



STEELE COUNTY
Soil and Water Conservation District

235 Cedardale Drive SE
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 Mark Ditlevson at 7:00 PM on Wednesday April 12, 2023 at the Steele County SWCD Office, 235 Cedardale Drive SE, Owatonna MN, 55060.

<u>SWCD Supervisors Present:</u>	<u>SWCD Staff Present:</u>	<u>Others Present:</u>	<u>Absent:</u>
Mark Ihlenfeld, Treasurer	Eric Gulbransen	Dave Copeland, BWSR	
Dan Hansen, PR&I	Adam Arndt	James Brady, County Commissioner	
Dave Melby, Secretary	Adrienne Gransee	Rick Gnemi, County Commissioner	
Mike Klecker, Vice Chair		Jennifer Tonko, Clean River Partners	
Mark Ditlevson, Chairman			

The April agenda was reviewed, no changes were made.

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

The March Treasurer’s Report was read by Ihlenfeld. Motion was made by Melby, seconded by Hansen, to approve the March Treasurer’s Report. Motion was carried by voice vote.

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

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Meeting Reports – Supervisor Training – Rochester MN – Mark Ditlevson, Mike Klecker, Dan Hansen and Dave Melby attended this training provided by BWSR. They all reported that the meeting was very informative and well worth attending for new Supervisors and those who have served for a while already. They reported that they were impressed by the dedication and passion displayed by the new Supervisors who attended the training.

Windmill Question & Answer – Dave Melby attended a Q & A session on March 29 for the windmills that are planned to be constructed in Dodge and Steele counties. There are a total of 79 windmills planned with 12 of those being in Steele county. Melby reported that they have a 35 year lifespan, with planned maintenance and part replacement during that time. The company is contracted with Great River Energy, a local energy supplier.

Owatonna Public Works – March 30 – Dave Melby attended this meeting to discuss concerns about the construction of the new roundabout. The primary concern that was discussed were the new culverts and how the change in water flow would affect the neighboring land owners. Also the water that is flowing under the road is designated as public waters so a DNR permit is needed before work can begin. It is scheduled to start June 1, 2023.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Rice County Stream Protection – Mark Ditlevson attended this meeting regarding the ongoing project to protect Rice county’s trout stream. Ditlevson reported good attendance and informational speakers. He reported that the efforts made to protect the stream have produced noticeable reductions in the nitrate levels in the stream.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Clean River Partnership – Jennifer Tonko – Tonko introduced herself and informed the Board that she is the new Director of the Clean River Partners, formerly the Clean River Watershed Partnership. She is attending the meetings of the other local LUGs to introduce herself and become more familiar with what they are working toward and any projects that they may have coming up in the future.
2. 4H Award Sponsorship – Gulbransen presented the information for the annual 4H Award Sponsorship. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Melby, to sponsor an award in the amount of \$25 for the Steele County 4H. Motion was carried by voice vote.
3. Tree Week Assistance – 3-4 additional people and meals – Adam Arndt requested that he be allowed to bring in 3-4 people at \$15 per hour to assist with tree unloading and preparations for pick up the week of May 1st. He also requested to be able to provide lunch on those days for the people assisting. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Ihlenfeld, to approve Arndt’s request. Motion carried by voice vote.
4. United Prairie Securities Change – Adrienne Gransee presented information about the InfraFi Network. This network allows government agencies and non-profit organizations to maintain coverage for their deposits over the \$500,000 Federal limit. Joining this network also allows the bank to free up some of their collateral that is currently being used to secure our funds. Motion was made by Melby, seconded by Klecker, to approve joining this network. Motion carried by voice vote.
5. United Prairie CD and Companion Savings Accounts – Adrienne Gransee presented the information for the current CD rates and how the companion savings account works. She presented the rate and forfeiture amount for the current CD that the District holds. Gransee also presented the current dollar amount for the Compensated Absences. There was discussion about keeping at least that amount in the CD to ensure it would be available in the event that it was needed. A motion was made by Klecker, seconded by Melby, to close the current CD, use those funds plus additional from checking to open a new CD for \$30,000, and to match that amount in the companion savings account. When Ditlevson asked if there was any more discussion it the question of if the companion savings could be funded higher than the CD was brought up as well as if the interest rate on the savings account was a fixed or variable rate. The discussion did not lead to a new motion so the vote was taken on the motion previously made by Melby. Motion carried by voice vote.
6. MN Soil Health Coalition Membership - \$25 annually – Eric Gulbransen presented the information about the MN Soil Health Coalition Membership. Members get free attendance to soil health events, access to the monthly newsletter, updates on events and field days throughout the sate as well as access to mentors, specialists and the Healthy Soils online forum. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Hansen, to pay the annual membership. Motion carried by voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS:

7. Other – Envirothon Update – Gransee gave the Board an update on the Envirothon event being held at the Byron Sportsman and Conservation Club on May 3. There are now 12 senior and 5 junior teams registered; a total of 89 students participating. There will be 2 sets of judges for the oral presentations done by the senior teams. Two of the Steele Board members, Dan Hansen and Dave Melby, have volunteered to be judges again.

Board meeting time – Dave Melby began a discussion regarding the start time for the Board meetings. He is in favor of maintaining the 5pm start time year round. There was discussion about the 7pm start time interfering with schedules and keeping staff at the office beyond what is necessary. Motion was made by Klecker, seconded by Hansen, to change the meeting time to 5pm year round. Motion passed with 4 votes yay, Ihlenfeld voting nay.

Agency Reports

Dave Copeland reported on the Supervisor Training stating that there were 15 supervisors in attendance and he also was impressed by the passion and dedication of the new board members. Copeland also spoke about the new LCCMR grant which is going to include incentive payments for new or re-enrolled Continuous CRP in the priority areas, including the Cannon River watershed. He also gave the Board a brief review of what he found when he did the Cost Share contract review with the staff. There were some minor changes that he would like to see in the future but overall he was pleased with how the staff is completing the work.

James Brady gave the Board an update about how the ARPA funds that the County received are being used and an update on the County buildings that are going to be updated.

Rick Gnemi informed the Board about the jail remodel project that is in the works. The plan is to move the Sheriff offices there to better use the available space.

Staff Reports

Adam Arndt provided an update about the Soil Health team. He also talked about the Women’s Day event that he attended and let the Board know about the 4H Agronomy night that will be taking place on May23rd.

Eric Gulbransen reported on the Area 7 Employee meeting that the staff attended. The meeting included a tour of Prairie Moon Nursery.

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

Respectfully Submitted by,



Adrienne Gransee,
Administrative Assistant

April Bills

Cedardale Dev. Co	April Rent		\$716.40
Spectrum	Internet		\$64.99
Cedardale Dev. Co	Garage		\$600.00
Elan	Legislative Registration	700.00	
	Hotel Rooms	576.84	
	Meals	154.93	
	Gas	141.18	
	Phone	84.09	
	Matting	469.62	
	Postage	262.86	
	NACD Dues	775.00	
	Office Supplies	17.45	\$3,181.97
		Total	\$4,563.36