lori Doering (Township Clerk) explaining the board’s position and what constitutes an application, while also including an application form. Ayes Nielsen, Thies, Evenson, Wiemann. Carried. The staff were reminded by the board to keep communication lines open with the Township.

Wurscher brought up that he had been approached by Scott Mackenthun (DNR) regarding a CPL grant the Friends of High Island had received towards replacing the dam at the outlet of High Island Lake. Mackenthun approached the district to inquire if they would partner on the grant since they need a local LGU to partner on the project to remain eligible. Mackenthun stated that the district’s role would be mostly in-kind services which would include: help with bids, coordinating engineering and construction with the contractors, as well as taking on additional dam safety dollars if the project goes over \$400,000. Wurscher shared that Houston Engineering is finalizing designs and that DNR is hoping construction will begin Fall of 2021. Wurscher then said Mackenthun was willing to provide the board with more information at a future meeting if requested. With the information provided by Wurscher through Mackenthun, a motion was made by Nielsen and seconded by Thies, moving to approve partnering with the Friends of High Island on the CPL grant. Ayes Nielsen, Thies, Evenson, Wiemann. Carried.

**Next Meeting:** May 11, 2021, starting at 4 p.m., via conference call.

**Adjourn:** Upon a motion by Thies seconded by Evenson, it was moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 p.m. Ayes Nielsen, Thies, Evenson, Wiemann. Carried.

Approved: May 11, 2021

---

**Secretary**