STEELE COUNTY
Soil and Water Conservation District

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The regular monthly meeting of the Steele County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors was called to order by Dave Melby at 5:00 PM on Wednesday April 8, 2026 at the Steele County Historical Society, 1700 Austin Rd, Owatonna MN 55060.

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

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 Ditlevson, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

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

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

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Meeting Reports – Legislative Day – March 17-18 – Mark Ihlenfeld, Dan Hansen, Dave Melby and Adam Arndt attended the MASWCD Legislative Day event on March 17 and met with legislators on March 18. They met with 4 of the legislators that represent the Steele County area. All that they spoke with seemed to understand the need to have SWCD funding restored to previous levels to maintain staff and services.

   Dan Hansen reported on the Noxious Weed meeting that he attended on March 13. He reported that the speakers did a good job. The speaker from U of M reported on changes that have been made to the noxious weed list and why they were made. Hansen reported that there were no changes to our specific area. He also reported on a new chemical that is available to contractors to combat wild parsnip.

   Hansen reported on the township meeting that he attended. The main topic of discussion was plans for ditch maintenance. They plan to execute burning and spraying for weed management. There was also discussion about the limitation of the designated nesting season, which is not applicable if the activity is being done to control noxious weeds.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Meeting reports cont. – Mark Ihlenfeld reported on the MASWCD Area Board meeting that he attended. They hare beginning to make tentative plants for the Resolution meeting. The dates are June 8, 9, 12 or 15 and it will be held in Stewartville. Ihlenfeld stated that details will be distributed once the date is finalized.

   Mark Ihlenfeld also reported on the JPB meeting that he attended. NRCS approached the TSA about partnering with them to hire a Forester who would work with both agencies. They are also offering to fund an engineering position. These would be 3 year positions with additional details still to be negotiated.

   Brad Hagen spoke about the Farm Show where he participated on the panel for a question and answer session. He stated that he liked the format and thought it worked well but was disappointed with the number of people who attended.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Tree Week Snacks and Meals – Ian Pringle updated the Board on the plan to have students assist with unloading the trees and other preparations. The staff requested approval to purchase snacks for the students and lunch food for the staff to have during pick up. Motion was made by Ditlevson, seconded by Ihlenfeld, to approve the expenditure. Motion passed by voice vote.

2. MACDE Administrative Conference – June 17-18 – Walker, MN – $100 registration plus hotel room – Adrienne Gransee presented the summary of what is going to be covered at the conference and requested approval to attend. She also requested approval to book a hotel room for the nights of June 16 and 17. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Ditlevson, to approve the requests. Motion passed by voice vote.

3. Updated Drill Rental Policy – Ian Pringle presented the proposed updates to the rental policy. The flat rate fee will be increased to $175 which covers in county delivery and the first 5 acres that are seeded. The policy will also include updated out of county drop off changes. The policy will now be that is it an additional $200 to drop it off to a location up to 5 miles out of county, $250 for locations 5-10 miles out of county, and no drop offs will be made more than 10 miles out of county. The changes are meant to ensure that staff time and wear and tear on the equipment is more appropriately accounted for in the cost. Motion was made by Ditlevson, seconded by Ihlenfeld, to approve the policy updates. Motion carried by voice vote.

4. Grassland Gala – Steele County Historical Society – April 24, 5PM – The District was offered 2 tickets to the Gala because of the participation in the annual installation. Gransee requested approval from the Board to attend this event so that there was a staff member there representing the SWCD. She would plan on adjusting her working hours a bit to accommodate the later evening and not incur any additional hours. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Ditlevson, to approve Gransee attending the event. Motion passed by voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS:

5. 80th Anniversary Banquet – Staff presented a variety of ideas for ways that the District could acknowledge the 80th Anniversary of the District. The Board wants to purse the idea of having a tour of the county and requested that staff look into the costs associated with that.

6. Call for Resolutions – Gulbransen asked the Board to let him know if they have any ideas for resolutions that they would like to have written. The resolutions need to be ready for presentation and discussion at the June meeting in Stewartville.

