



TITLE: REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

DATE: DECEMBER 8, 2025

1. ATTENDANCE:

Vice-Chairman Don Andringa called the December 8, 2025, meeting to order at 8:00 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Clayton Bartz, Craig Engelstad, and Shawn Brekke. Managers absent: Chairman Stuart Christian. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator and Donna Bjerk – Administrative Assistant. Others in attendance included Todd Peterson – Manager Appoint and Zach Herrmann, Houston Engineering.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the agenda, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

3. MINUTES:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve minutes for the regular board of managers meeting on November 6, 2025, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Swenby provided a revised Treasurer's Report for October 2025. The new report shows interest accrued on the Money Market account between October 19 and October 31. During this time Bremer transitioned to Old National Bank. The Treasurer's report approved at the November board meeting only included interest accrued under Bremer Bank; therefore, Swenby provided a revised report for approval.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve the revised October treasurer's report as presented, Seconded by Manger Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve the November treasurer's report as presented, Seconded by Manger Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

The managers reviewed their expense reports and reported on activities for the month. The following bills were reviewed.

April J. Swenby	817.07
City of Fertile	133.63
CMGB Land	570.25
EcoLab	60.88
First Community Credit Union	1,556.61
Garden Valley Telephone Company	1,654.24
Gladen Construction, Inc.	122,311.00
H2Over Viewers	32,201.73
Houston Engineering	42,904.50
Jason Benbo	500.00
Mill Street Catering	513.78
Otter Tail Power Company	176.13
Polk County Recorder	46.00
Rinke-Noonan	12,420.00

Rosebud Township	2,070.00
Schmitz Builders, Inc.	34,235.00
Sletten Township	805.00
Wild Rice Electric	122.27
	<u>253,098.09</u>

An additional bill from Rinke-Noonan for November legal services was presented for \$812.50.

In addition the above listed bills, Swenby provided an invoice from Schmitz Builders for the building project. Swenby said that she would like to work with the contractor to learn more about the billing and what it entails. She has asked for a listing of the sales tax deductions and any change orders. Swenby will work with the contractor on the amount submitted before she pays the billing.

Manager Engelstad asked for a listing of all invoices paid to date for the building project, the furniture expenditures for the board room, and HVAC improvements to the existing building.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve and pay the bills to be paid with a total of \$253,910.59. Swenby will work with Schmitz Builders on the billing submitted for the building project, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

As in prior years, Swenby suggested the following funds be “zeroed out” to prepare for the new year, because they are accumulative funds and are better represented as an annual total on the Treasurer’s Report, for manager review benefit:

- Web-site, Permits DB and Mapping
- Beaver Bounty Program
- Technical Engineering and Legal
- Agency Support
- Education
- LiDAR
- Monitoring

As a reminder, because the auditor suggests that these entries be made with a current year date, the December Treasurer’s report that will be prepared for the January 2026 meeting will have two fund balance reports to show the year end totals, and another one that shows them with a zero balance so that managers can see the final year end totals for those categories.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve the suggested journal entries for 2025, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

5. DITCH LEVY RESOLUTION (REVISED):

2026 Ditch Levies: The Board was presented with information regarding drainage system costs and assessments necessary to pay drainage system costs related to Sand Hill River Watershed Ditches, ***County Ditch # 9, County Ditch # 119, #32 Ditch #80, Sand Hill Ditch, #03 Liberty-Onstad, #05 Ditch 17-2, #11 Beltrami Flood Control, #12 County Ditches 98 &148, #13 Reis-Scandia, #17 Polk County #41, #20 Ditch # 46, #24 Ditch 77 and 166 (Nielsville)***. The Board gave instruction to its staff to take the actions necessary to certify assessments for drainage system costs. Pursuant to the Board’s instruction, staff prepared a draft assessment order for the Board’s consideration. Based on the information provided, Manager Brekke moved adoption of the following resolution:

