

**FARIBAULT COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
FARIBAULT COUNTY AG CENTER
FSA CONFERENCE ROOM
BLUE EARTH, MN 56013
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 12, 2020**

Chairman Bell called the Regular Board Meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

SUPERVISORS PRESENT:

CHAIRMAN – JEFF BELL
VICE-CHAIRMAN – RANDY FEIST
SECRETARY – NEAL MENSING
TREASURER – DAVE MATHEWS
P/R – BILL ANDERSON

SUPERVISORS ABSENT: None

STAFF & OTHERS PRESENT:

Nate Carr, Amy Huber, Aaron Janz, Shane Johnson, Nicki Miranowski, and Michele Stindtman.

I. APPROVALS

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA/ADDITIONS

Motion by Mathews to approve the Agenda with the following additions: IV.4, review/approve contract with Minnesota State University; IV.5, review/approve resolution and policy for adoption of Nationwide 457 program; and IV.6, review time-off and PTO process. Seconded by Feist. Motion carried.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Anderson to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2020 SWCD Board Meeting with correction of Anderson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mensing. Motion carried.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

Motion by Anderson to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented and to file it subject to audit. Seconded by Feist. Motion carried.

4. PAYMENT OF BILLS

Motion by Feist to pay all outstanding bills. Seconded by Mathews. Motion carried.

5. TRANSFER OF FUNDS TO PAY BILLS

Motion by Mensing to approve the Transfer of Funds in the amount of \$85,141.60 from Savings to Checking to pay the bills. Seconded by Mathews. Motion carried.

II. OLD BUSINESS

1. GRIEVANCES/OTHER – None

III. NEW BUSINESS –

1. NRCS/FSA –

Nicki thanked the Board for sponsoring the five January meetings and reported on the attendance at those meetings. She also had hand-outs on the PLC/ARC-CO Farm Program Comparison Table, ARC-IC Yield Checklist, Producer Yield Certification Tracker, and 2019 and 2020 Farm Program Decision Cheat Sheet. In addition, she mentioned there are also web-sites available to go to for decision tools. Nicki mentioned MFP payments were processed on 2/4-2/5/20. She said that Ruth has been working on about 65 CRP contracts. Lastly, she stated they are still waiting to hear on their temporary staff yet.

Aaron Janz attended the meeting in representation of NRCS. Aaron explained the NRCS staffing situation as it relates to the Faribault County office. He said there are three positions open; 1.) Supervisory Team Lead which is located in Mankato, but serves Blue Earth, Faribault, and Waseca County; 2.) Soil Conservationist/Tech (Gordy's old position); and 3.) Resource Conservationist (Josiah's old position). He said the only supervisory position would be the Supervisory Team Lead and interviews have been done for this position with hopes to have a selection made the last week in February and someone in place by the first week in April. In the interim, Aaron is serving as the acting DC and comes about one time a week. Aaron mentioned the EQIP application deadline is 3/13/20. He said he had a training today on CSP and provided a hand-out with the CSP program deadlines with workload prioritization/screening. He said the new Farm Bill policy was just released in January to move forward with programs. Lastly, he discussed program funding and how funding is decided.

2. COST-SHARE CONTRACT/VOUCHER SPREADSHEET/PROJECT LOG

Shane Johnson briefed the Board on the Cost-Share Requests.

ENCUMBERING –

Motion by Mensing to approve the Cost Share Encumbering Requests as presented for a total amount of \$68,971.50. Seconded by Mathews. Motion carried.

VOUCHER PAYMENTS –

None this month.

The complete and detailed list of Encumbering requests are attached to the official minutes and are available in the SWCD office.

PROJECT LOG - There were no updates or changes from January to the Project Log.

3. GRANT UPDATE/OTHER – Michele mentioned she applied for a grant through the Corn Growers association, but they did not receive it as the association felt there was too much in the request for staff time. She said she hoped to use those funds for monitoring at Neal's bioreactor. However, the Corn Growers association encouraged her to apply again. She did state that Gary Feyereisen also applied for a grant with the Corn Growers association and he did receive funding through his grant request. She also mentioned there is a possibility for grant funding through the Department of Health for water testing. It is a \$100,000.00 grant, but she was not sure of all the details yet and needed to check into it a little more.

Michele provided the Board with a copy of the MDM Application Budget Worksheet for the FY 2020 Multipurpose Drainage Management Grant program in the amount of \$61,600.00. She said there is a requirement to have a state cost-share policy in place to go with this and she will bring one to the board at the March meeting. Michele stated this is a three-year grant and Shane would need to contact landowners about this.

4. STAFF PROGRAM UPDATES –

Review/approve Nate Carr's JAA form – Nate Carr's Skills Matrix Worksheet for JAA was reviewed by the Board.

Motion by Feist to approve Nate Carr's JAA Skills Matrix. Seconded by Mensing. Motion carried.

