



TITLE: PROJECT # 17
LANDOWNER MEETING

DATE: MARCH 25, 2024

Attendance: Sand Hill River Watershed District Board Managers: Don Andringa, Clayton Bartz, and Shawn Brekke. April Swenby - Sand Hill River Watershed District Administrator, Zach Herrmann – District Engineer at Houston Engineering. Landowners: Elliott Solheim, Charles Perry, Maynard Johnson, Margarette Gallager, Jeff Voeller, Ted Stoa, Andrew Johnstad, Todd Evenson, and Connie Korynta.

The meeting began with introductions of the Sand Hill River Watershed District Board managers, stating that there was a quorum of board managers present.

A presentation was given to those in attendance highlighting the following:

- Project #17 history/locations
- Drainage authority responsibility for maintenance
- Planned projects on the system in the works using grant funding
- Inspection reports of sedimentation in the ditch channel
- Options for a cleanout along Polk County Road 41
 - Option 1: Continue to monitor
 - Option 2: Phased approach
 - Option 3: Large Repair (do in one year)
 - Option 4: Combination of Option 2 & 3
- District finances (The district has varied their levy, and has currently levied \$50,000 for 2024 for maintenance)

An example was used, with a parcel adjacent to the ditch. This particular parcel was labeled as \$150 per acre/benefit rate or \$1.23 per acre. When the district levies \$50,000, that parcel would pay \$196.71 per quarter/year. Swenby stated that the managers have also slowly increased the levy to allow for inflation and for maintenance, and historically have attempted to limit large increases and decreases in the levy between each year. Regardless of what is chosen, Swenby didn't foresee the levy decreasing from \$50,000 and will likely increase slightly per year to allow for the elevated costs and to build the maintenance fund. The annual levy is set annually at the November board meeting and fluctuates according to the needs of the system, as determined by the annual inspections each year.

Landowners were given opportunity to ask questions. Questions were asked regarding interest paid/received on ditch funds, leverage for grants, timeframes, and if costs may be more affordable during the projected dry year.

The consensus in the room, was that it may be cheaper for construction to do the entire clean out along Polk County Road 41 at one time vs. a phased approach and it may be more enticing for contractors, making that a preferred method. However, landowners were not in support of having a large levy placed on their property taxes and payable in one year. Swenby stated that the watershed district would pay for the costs from their reserve and the system would continue to be levied annually, to reimburse what the watershed district has paid for the maintenance (plus interest). It was explained that should a large repair take place all in one year, the district does not intend to levy that full amount to property taxes in one year, and will span it out over several years. There would likely not be a bond needed for this amount, and the district could cover the cost ensued, allowing the benefit area to take a reasonable amount of time to build the fund back up out of the red. Landowners in attendance agreed that it may be best to do the cleanout in one year, if the district has the funds to cover the costs and slowly allow the landowners to reimburse the district.

Landowners were given a questionnaire, asking for input. They were asked to return the questionnaire by mid April 2024.

Swenby encouraged all in attendance to visit the district web-site at www.sandhillwatershed.org (Projects >Ditches > Project 17) to learn more about the decision that the district will make. The recording from the meeting will be found online, along with meeting notes. She also encouraged all to read the manager minutes, where all discussions are publicly posted.