WHEREAS, on November 6, 2025, the Board adopted Resolution DA 2025-A; and

WHEREAS, Resolution DA 2025-A included an assessment certification for Watershed Project 27

(Union Lake Pumping) that was improper as Project 27 is not a public drainage system under Statutes Chapter 103E; and

WHEREAS, this Resolution 2025-B corrects the error by removing referenced to Project 27 so that assessments to that project may be properly certified under Statutes Chapter 103D; and

WHEREAS, section 103E.725 provides all fees and costs incurred relating to a drainage system, including repairs, inspections, engineering, viewing, and publications, are costs of the drainage system and must be assessed against the property and entities benefited; and

WHEREAS, the Board, pursuant to procedures under the drainage code, Statutes Chapter 103E, has performed work and incurred costs on Sand Hill River Watershed District Ditches and Drainage Projects: **County Ditch # 9, County Ditch # 119, #32 Ditch #80, Sand Hill Ditch, #03 Liberty-Onstad, #05 Ditch 17-2, #11 Beltrami Flood Control, #12 County Ditches 98 &148, #13 Reis-Scandia, #17 Polk County #41, #20 Ditch # 46, #24 Ditch 77 and 166 (Nielsville).**

WHEREAS, Statutes section 103E.655 requires the costs for drainage project proceedings and construction to be paid from the drainage system account by drawing on the account. Statutes section 103E.645 requires the payment of fees and expenses; and

WHEREAS, the drainage system accounts Sand Hill River Watershed District Ditches and Drainage Projects: **County Ditch # 9, County Ditch # 119, #32 Ditch #80, Sand Hill Ditch, #03 Liberty-Onstad, #05 Ditch 17-2, #11 Beltrami Flood Control, #12 County Ditches 98 &148, #13 Reis-Scandia, #17 Polk County #41, #20 Ditch # 46, #24 Ditch 77 and 166 (Nielsville)** do not contain sufficient funds to pay current costs; and

WHEREAS, Statutes section 103E.655 provides that if money is not available in the drainage system account to pay current costs, the board may, by unanimous resolution, transfer funds from any other drainage system account under its jurisdiction or from the its general revenue fund to the drainage system account. If the board transfers money from another account or fund to a drainage system account, the money plus interest must be reimbursed from the proceeds of the drainage system that received the transfer. The interest must be computed for the time the money is actually needed at the same rate per year charged on drainage liens and assessments; and

WHEREAS, Statutes section 103E.755 allows the Board to establish a repair fund, surplus, in the drainage system accounts in order to have funds available for future actions and costs on the drainage systems; and

WHEREAS, assessments to repay drainage system costs may be paid in annual installments not to exceed 20 years at a rate of interest not to exceed the rate determined by the state court administrator for judgments under section 549.09 (currently 4% maximum).

THEREFORE, the Board of Managers of the Sand Hill River Watershed District, Drainage Authority for Sand Hill River Watershed District Ditches and Drainage Projects: **County Ditch # 9, County Ditch # 119, #32 Ditch #80, Sand Hill Ditch, #03 Liberty-Onstad, #05 Ditch 17-2, #11 Beltrami Flood Control, #12 County Ditches 98 &148, #13 Reis-Scandia, #17 Polk County #41, #20 Ditch # 46, #24 Ditch 77 and 166 (Nielsville)** adopts the following drainage system assessments, and directs certification thereof to the Polk County and Norman Auditor for collection:

County Ditch # 9	\$25,000
County Ditch # 119	\$10,000
Total #32 - Ditch #80	\$9,000
SH DITCH Sand Hill Ditch	\$53,000
#03 Liberty-Onstad	\$7,000
#05 Ditch 17-2	\$13,000
#11 Beltrami Flood Control	\$5,000
#12 County Ditches 98 &148	\$6,000
#13 Reis-Scandia	\$5,000
#17 Polk County #41	\$75000
#20 Ditch # 46	\$7,500
#24 Ditch 77 and 166	\$18,000

This resolution shall serve as the Board's assessment order as required by Minnesota statutes chapter 103E; and