Discuss/approve Cover Crop Policies – Nate reviewed the final version of the Cover Crop Cost-share policy, #601, and the difference between the old policy and the new. This was a follow-up to what he discussed at the December meeting regarding changes to the policy.

Motion by Mensing to approve the Cover Crop Cost-Share Policy, #601. Seconded by Feist. Motion carried.

Michele mentioned we now need to start approving Grant Policies.

Nate and Michele presented two more new policies for the Board to consider for approval. Policy #602, Cover Crop Demonstration Program Policy, and #602 -1, Cover Crop Incentive Policy.

Motion by Feist to approve Policy #602, Cover Crop Demonstration Program Policy, and Policy #602-1, Cover Crop Incentive Policy. Seconded by Mathews. Motion carried.

Board member Feist suggested putting up a billboard or signage with cover-crop pictures if that is possible.

Nate mentioned he will be working on a Strip-Till Policy and will bring it to a future meeting for review and approval.

Soil Health Team Meeting: Nate stated he has a Soil Health Team meeting today at 1:00 p.m. in the extension office conference room. Two more people have joined the team.

Women in Ag Conference: Amy mentioned that she and Hannah (from Martin County) are planning a Women in Ag Conference on March 9, 2020, at the Holiday Inn in Fairmont from 8:30 – 1:00. Featured speakers are Kristin Brennan from NRCS; Kate Graham, attorney from New Ulm; and Merissa Lore from the Drainage Department. They also plan to have a 2nd Women in Ag event this summer, which will take place in Faribault County.

Update on Hosting Area VI Meeting, March 31: Michele and Jeff recently attended the Area VI Chairman's meeting in New Ulm where there was discussion about the future of Area VI meetings. It was decided that there will continue to be three Area VI meetings a year, but one a year will always be in New Ulm. It was also decided that the host district will basically coordinate and put on the meeting. Michele said the meeting we are hosting on March 31st will include Andy Linder to speak as well as our Soil Health Team. Agency reports will be done toward the end of the meeting. The meeting would start around 9:30 and should be done by 1:30.

5. SUPERVISOR UPDATES -

Chairman Bell reported on his attendance at the Area VI Chairman's meeting. He said Scott Sparlin was there and is looking for a resolution or letter of endorsement in support of Water Storage. Amy added that she believed the board approved a resolution in support of this several months ago.

Motion by Anderson to send a letter of support or copy of the Water Storage Support resolution passed this past year by the Board to Scott Sparlin. Seconded by Mathews. Motion carried.

Board member Anderson said he found out there was a TSA meeting, but he didn't know about it until after the fact. Michele said she will check with the TSA to be sure they are getting that information out to him. Jeff injected that TSA was a topic of discussion at the Chairman's meeting and he reiterated that we need to be sure we are telling the TSA our needs and be sure our voice is heard with any concerns.

A list of upcoming meetings Board members could consider attending was reviewed:

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|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| February 12 | Soil Health Team, Ag Center |
| February 14 | GBERBA Exec. Mtg., Mankato |
| February 25 | I-90 Soil Health Tour, Fairmont |
| February 26 | I-90 Soil Health Tour, Albert Lea |
| March 31 | Area VI Meeting, Winnebago |
| February 19 | Bass Lake Meeting, Delavan |

Chairman Bell asked Amy to give an update on Financials/Payroll: Amy said she is implementing many new processes. She explained that the SWCD has not utilized the Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, or Employee Services/Payroll portion of the existing accounting module. Further, she explained that the District has virtually utilized the check register to record expenses and the savings register to record deposits in the accounting system thus there is limited capability to run meaningful reports because of that. Most financial and payroll related tracking has historically been done on various spreadsheets tracked by various staff. She also explained that she does not currently have access to the BWSR Grant system but has asked for permission to view it and hopes to have access to that sometime soon. She explained that it will take several months to set up and fully utilize these various modules, but in a long run, this should benefit the SWCD in having meaningful financials and reports that all come from the accounting system. This should also reduce errors and omissions that can potentially happen by using various tracking methods that are not linked to the accounting system.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

1. Consider/Approve hiring Dr. Jim Mulder as a 3rd Party Consultant to assist in Office Development

Board Chairman Bell and Vice Chairman Feist met with two County Commissioners and Lexi from Central Services to further discuss the office situation and how best to proceed to resolution. Chairman Bell stated he had contacted Dr. Mulder to get some information about consulting. He said he would charge \$40.00/hour plus mileage. His process is to gather some information, interview everyone, including the supervisors, and come back with a report basically. The County Commissioners agreed on this process and would split the cost with the SWCD. Vice Chairman Feist mentioned he also asked Lexi from the County Central Services if she would be interested in being the SWCD Human Resources person, but she didn't really say yes or no. Currently Michele serves as Human Resources for the SWCD.

2. Review/Approve the Subcontract with the County

The Program Administrator mentioned the Subcontract is getting close but is not quite complete. She said she would like to have MCIT meet with the Board about this.

