STEELE COUNTY
Soil and Water Conservation District

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Owatonna MN 55060
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www.steeleswcd.org

The regular monthly meeting of the Steele County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors was called to order by Dan Hansen at 5:00 PM on Wednesday January 14, 2026 at the Steele County SWCD Office, 235 Cedardale Drive SE, Owatonna MN, 55060.

SWCD Supervisors Present:	**SWCD Staff Present:**	**Others Present:**	**Absent:**
Mark Ihlenfeld, Secretary	Eric Gulbransen	Jim Smith, NRCS	Brad Hagen, Treasurer
Dan Hansen, Vice Chair	Adam Arndt	Leanna Smeby, NRCS	
Dave Melby, Chairman	Adrienne Gransee	Lezlie Sorensen, NRCS	
Mark Ditlevson, PR&I	Ian Pringle	Roger Wacek	
	Alan Krause		

The January agenda was reviewed, no changes were made.

The December minutes were distributed to the Supervisors prior to the meeting. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Ditlevson, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

The December Treasurer's Report was read by Ihlenfeld. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Ditlevson, to approve the December Treasurer's Report. Motion was carried by voice vote.

Bills: (See attached) Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Ihlenfeld, to approve paying the bills. Motion was carried by voice vote.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Meeting Reports – No-Till Conference – Mark Ditlevson reported on the No Till Conference that he attended. There was a good turnout and interesting speakers. He didn't have any new policies or stand out concerns to report. He was particularly interested by a presentation focused on the impact of neonicotinoids on wildlife, specifically the local deer population.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Committees and Appointments – The Board discussed who was currently on each committee. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Hansen, to approve the committees and appoints as they stand. Motion passed by voice vote.
    - Personnel – Melby & Hagen
    - Budget & Planning – Hagen & Melby
    - SE Joint Powers – Ihlenefld
    - CRWJPB – Hansen
    - Zumbro 1W1P - Hansen

NEW BUSINESS:

2. Annual Approvals and Designations – The Board reviewed the current designations and made no changes. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Hansen, to approve the designations as listed below. Motion carried by voice vote.
    - Primary Financial Institution – United Prairie Bank
    - Official Newspaper – Steele County Times
    - Official Radio Station – KOWZ
    - Authorized Grant Signer – Eric Gulbransen

3. Dues & Contribution – Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Ditlevson, to approve the dues and contributions as listed below. Motion carried by voice vote.
    - MASWCD - $7,654.59
    - CRWJPB - $3,750.00
    - Envirothon – $175.00

4. Soil Health Winter Workshop – February 17 – Torey's Restaurant, 8:30am – 2:00pm – The Board was reminded of the upcoming event and to register prior to the deadline.

5. Steele-Waseca Agreement for Administrative Services – Eric Gulbransen, Adrienne Gransee and the personnel committee met with Mark Schaetzke and two of the Waseca SWCD board members. They discussed the scope of the temporary position and the basic duties that would be provided. They also discussed the hours and billing rate. This information was all presented to the Board. Motion was made by Ditlevson, seconded by Hansen, to approve the agreement. Motion carried by voice vote.

6. CRP Incentive Payment - $500 – Ian Pringle presented the final CRP incentive contract for payment approval. Motion was made by Ditlevson, seconded by Ihlenfeld, to approve the payment. Motion carried by voice vote.

7. 2025 Audit – Peterson LTD - $6,150 – Gransee presented the bid for the 2025 audit. There was a short discussion about if the Board wanted to reach out for other bids, and decided that they have been happy with Peterson's performance. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Ditlevson, to approve signing with Peterson for the 2025 audit. Motion passed by voice vote.

8. Other – Handbook Training – Adrienne Gransee requested approval to register for a webinar regarding updating and maintaining personnel policy handbooks. The District handbook has been periodically updated but has not had a complete review in some time. Motion was made by Ditlevson, seconded by Hansen, to approve the cost of the webinar. Motion carried by voice vote.

Public Comment

Roger Wacek provided a written summary of his talking point which was included in the meeting packet. He brought up contract feeding for livestock production which started a discussion about both the pros and cons of the practice.

Agency Reports

Leanne Smeby and Jim Smith gave the Board an update from NRCS. The deadlines for both EQIP and CSP applications are approaching. Smeby stated that she has been working on eligibility and planning for potential contracts and that 25 payments have been approved. She also spoke about the new temporary team lead that they will be working with for the next 120 days. Smith spoke about the regenerative agriculture program and how they are anticipating it will function.

Staff Reports

Eric Gulbransen gave an update on JD7, he has the sprayer lined up so that work can move forward. He is continuing to work on the WCA violations that have been identified. He also reported on the possibility of have a couple of new grants available in the future, one being a $9 million grant that would be divided through the entire SE area.

Adam Arndt gave the Board an update on the upcoming soil health workshop where he will be the moderator. He has also been working on completing the technical requirements for eLink reporting.

Ian Pringle has been focused on tree sales in addition to his time spent on RCPP contracts and assisting Gulbransen with WCA.

Adrienne Gransee is nearly finished with eLink reporting and has been working on the year end financial adjustments. She has also been finalizing the last few details for the Conservation display at the Steele County Historical Society. She also had the first meeting with the statewide admin training planning committee.

Al Krause gave an update from the soil health winter meeting that he attended. He reported that the Rice Creek project is getting a lot of attention both locally and at a state level. Krause gave an update on the farmer trial group that he has been working with as well as on the bus tour to the strip till conference in Illinois that is being planned.

Motion to Adjourn: Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Ihlenfeld, adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Adrienne Gransee

Adrienne Gransee,
Administrative Assistant

January Bills

Cedardale Development Co.	**January Rent**		**$836.64**
Peterson Co. LTD	**2025 Audit**		**$5,950.00**
Tri-M Graphics	**Mailing Services**		**$261.76**
Assoc. of MN Counties	**Drainage Conference**		**$325.00**
MCIT	**2026 Coverage**		**$7,145.00**
Chad Billat	**Easement Services**		**$1,364.00**
Elan	**Gas**	**$88.42**	
	Hotel Rooms	**$1,632.56**	
	QuickBooks Payroll	**$30.07**	
	Office Supplies	**$164.73**	
	Phone	**$89.68**	**$2,005.46**
		Total	**$17,887.86**