FURTHER, the Board of Managers of the Sand Hill River Watershed District authorizes inter-funds loans from (account of the WD) to the drainage system accounts for Sand Hill River Watershed District ditches and drainage projects **County Ditch # 9, County Ditch # 119, #32 Ditch #80, Sand Hill Ditch, #03 Liberty-Onstad, #05 Ditch 17-2, #11 Beltrami Flood Control, #12 County Ditches 98 &148, #13 Reis-Scandia, #17 Polk County #41, #20 Ditch # 46, #24 Ditch 77 and 166 (Nielsville)** to cover deficiencies in the accounts in fiscal year 2026.

Seconded by Manager Engelstad. After discussion, the President called the question. The question was on the adoption of the foregoing resolution.

A roll call vote was held.

	Yea	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Christian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Andringa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brekke	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bartz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engelstad	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Upon vote, the President declared the Resolution DA 2025-B.

Project #27: The Board was presented with information regarding project account balances, costs and assessments necessary to pay project costs related to Sand Hill River Watershed Project 27: Union Lake Pumping. The Board gave instruction to its staff to take the actions necessary to certify assessments for Project 27 costs incurred since initiation and completion of proceedings to redetermine project benefits. Pursuant to the Board's instruction, staff prepared a draft assessment order for the Board's consideration. Based on the information provided, Manager Brekke moved adoption of the following resolution:

WHEREAS, by findings and an order dated November 7, 2024, the Board reopened proceedings related to Project 27 for the purpose of considering redetermined benefits for the Project; and

WHEREAS, by findings and an order dated October 2, 2025, the Board adopted a new and updated benefits roll for Project 27; and

WHEREAS, statues chapter 103D provides that the costs of watershed projects, inspection, maintenance and other activities related to watershed project be paid from the funds and revenue sources established and authorized for such projects; and

WHEREAS, in the case of Project 27, costs are paid by assessment to the properties and entities benefited; and

WHEREAS, the Board, pursuant to procedures under the watershed law, Statutes Chapter 103D, has performed work and incurred costs on Sand Hill River Watershed District Project 27; and

WHEREAS, the project account for Project 27 does not contain sufficient funds to pay current costs; and

WHEREAS, if money is not available in the project account to pay current costs, the board may, by unanimous resolution, transfer funds from any other account under its jurisdiction or from the its general revenue fund to the project account. If the board transfers money from another account or fund to a project account, the money plus interest must be reimbursed from the proceeds of the project that received the transfer. The interest must be computed for the time the money is actually needed at the same rate per year charged on drainage liens and assessments; and

WHEREAS, Statutes section 103D.631 allows the Board to establish a maintenance fund, surplus, in the project accounts in order to have funds available for future actions and costs on the project; and

WHEREAS, assessments to repay project costs may be paid in annual installments not to exceed 20 years at a rate of interest not to exceed the rate determined by the state court administrator for judgments under section 549.09.

THEREFORE, the Board of Managers of the Sand Hill River Watershed District, responsible government unit for Sand Hill River Watershed District Project 27 adopts the following project assessments, and directs certification thereof to the appropriate County Auditor for collection:

Project 27: Union Lake Pumping \$25,000

This resolution shall serve as the Board's assessment order as required by Minnesota statutes chapter 103D; and

FURTHER, the Board of Managers of the Sand Hill River Watershed District authorizes inter-funds loans to the project account for Sand Hill River Watershed District Project 27 to cover deficiencies, in any, in the account in fiscal year 2026.

Seconded by Manager Bartz. After discussion, the President called the question.

The question was on the adoption of the foregoing resolution. A roll call vote was held.

	Yea	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Christian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Andringa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brekke	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bartz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engelstad	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Upon vote, the President declared the Resolution 2025-C.