7. Election Registration – Gulbransen reminded the Board members that they will need to register between May 19 and June 2 if they are at the end of their term and they intend to run for reelection. Brad Hagen announced his intention to resign from the Board due to conflicts with his personal schedule. This announcement sparked a discussion about the process for appointing and if there were any local landowners who may be interested in filling the position.

8. MDA Climate Friendly Ag Practices Incentive Payment – Gulbransen reviewed the program with the Board. Contracts can be up to $10,000 and a higher incentive payment will be made to those who are Ag Water Quality certified. Contracts will be accepted until all funds are allocated rather than having an enrolment period.

9. CRP Contribution Agreement – Gulbransen reviewed the MASWCD CRP Contribution agreement that the District received. Due to this being the last year of the agreement with NRCS and funding being limited, the District was approved for approximately half of the number of plans, field visits and practice certifications that were requested.

10. Upper Cannon Watershed Flood Study – Request for Match – The District received a request to contribute to the match for the proposed watershed flood study. The Federal grant that has been received requires an additional $45,000 in match and in-kind staff hours can not be applied to the total dollar amount required. After some discussion it was decided by the Board to table the topic for the time being.

11. Other – Meeting Time Change – Moving the meeting start time earlier in the day, so that it requires less after hours staff time, was presented. There was discussion about how surrounding Districts handle their meetings, as well as both the pros and cons of an earlier start time. Feelings about the topic were mixed but the idea of moving the start time to 4pm was presented. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Hagen, to approve changing the start time to 4pm. Motion carried by voice vote.

Agency Reports

Leanna Smeby, Lezlie Sorensen and Jim Smith presented the monthly report for NRCS. Smeby reported that they have 2 EQIP pre-approvals for contracts and are working on getting things finalized. They also have 3 CSP applications, 2 for forestry and 1 for cover crops. They have begun working on the FY28 and FY29 status reviews for CRP contracts.

Shane Bugeja gave an update on RCPP, stating that there are funds left for approximately 12 grants and they anticipate that all RCPP funds will be distributed by the end of April. He reported on a couple of other grants that are accepting applications. He also gave the Board a brief overview of his history with BWSE and U of M Extension.

Staff Reports

Eric Gulbransen has been occupied with county ditch concerns, including the JD2 clean out that is going to be needed. WCA issues are ongoing. Gulbransen reported briefly on the Drainage Inspectors meeting that he attended informing the Board that it was a good experience and gave him the opportunity to learn from others who handle these issues on a regular basis.

Alan Krause has been getting the photos needed for the cover crop field project that he is involved in. He also has been working a lot on the planning of the strip-till meeting bus tour, with targeted outreach currently being a primary push. He also gave the Board an update on the nitrogen rate project paper that he wrote that has been getting attention from local and national news publications.

Adrienne Gransee has continued to assist with the Waseca administrative work but anticipates that will not last for too much longer. They are going to be conducting interviews soon and have a good selection of candidates. The planning committee for the administrative conference has also been taking up a portion of her time.

Ian Pringle gave the Board an update on the status of the tree sales and RCPP, both of which have been taking up a significant portion of his time. In addition to those he has been accompanying Jim with on his site visits.

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

Respectfully Submitted by,

Adrienne Gransee

Adrienne Gransee,
Administrative Assistant

April Bills

Cedardale Dev. Co	**April Rent**			**$836.64**
Spectrum	**Internet**			**$89.99**
Cedardale Dev. Co	**Garage**			**$600.00**
Elan	**Legislative Day Registration**		**536.15**	
	Hotel Rooms		**591.25**	
	Field Supplies		**66.98**	
	Gas		**82.71**	
	Phone		**89.66**	
	Wix Extended Email		**29.00**	
	SCFF Booth		**478.54**	**$1,874.29**
Chad Billat	**Easement Services**			**$2,852.00**
Adrienne Gransee	**Mileage 127@.725**			**$92.08**
			Total	**$6,345.00**