

WASHINGTON CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SEPTEMBER 14, 2022 BOARD MINUTES

APPROVED

CALL TO ORDER

The regular Board Meeting was called to order at 9:00a.m. by Chair, John Rheinberger.

Members Present: John Rheinberger, Chair
Jim Levitt, Vice Chair
Tim Behrends, Public Relations and Information
Diane Blake, Communications and Outreach
Bob Rosenquist, Secretary

Staff Present: Jay Riggs
Shari Larkin

Other Agencies: Chris Schmidt, NRCS
Lizzie Dawson, NRCS
David Nuccio, Board Candidate

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA

An additional training request (BWSR Academy) was added under New Business, Item C. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Jim Levitt, seconded by Diane Blake. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

There are no items to approve this month.

APPROVAL OF AUGUST 10, 2022 BOARD MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve the August 10, 2022 minutes was made by Jim Levitt and seconded by Tim Behrends. Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Items to note are HP Payment Processing Center in the amount of \$1,014.20 for EMWREP expenses; Minutemen Press in the amount of \$530.63 for EMWREP expenses; Spartan Promotional Group in the amount of \$858.49 for WCD clothing; University of Minnesota in the amount of \$12,616.50 for the Agronomist position; C Lanphear Design in the amount of \$675.00 for CMSCWD newsletter editing; Stantec Consulting Services Inc. in the amount of \$13,406.33 for a CPL grant expense; Postmaster in the amount of \$3,000.00 for postage for our bulk meter; and Tech Sales Company in the amount of \$11,490.00 for water monitoring expenses. A motion to approve the Treasurer's Report, subject to audit, was made by Diane Blake, seconded by Jim Levitt. Motion carried.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Personnel – The Landscape Restoration Technician position has been filled.

Budget and Finance – Jay would like to schedule a Budget Committee meeting to discuss 2023.

Cost-Share – There are a couple items later in the agenda.

Communications and Outreach – Nothing to report.

AGENCY / PARTNER REPORTS

County – We have received confirmation that the County approved a \$20,000 increase in the 2023 budget.

NRCS – NRCS is still operating at 50% staffing levels in the office, due to COVID guidelines. They have hired a new Forester in Waconia. For this service year in EQIP, their service team has had 54 applications pre-approved for funding, one of which is for Washington County. The field office has been working on getting CRP plans back to FSA. The fiscal year ends on September 30, 2022.

BWSR – Nothing to report.

MCD/Area IV – The next MCD meeting will be November 16th. They went over the workplan at the last meeting. The next Area IV meeting will be on the 16th.

Watersheds – We are continuing to work with partners on the 2023 agreements.

MASWCD – The annual convention will be December 12-14, 2022. Due to that, the December Board meeting will be held on December 7, 2022.

EMPLOYEE REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS/INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- a. **WCD and EMWREP Outreach** – *See Attached and Newspaper Article Binder.*
- b. **Presentation** – EMWREP and LSCP Social Media Update Highlights

OLD BUSINESS

- a. **COVID-19 & Telework Policy** – Jay will be preparing a survey for staff to determine how the telework policy is going.
- b. **Office and Vehicles** – The interior sprinkler system has been inspected. The outdoor sprinkler system will be shut down for the season soon.
- c. **Equity Initiatives** – There are scheduling conflicts with the person we were entering into an agreement with, so we are reevaluating our options going forward.
- d. **Program Updates** – The planning team for the Lower St. Croix partnership will be meeting today to look at the final edits for the workplan.
- e. **2023 Budget and Workplan** – The Budget Committee will be meeting to discuss the 2023 budget.
- f. **Board Tour and Holiday Potluck** – The Board tour will be held after the November meeting. The holiday potluck will be held after the December meeting, which will be moved to December 7th.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Exterior Glass Cleaning Bid** – We requested a bid to do the exterior windows. The total proposed cost is \$800. A motion to approve entering into the agreement to clean the exterior windows was made by Tim Behrends, seconded by Bob Rosenquist. Motion carried.
- b. **Phone System Update Proposals** – A phone system bid from Loffler was included in the packet. Approval is requested to move forward with evaluating and purchasing the system if it works from an IT perspective. A motion to approve moving forward was made by Jim Levitt, seconded by Diane Blake. Motion carried.
- c. **Training Requests – Outdoor Media Summit and BWSR Academy** – Approval was requested to allow Angie Hong to attend/present at the Outdoor Media Summit, at a cost of up to \$500.00. A motion to approve the training request was made by Bob Rosenquist, seconded by Diane Blake. Motion carried. Approval was also requested to send staff to BWSR Academy this year, of up to \$1,000.00. A motion to approve the BWSR Academy registration expenses was made by Diane Blake, seconded by Jim Levitt. Motion carried.