5 ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

Buffer Draft Procedures: For a couple of months Administrators and Mn Watershed's have been meeting with BWSR who is proposing new draft procedures to address non-compliance of buffer enforcement. BWSR (Board of Soil and Water Resources) will require all enforcement authorities to "reapply" for jurisdiction by providing BWSR with notice and evidence of updated rule/ordinance that is compliant with new requirements and updated statutory language. Swenby has attended all of these meetings and has provided feedback to Mn Watershed's for official comments. John Kolb has also attended the meetings she has attended. Swenby would expect the district to be updating our rules and regulations in 2026 to comply. Swenby provided the managers with a link with more information.

Maintenance Items: Swenby reported that she and Herrmann decided to complete the cleaning of Ditch #119 next year to allow for more time. Similarly, the boundary revisions is on the schedule next year to allow more time to coordinate with MnDOT to parallel our portion with their portion of the project. Project # 20 has a repair that will be added during the cleaning of Ditch # 119 and will be completed next year as well. The overflows and the Ulseth side inlet repair were on the schedule to be completed this fall by Johnson.

SH Ditch/FEMA: FEMA has asked for a more detailed mitigation plan than what was submitted to FEMA November 3. Swenby and Herrmann met on November 17 to move through this process. Herrmann has said that he will have this completed by January so that FEMA can send it through their environmental review process. Meanwhile, Swenby has signed the scope document that obligates the funds for returning it back to pre-disaster. The deadline for expending these funds is December 2026.

Project #27: There has been no new information from MN Legislators other than e-mails back and forth sharing resources of funding opportunities. Swenby met with the Red River Basin Coordinator (MnDNR) to talk about why the FMH application was rejected, and noted that in the RRB the two projects selected were on MnDNR land. Swenby asked the Coordinator to provide more information, like a statewide report of what projects were selected and what percentages of the approved dollars were on state owned land.

Building Project: Swenby provided a list of about 15 punch list items that remain for the project to be deemed complete.

District Signage: Swenby provided additional options for shared signage from Premier Signs. With that she provided costs quotes from a few months ago about stand alone signs so that managers could compare the cost difference.

Swenby provided information for managers to read on their own regarding the district open house and 50th Anniversary celebration, Corp of Engineer's 1135 funding, Sand Hill Advisory Committee, FDRWG meeting, 1W1P meetings, and progress reports for the redetermination of benefits.

6. ENGINEER'S REPORT

Project #5 Outlet Stabilization: Herrmann continues to work on developing a preliminary plan and cost estimate to reduce erosion along the outlet of the Project No. 5. Houston Engineering has began collecting field data necessary for a concept design.

Project Team: Herrmann provided a summary of the project team meeting held on November 25, 2025. As directed by the Board of Managers, the Project Team has reprioritized their focus to address erosion along the Sand Hill Ditch east of MN Highway 9. The primary concerns of Project Team members west of MN Highway 9 are the spring flood events, particularly when snow blocks the Sand Hill Ditch. This snow blockage limits the channel's capacity, leading to ice flows, ice jams at bridges, and ultimately, overland flooding in western Reis, Scandia, and Hubbard Townships.

To aid in the discussion with the Project Team, Herrmann completed hydraulic modeling to analyze flooding under snow-plugged conditions. The hydraulic model was adjusted to simulate extremely restrictive flow conditions west of MN Highway 9 and unplugged conditions east of MN Highway 9. This conservative assumption suggests results could represent a "worse than average" scenario, as snow plug conditions are unlikely to start right at MN Highway 9.

The modeling evaluates a 10-year, 4-day hydrologic scenario, which has previously closely reflected recent historic floods. Herrmann presented the findings to the Board, comparing results for the existing channel (plugged and unplugged) and the proposed two-stage channel east of MN Highway 9 (plugged).

At County Road 213 (2 miles east of MN Highway 9), there was no impact on flow rates between plugged and unplugged existing conditions, serving as a model accuracy check. Given its upstream location, snow plugging west of MN Highway 9 does not influence flow rates at County Road 213. When compared to the two-stage channel alternative, negligible changes were observed due to the lack of additional storage provided by the two-stage channel relative to the flood volume flowing in the Sand Hill Ditch.

