

Minnesota Watersheds Board of Directors Meeting

March 20, 2023

Via Zoom



1. CALL TO ORDER

President Vavra called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. A quorum was present.

Minnesota Watersheds Board (Board) members present: Peter Fjestad, David Ziegler, Mary Texer, Linda Vavra, Brad Kramer, Wanda Holker, Jeff Gertgen, Gene Tiedemann, and Jackie Anderson

Others present: Jan Voit, Executive Director; Tina Carstens, Minnesota Association of Watershed Administrators (MAWA), John Jaschke, Joe Collins, and Jill Crafton, Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), and Celia Wirth, Brown's Creek Watershed District (WD)

2. GENERAL HOUSEKEEPING

Agenda

Director Ziegler made a motion to approve the agenda. Director Fjestad seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Member Comment Period

No Minnesota Watersheds members were present to address the Board.

Secretary's Report

Director Texer made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 15 meeting. Director Fjestad seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Director Ziegler reported on bills paid and the account balances as of March 19, 2023:

- Checking: \$98,487.12
- Savings: \$279,947.79
- Total: \$378,434.91

Director Anderson moved to accept the treasurer's report. This was seconded by Director Ziegler and the motion carried unanimously.

3. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Executive Director's Contract

The Executive Director's contract expires on March 31. When the contract was last extended, it was recommended that the Strategic Plan Committee review the work done to date before making a longer-term contract. The Strategic Plan Committee met on March 8 to review the Executive Director's work plan. They determined that the value of the work plan is to provide the Executive Director with direction on priorities. The reporting that she provides will allow for comparing what was proposed and what was done, as well as to know how much is too much, and what it will take to implement the Strategic Plan. Changes in the contract include: the rate per hour was increased from \$50 to \$55 per hour and the software provided was corrected (Adobe Pro, Zoom, and Survey Monkey).

Discussion was held regarding the contract length, data control, contractor versus employee position and financial savings, that things are working well, and that the contract will be reviewed again in one year. Director Texer made a motion to approve the contract. Director Fjestad seconded the motion. In favor: Fjestad, Gertgen, Holker, Kramer, Tiedemann, Texer, Tiedemann, and Vavra. Abstain: Anderson. Motion carried.

4. DISCUSSION ITEM

Drainage Work Group (DWG) membership

The drainage registry portal language that was introduced did not reach consensus at the DWG. Discussion was held regarding the potential difficulties that will arise because of this legislation if it is passed. Those difficulties included duplication of notification efforts and conflicts with other portions of the drainage law statute. Discussion was also held regarding the need for drainage, that the Department of Natural Resources and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency do not allow uncontrolled drainage, the importance of water storage, added expense for landowners who bear the cost for all drainage proceedings, that the repair requirement had been removed from the bill language, and the assumption that the goal of environmental groups is to stop agriculture.

John Jaschke explained that the DWG had looked at the language but had not completed their discussion or made a recommendation. At a hearing in the House of Representatives, Ray Bohn and a representative of the Association of Minnesota Counties spoke in opposition to the bill and testified that the language did not have a consensus recommendation. The advocates for the bill also said that consensus had not been reached. BWSR knew that the bill would be held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill. Speaking against the committee chair, who authored the language to create the DWG, would not have been beneficial. BWSR is working behind the scenes and that is more important than what is said during a hearing.

The Board's consensus is that membership in the DWG is important, but that it also has to operate on a consensus basis.

5. REPORTS

President's Report

President Vavra reported on her participation in the Events-Education and Strategic Plan Committee meetings, discussions with Minnesota Watersheds officers, meeting with Ray Bohn regarding HF2354, phone calls from watershed managers and staff regarding HF2354 testimony, and sending letters in support of the general operating levy, DWG, and the bonding bill.

6. NEW BUSINESS

Salt Symposium Sponsorship

Minnesota Watersheds has received a request for sponsorship for the 2023 Salt Symposium. There are five sponsorship levels: Platinum Sponsor - \$4,000; Gold Sponsor - \$2,500; Silver Sponsor - \$1,000; Bronze Sponsor - \$500; and Specialized Sponsor – no cash donation.

Discussion was held regarding the cost, Minnesota Watersheds legislative agenda, past sponsorship of the Salt Symposium, and the chloride issue's importance to metro members. Director Anderson made a motion to approve the \$500 Bronze Sponsorship. Director Ziegler seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

7. REPORTS CONTINUED

Executive Director

Executive Director Voit provided an update on the February newsletter, Ag-Urban Partnership Forum, joint response from MAWA and Minnesota Watersheds regarding BWSR Academy, Events-Education and Strategic Plan Committee meetings, handbook, MAWA Executive Committee meeting, monthly meeting with Justin Hanson, letter of support for the Legislative Water Commission, partnership opportunities, legislative correspondence, and communication with non-member watershed districts and watershed management organizations.

Director Anderson requested copies of the correspondence that was sent to non-member WDs and WMOs. Executive Director Voit reported that the information had been sent to the Board on March 17.

Director Anderson reported that Comfort Lake Forest Lake WD has paid their dues. Director Gertgen stated that Middle Fork Crow River WD voted to pay their dues as well.

Director Anderson asked when the reconciliation for the annual conference would be available. She also stated that the financial report looks good. Executive Director Voit explained that the financial information regarding the annual conference had been sent to the Board several weeks ago.

Partner Reports

MAWA

Tina Carstens provided an update on the BWSR Academy comment letter, review of the Minnesota Watersheds legislative event, Summer Tour planning, MAWA questionnaire, committees, and encouraging administrators to include updates on Minnesota Watersheds activities in board packets.

BWSR

John Jaschke explained that BWSR is looking forward to more engagement with MAWA. He gave an update on the BWSR technical bill, his appreciation for effort from MAWA and Minnesota Watersheds for BWSR Academy, and the Clean Water Fund legislation. Jill Crafted stated that the BWSR Board meets on March 22 and will be considering five One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) comprehensive watershed management plans. She spoke with Katie Smith, DNR about the importance of the DWG. Joe Collins reported on discussions about procedures to amend a 1W1P and a possible requirement for climate change recognition in 1W1P. He also pointed out the differences in how WDs are featured in the Des Moines and Ottertail 1W1Ps.

Jill Crafton said that the Grants Program and Policy Committee discussed the formula for funding in watershed-based implementation funding and the possibility of changing the formula to allocate money for groundwater. Input was requested from MAWA. Jamie Beyer, Bois de Sioux WD had suggested that BWSR consider a separate funding source for groundwater rather than changing the formula. John Jaschke responded that there is no basis for the committee's discussion for changing the formula. BWSR staff have not recommended any changes.

Clean Water Council (CWC)

The CWC meets at the same date and time as the Minnesota Watersheds Board meeting. A report on the meeting will be included in the March newsletter.

Confirm Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 17 at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom.

President Vavra thanked BWSR for their work on behalf of WDs at the DWG. She stated that our members are paying attention to what the Board and the lobbyist are doing. They are more in tune with legislation. Our members want this organization to move forward. Part of that is listening to their concerns and bringing them to the Board. We want to continue to work with BWSR in a positive manner.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 a.m.

Wanda Holker
Secretary