

# Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) Board of Directors Meeting

April 18, 2022

Via Zoom



## 1. CALL TO ORDER

President Texer called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. A quorum was present.

MAWD Board (Board) Members present: Mary Texer, Sherry Davis White, Gene Tiedemann, Peter Fjestad, Linda Vavra, Wanda Holker, and Ruth Schaefer

Board Members absent: Jackie Anderson

Others present: Emily Javens and Jan Voit, MAWD; Tina Carstens, Mark Doneux, and Andy Henschel, Minnesota Association of Watershed Administrators (MAWA); Marcie Weinandt, Clean Water Council (CWC); LeRoy Ose, Joe Collins, and Jill Crafton, Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

## 2. GENERAL HOUSEKEEPING

### ***Agenda***

Director Vavra moved to approve the agenda. This was seconded by Director Fjestad and the motion carried unanimously.

### ***Member Comment Period***

No MAWD members were present to address the Board.

Introductions were done.

### ***Secretary's Report***

Director Texer reported that concerns shared with her about a statement from the Pelican River Watershed District (WD) being disappointed that MAWD promised that a finance committee meeting would be held in January or February and did not deliver on that promise. Executive Director Javens explained that an attempt was made to have all committees meet at the end of 2021. The Finance Committee was unable to schedule within that time period. A meeting is scheduled for April 27. Director White thought the line "But, if you are not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem" should be removed. Also, Director Texer's name was misspelled on page four of the minutes.

Director White made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2022 meeting with the removal of "But, if you are not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem" under the member comments section and correcting the misspelling of Director Texer's name on page four. This was seconded by Director Fjestad and the motion carried unanimously.

### ***Treasurer's Report***

Director White reported that the current account balances are:

- Checking: \$39,447.30
- Savings: \$299,739.62
- Total: \$339,186.92

Signature authority has been updated. The bank balances reflect members are paying their dues.

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

### 3. REPORTS

#### ***President's Report***

Director Texer reported that it was her opinion that staff take excellent notes. Notes are not meeting minutes and each person that attends has their own perception. Minutes are not official until they are approved by the appropriate group, the Committee or the Board.

This past month, Directors Texer and Vavra gave Executive Director Javens her raise as approved by the Board at its March 16 meeting.

#### ***Executive Director's Report***

Executive Director Javens reported on the following information. She stated this month's report is representative of a very typical month for MAWD.

#### Membership Invitation for Non-members

- *Sauk River WD (SRWD) Office Visit.* On March 21, she met with the SRWD president and administrator. During their discussion, the letter that led them to leave the organization was reviewed. They also discussed the situation of the SRWD office building. The president and administrator have asked her to attend a future meeting to discuss these items with the entire SRWD board.
- Lower Minnesota River WD contacted Executive Director Javens. MAWD membership is an agenda item for their April 20 meeting. The presentation from the annual conference was forwarded for their review.

#### Legislative Session

- The legislature is on break until April 19. The omnibus bills have come out. The drainage registry portal is a concern. This legislation would require BWSR to establish and maintain a drainage registry information portal. It would include a searchable electronic database of all documents initiating drainage proceedings and non-petitioned repairs. The amendment would require that drainage authorities take no action on repairs or maintenance until the reports have been posted for 30 days. When the bill was first introduced, the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and MAWD submitted a letter advocating that this bill be reviewed by the Drainage Work Group (DWG). Tom Gile, BWSR lead staff for the DWG asked for comments regarding the bill. The comments submitted by MAWD, Rinke Noonan and the Bois de Sioux WD were sent to him.
- All omnibus bills are out and the Senate tax bill. However, the tax bill only included tax conformity and some tax cuts. The WD levy bill is in the Senate Tax Committee. While the bill had unanimous support in the Environment Committee, the bill did not get a hearing in the House. Any tax bill can have hearings until the session ends. We will keep working on this.
- In the last legislative update, the MAWD Lobbyist said that the smart salting bill was dead. To clarify- the language in the bill for the education program and funding from the general fund (rather than CWF's) has support. The language regarding the liability portion of the bill has changed and does not have bi-partisan support.
- The bonding bill is not yet available.

#### Partnerships Update

- ***BWSR Board Meeting.*** On March 23, Executive Director Javens attended the BWSR Board meeting. She thanked BWSR for the efforts and noted she looked forward to continuing to build a strong partnership with them and included some specific requests that included: support from BWSR on the MAWD levy legislation, continue to increase transparency within the organization, alter protocols to allow for meaningful review and comment periods, review the policies that distinguish the roles of the Board versus staff vs the Governor, work in partnership to develop a comprehensive education program and assist with the MAWD Handbook. She stated that BWSR is hiring an on-staff attorney. The BWSR executive director agreed to make this person available to review our handbook before we send it to Smith Partners for the

final legal review.

- **Resilient Communities Work Group.** Director Javens is the MAWD representative on Minnesota's Climate Action Framework. Meetings were held on March 8 and April 5. She included the committees and membership in the Board packet.