d. **Metro Conservation Network Support** – MCNet is a coalition of habitat management agency experts that was typically funded by the DNR. It is no longer being funded, so they are requesting contributions to continue the program. Based on our organization size, the recommended contribution amount is \$1,000-\$3,000. After discussion, it was decided to contribute \$1,000. A motion to approve contributing \$1,000 was made by Jim Levitt, seconded by Diane Blake. Motion carried.

e. **LSCP Delegated Authority for Non-structural Ag BMP Contracts** – The WCD currently has two state grants with funding dedicated to implementing non-structural agricultural best management practices (BMPs):

- FY 2020 BWSR CWF Drinking Water grant
- FY 2021 BWSR Lower St. Croix Watershed Based Implementation Funds

Due to the nature of non-structural agricultural BMPs, there may be scenarios in which projects are proposed and need to be implemented with quick turnaround. For example, a landowner interested in planting cover crops may sign an application but need to meet planting deadlines that occur before the next WCD Board meeting where project approval would be determined. Rather than turn away good projects because staff are not able to request WCD Board approval in time, the WCD Board has the option to delegate authority to approve/deny/sign contracts with land occupiers to the WCD Manager. The process would go as follows:

1. The WCD Board delegates authority to approve/deny/sign contracts with land occupiers to the WCD Administrator.

2. An application comes in, and the Administrator approves/signs it or denies it.

3. The land occupiers may or may not start the project.

4. At a subsequent WCD Board meeting, the WCD Board reviews the contracts approved by the WCD Manager and all pertinent information as required by the Grants Administration Manual be entered into the meeting minutes. WCD staff would present the contracts at the same time as request for final payment with all project closeout documentation.

WCD staff are requesting the WCD Board delegate authority to approve/deny/sign contracts with land occupiers to the WCD Administrator for WCD Board-approved non-structural agricultural BMPs under the FY2020 BWSR CWF Drinking Water grant and the FY2021 BWSR Lower St. Croix Watershed Based Implementation Funds grant. WCD staff would still provide appropriate technical assistance and follow cost share procedure under the BWSR Grants Administration Manual. This process has been reviewed and approved by the WCD's BWSR Board Conservationist, in consultation with the BWSR Central Region Grants Compliance Specialist. Other SWCDs within the Lower St. Croix Watershed are also proposing delegation of authority to complete non-structural agricultural BMPs in time. A motion was made by Tim Behrends to approve delegating authority to approve/deny/sign contracts with land occupiers to the WCD Manager for WCD Board-approved non-structural agricultural best management practices under the FY2020 BWSR CWF Drinking Water grant and the FY2021 BWSR Lower St. Croix Watershed Based Implementation Funds grant. The motion was seconded by Bob Rosenquist. Motion carried.

f. **FY20 CWF – Drinking Water Grant – Updated Cover Crop Payment Rate** – The WCD was awarded a FY2020 CWF grant to protect drinking water sources in southern Washington County from nitrogen fertilizer contamination. The WCD allocated funding for nitrogen fertilizer best management practices (BMPs) and alternative management tools (AMTs), some of which are nonstructural land management practices. The WCD Board approved a Nonstructural Land Management Practices Implementation Plan for this grant, which identified nonstructural practices and associated payment rates. This Plan was last updated in April 2020. Currently, the WCD offers a higher cover crop payment rate through the FY2021 Lower St. Croix Watershed Based Implementation Funding pool:

- FY2020 CWF grant

- Cover Crop - \$30/acre/year for a three-year contract. No requirement on number of species but higher diversity will be encouraged.
- FY2021 Lower St. Croix Watershed Based Implementation Funding
 - Cover Crop - \$50/acre/year for 1-2 species; \$60/acre/year for 3+ species

WCD staff would like the WCD Board to discuss increasing the cover crop payment rate for the FY2020 CWF grant to match the FY2021 Lower St. Croix Watershed Based Implementation Funding cover crop payment rate. Consistency between grants will allow WCD staff to present one cover crop payment rate to landowners/producers, instead of navigating different grant payment rates for the same practice. A motion was made by Tim Behrends to approve the increased cover crop payment rates for the FY2020 CWF Drinking Water Grant's Nonstructural Land Management Practices Implementation Plan, to match the rates of the FY2021 Lower St. Croix Watershed Based Implementation Funding. Jim Levitt seconded the motion. Motion carried.