3. Review/Approve the Contract for Services with the County prepared by Legal Counsel

The Program Administrator said this is not quite ready to go. She would like to discuss Septics with MCIT yet before going any further. Michele said she saw Darren, County Auditor, at the Township meeting and told him the Contract for Services is on hold for 2-3 months yet.

4. Review/Approve the Contract with Minnesota State University

The Program Administrator has been in contact with Minnesota State University and asked them to develop a framework and Lake Management Plan for Bass Lake for an amount not to exceed \$4000.00.

Motion by Mensing to approve the Contract with Minnesota State University to develop a framework and Lake Management Plan for Bass Lake. Seconded by Mathews. Motion carried.

6. Review/Approve the Resolution & Policy for Adoption of the Nationwide 457 Program

Amy explained that when the SWCD took on their own payroll, some employees had existing deferred compensation plans and Nationwide is one of the vendors that offers the deferred compensation plans. For those employees to continue vesting in those plans, the SWCD needs to pass a resolution adopting the Nationwide program in order to continue to offer that plan to the employees. She mentioned that Nationwide is one of three companies the employees have been utilizing for Deferred Compensation benefits. Once Nationwide accepts the resolution and the new employer paperwork is complete, all employees and supervisors are eligible to participate in this voluntary deferred compensation deduction.

Member Feist introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption:

RESOLUTION 01-20 FOR ADOPTION OF THE NATIONWIDE 457 PROGRAM

WHEREAS, Faribault County Soil & Water Conservation District (“Employer”) desires to establish an eligible deferred compensation plan to be made available to all eligible employees and elected officials (collectively, “Eligible Employees”) pursuant to Section 457 of the Internal Revenue Code (“Code”); and

WHEREAS, Nationwide Retirement Solutions, Inc., a Delaware corporation and an affiliate and subsidiary of Nationwide Financial Services, Inc. (“NRS”) offers an eligible deferred compensation program pursuant to Code Section 457 (the “457 Program”) that allows Employer to offer a Code Section 457 eligible deferred compensation plan to Eligible Employees; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, Employer hereby adopts the documents necessary to implement the 457 Program thereby establishing the Faribault County Soil & Water District Deferred Compensation Plan for the participation of Eligible Employees; and,

FURTHER RESOLVED, Employer selects NRS to administer the 457 Program; and,

FURTHER RESOLVED, Employer authorizes and directs its representatives to take the actions necessary to implement these resolutions.

The motion for the foregoing resolution was duly seconded by Mensing. Upon vote taken thereon, the following voted in favor thereof:

Mathews, Feist, Anderson, and Mensing.

Those voting against: none

Whereupon said resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

6. Review Time-off/PTO process

Michele and Amy went through the current process in place for staff to request PTO time and had examples of processed PTO slips for the board to see. It was explained that whether staff are requesting 15 minutes or 1 week off, they must complete a PTO request slip. After approval, it is entered on the electronic calendar and also on another office calendar in addition to the employee's time-sheet. The slips are reconciled with the time-sheet usually monthly. Amy mentioned she is checking into other means of tracking leave within the existing accounting system to see if that would be beneficial or helpful in tracking leave.

7. March Board Meeting

The next regular Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 11, 2020, at 8:30 a.m. in the Ag Center Conference room. It was discussed and decided that the regular Board meetings have gotten very lengthy and there is need for more work sessions from time to time. After further discussion, it was decided that the Board would hold another work session on March 4th. Chairman Bell told Amy to prepare the Agenda and send out the reminder to the Board ahead of the meeting. Michele said she would contact MCIT to see if they could come meet with the Board on March 4th or be available via telephone conference.

V. MEETINGS/EVENTS/TRAININGS FOR STAFF -

Motion by Feist to approve attendance to the following:

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|-------------|---|
| February 7 | Area VI Chairman Meeting, New Ulm - Michele |
| February 11 | Township Meeting, Blue Earth - Michele |
| February 12 | Soil Health Team Meeting, Ag Center Ext. Office Conf. Rm - Nate |
| February 13 | Grass W/W Program Training, Owatonna – Shane/Nate |
| February 25 | MACDE Mtg., St. Cloud - Michele |
| February 25 | I-90 Soil Health Tour, Fairmont - Nate |
| February 26 | I-90 Soil Health Tour, Albert Lea - Nate |
| February 26 | GBERBA Technical Meeting, Mankato – Michele |
| March 2 | SSTS Training, Belle Plaine – Chad |
| March 9 | Area VI Training Team, Nicollet – Shane |
| March 9 | Women in Ag Conference, Fairmont - Amy |
| March 10 | Huntley Sewer Dist. Mtg., Winnebago – Chad |
| March 31 | Area VI Meeting (Hosting), Winnebago – Amy, Michele |

Seconded by Mathews. Motion carried.

VI. ADJOURNMENT –

Motion by Anderson to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mathews. Motion carried.

Chairman Bell adjourned the meeting at 12:32 p.m.