- **BWSR Academy Input Meeting.** MAWD and MAWA were invited to participate in an Academy input meeting on April 5. Administrative Support Voit and Shell Rock River WD Administrator Andy Henschel attended on behalf of MAWD and MAWA. BWSR staff explained the process for input on session topics. Topics are reviewed and suggestions as to the most valuable are determined. The MAWA Executive Committee submitted suggestions that are important to watersheds. The BWSR Team will choose the topics and look for speakers. Some WD's think MAWD should have its own academy. Partnering with BWSR makes sense since they have dedicated resources to deliver relevant staff training.

#### Events

- **Legislative Day at the Capitol.** The legislative event was held on March 16 and 17. The final numbers are not yet available. Participation in the event was about half of what it had been in the past. Scaling back on food and using the credit from 2019 helped with the costs, but the event did not break even.

- **Red River Basin Conference.** On March 22 and 23, Executive Director Javens attended the Red River Basin Conference. This was an excellent conference with good presentations.

- **Summer Tour.** On April 8, Executive Director Javens and Administrative Support Voit attended the Summer Tour Planning Session. Partners include Red River entities, MAWD, the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) employees' association, and BWSR. The down payments made for last summer's canceled bus tour have been refunded. The hotel refund is still in discussion.

#### **Committee Reports**

- **Watershed Handbook.** The Handbook Committee met on March 31. The main body of the document was reviewed, along with comments and questions posted within the original draft. The document will include both WD and WMO information in the same sections where it is applicable. A draft document will be sent to the committee for review by the end of the month.

- **Strategic Plan.** Director Texer reported that the Strategic Plan Committee met on April 12 and plans to continue that meeting on April 26 to review comments submitted by MAWA after the April 12 meeting was held.

- **Finance.** The Finance Committee will meet on April 27 to discuss how dues could be restructured. The draft agenda was shared with the committee and the Board. Committee members have been asked to complete homework before the meeting. Committee Chair White and Executive Director Javens will meet prior to the meeting to review the agenda.

#### **Partner Reports**

- **MAWA.** Tina Carstens reported that MAWA met on March 16. Many of the topics have already been discussed. The group reviewed the strategic plan and sent comments and recommendations to the Board. Tina Carstens and Andy Henschel serve on the Handbook Committee.

- **BWSR.** Joe Collins reported that he was involved with the review of the BWSR Executive Director. He highlighted positives and a few concerns. The issue of authority will be discussed at an upcoming strategic planning workshop, date pending. The executive director received a good review overall from the BWSR Board and staff. The 60 day review policy will be discussed further with the BWSR Executive Director at our summer tour. Jill Crafton stated we need to do a better job of reaching out to MAWA and SWCD staff for input. LeRoy Ose said that he is looking forward to in-person meetings. The drainage registry is concerning. He also shares the concerns mentioned by the other BWSR Board representatives.

- **CWC.** Marcie Weinandt reported that the CWC met on March 28. Over the next few months, the CWC will be hearing proposals for how to spend dollars in the next biennium. Presentations were given in

March and are scheduled for April 25 and May 7. There will be a final round before the recommendations are sent to committee. She informed the Board that it is important for them to receive feedback on how stakeholders prioritize the distribution of funds.

#### **4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

##### *Region 2 Director Appointment*

The appointment of a Region 2 Director will be an agenda item until the position is filled. There are no candidates at this time. Director Schaefer suggested that the by-laws be amended so that when there is a vacancy, at some point two managers from the same watershed can serve on the Board. Director Texer asked that language be drafted. She also stated that because it is part of the Manual of Policies and Procedures, the change does not have to be approved by the membership.

#### **5. NEW BUSINESS**

##### *MAWA Concerns*

Mark Doneux explained that when MAWA met their biggest concern was the need to expand the legislative platform. It would be helpful to have defined positions on topics like drainage and other issues that are important to the membership. A defined legislative platform would help managers and staff communicate a consistent message. MAWA has an interest in developing a first draft of a platform. Administrators who are knowledgeable in areas and could develop policy statements for the Board to review and approve. The resolution about wakeboards was given as an example. While wake boards may not have statewide appeal because its focus is a specific user group, it would be better to have a policy about recreational activity that causes erosion.

##### *Confirm 2022 Goals*

Director Texer stated the 2022 goals to be: Legislative & Administrative Lobbying; Education & Training; Communication and Collaboration as stated in the Strategic Plan.

Executive Director Javens presented the goals as she understood them for 2022: Finnish implementation of the activities identified in the current strategic plan; Develop the 2023+ strategic plan with a goal of membership adoption at the annual conference; Continue to provide foundational member services; Publish a revised and updated Watershed Handbook and continue to improve external and internal relationships and partnerships.

Director Texer asked if the goals should be changed, deleted, or if other items should be added. The consensus was to continue with no changes.

##### *Governance Discussion*

The Board and Ms. Javens discussed the evolution of roles and responsibilities of the board and staff, how committees are functioning and the relationship of committee chairs and staff, and the sharing of board meeting information with MAWD members. Director Vavra made a motion to post Board packets on the website. The motion died for lack of a second. Ms. Javens also offered follow-up comments on the performance review process and methods of collecting information.

#### **6. ADJOURNMENT**

Director White made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:01 a.m. This was seconded by Director Schaefer. Motion carried unanimously.

Ruth Schaefer, Secretary