- g. FY20 CWF – Drinking Water Grant – Encumbrance Request - Neenan** – In 2020, the WCD received a Clean Water Fund grant to implement nitrogen fertilizer BMPs that protect groundwater as a drinking water source in southern Washington County. WCD staff requests encumbrance of \$4,117.50 from the FY2020 BWSR Drinking Water grant to convert 2.25 acres of agricultural land to prairie at the Neenan property (11626 Neal Avenue, Hastings, MN). The agricultural land is located in Denmark Township in a vulnerable groundwater area (karst/high pollution sensitivity), making the land highly susceptible to groundwater contamination from nitrogen fertilizer. The conversion to prairie would remove future nitrogen fertilizer inputs and protect groundwater as a drinking water source. The total estimated cost for the project is \$5,490 in materials and installation cost. The rest of the project cost (\$1,372.50) is to be covered by the South Washington Watershed District. WCD staff requests approval to enter into the contract for FY2020 BWSR Drinking Water, Contract 20-04 BWSR. A motion was made by Jim Levitt, to approve an encumbrance of \$4,117.50 and enter into the contract for FY2020 BWSR Drinking Water, Contract 20-04 BWSR. No second to the motion is required. The district technical representative (Tara Kelly) has performed a site inspection, concept plans, and cost estimate. Applicant will be notified of Board's decision within 15 days. All members voting yes. Motion carried
- h. FY22 Lawns to Legumes – LSCB Demonstration Encumbrance Request** – WCD staff are requesting the encumbrance of up to \$5,000.00 for the installation of a turf conversion/buffer enhancement project along Riviera Avenue in Lake St. Croix Beach, one of the three demonstration neighborhoods identified in the FY22 Washington County Legumes Demonstration Neighborhood grant. Additional projects will be completed in 2023. The \$40,000 Lawns to Legumes Phase 2 Demonstration Neighborhood program provides funding to install pollinator-friendly practices at a neighborhood-scale to showcase ways of supporting rusty-patched bumblebee and other at-risk insects. This project is located within high potential zones for rusty-patched bumblebee (USFWS) and key wildlife habitat corridors. The projects to begin installation in 2022 include:
- City of Lake St. Croix Beach – Upland native buffer enhancement along Riviera Avenue, MSCWMO
 - 0.25-acre buffer enhancement/turf conversion
 - \$5,000 L2L allocation with \$500 MSCWMO matching grant.

A motion was made by Jim Levitt, to approve an encumbrance of up to \$5,000.00 in grant funds for the project outlined above and for District Manager to sign cost share agreements. No second to the motion is required. All members voting yes. Motion carried.

- i. FY22 CPL Grant – Afton – Partial Payment Request** – The City of Afton and Washington Conservation District (WCD) applied for Conservation Partners Legacy Grants (CPL). The CPL Grant Program funds conservation projects that restore, enhance, or protect forests,

wetlands, prairies, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife in Minnesota. Funding for the CPL grant program is from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, created by the people of Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources manages the Expedited Grant Program which is a reimbursable program to provide competitive matching grants from \$5,000 to \$50,000 to local, regional state and national nonprofit organizations, including government entities. WCD applied for these funds on behalf of the City of Afton. The grant will cover \$50,000 of implementation costs. The City of Afton has agreed to cover \$5,000 of administrative and project management costs in an agreement with WCD. This will also be used as the 10% match to the grant. Stantec was hired to implement the restoration steps. They prepared the site for seeding with an additional herbicide application. WCD staff requests approval to process a partial payment to Stantec Consulting Services Inc., 13980 Collections Center Drive, Chicago, IL 60693 in the amount of \$1,905.59. Motion by Bob Rosenquist, seconded by Jim Levitt, to approve partial payment of \$1,905.59 to Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.. All members voting yes. Motion carried.

- j. MASWCD Award Nominations** – Our nomination for Outstanding Conservationist Award is James Pechacek and Caroline Meklin. A motion to approve that nomination was made by Diane Blake, and seconded by Jim Levitt. Our nomination for Community Conservationist is Kristina Smitten. A motion to approve this nomination was made by Jim Levitt, seconded by Bob Rosenquist. Both motions carried.
- k. 2022 MCIT Dividend** – The amount for the 2022 dividend from MCIT is \$6,395.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

None.

Tim Behrends moved to adjourn the public meeting. Jim Levitt seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m. The next scheduled meeting is October 12, 2022 at **9:00a.m.**

Secretary

Approved Date