Further downstream at the Texas Crossing (2 miles west of MN Highway 9), landowners identified problem spots for overland flooding and breakout flows. The modeling indicated reduced flow rates when the channel is plugged with snow, both with and without the two-stage channel east of MN Highway 9. Near the Texas Crossing, flood elevations would increase by approximately 1.4' due to snow plugging, regardless of the two-stage channel. The scenario with 1,500 acre-feet of flood storage resulted in a 0.1' reduction compared to no flood storage. Herrmann explained that the benefits of flood storage diminish in this location due to the horizontal spread of floodwater.

At the outlet of the east-west portion of the Sand Hill Ditch, snow plugging significantly reduces peak flow rates by creating unwanted flood storage. Water surface elevations remain the same under all conditions, with snow plugging causing higher water surface elevations for longer due to reduced flow rates. The two-stage channel east of MN Highway 9 and 1,500 acre-feet of flood storage have no impact at this location due to the expanding watershed and significant floodplain storage during snow-plugged conditions.

While the results indicate that flooding would not change due to the two-stage channel east of MN Highway 9, Herrmann emphasized that hydraulic modeling is based on consistent assumptions to assess impacts. Despite conservative assumptions, there is a level of unpredictability during a spring flood event, with factors like ice jams and washouts not fully accounted for in the model.

The Project Team will reconvene in January 2026 to consider a consensus vote on a recommended alternative to present to the Board at the February meeting. The recommended alternative will be a concept vetted by the Project Team for continued development, not final plans, specifications, or permits. If the Board accepts the recommendation, the next logical steps would be to develop a funding package before continuing technical work.

7. ACTION ITEMS.

Water Line: The City of Fertile charges the district for two meters. One meter is for the water line in the existing building and one meter is for the new addition. To merge the two meters into one – HN Plumbing has provided a quote \$2,490.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to accept the quote from HN Plumbing and merge the two meters, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

Personnel Manual Revisions: The Personnel Committee met November 19. The committee met with the attorney for all revisions. Many revisions were made relative to the new Minnesota Paid Family Leave requirement. Other language revisions were made as recommended by the attorney. Swenby provided the recommended revisions to the Personnel Manual.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the Personnel Manual revisions as presented, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

Rental Lease: Swenby provided a signed copy of a one year lease to Countryside Insurance. The draft has been approved by renter, Swenby and the district attorney.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve the lease as presented, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

Meeting Date Change: The first Thursday of the month is January 1. Swenby suggested postponing the January meeting to January 8.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to change the January 2026 meeting date to January 8, 2026, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

Exterior Building Maintenance/restoration: Swenby provided two estimates for repairing the tuck points on the existing historical building. This also includes acid washing of all stone and restoration of the exterior. Swenby suggested that there may be options with the Historical Society for grant funding, if the district was interested in listing the building on their registry.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to table discussion for a few months, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

Advisory Committee Additions: The Advisory Committee asked that the board consider adding Todd Peterson to the Advisory Committee. Because Todd Peterson was selected by Polk County as a board manager beginning January 1, 2026, Swenby suggested removing this action item.

Swenby thanked Manager Engelstad for his years of service and commented how she appreciated the different perspectives he always brought to the table. She commented that his way of thinking will be something she will continue to take with her as she continues and appreciated his perspectives on ways to approach multiple issues the watershed faces and also his perspectives on engagement with others. Manager Engelstad stated that his directives were never personal, and were always directed at the position of the Administrator. Herrmann agreed and thanked him for always "keeping him on his toes". Manager Engelstad gave Herrmann accolades for his approach and has appreciated working with him and his work for the district. Swenby asked if Engelstad would be available for phone calls for staff to continue to bounce ideas off of, and Manager Engelstad agreed that he would be available.

Manager Engelstad stated that in the future he hopes that the board continues to look at the watershed as a whole and the best interest of the district. The board managers thanked Manager Engelstad for his years of service to the district.

Employee Evaluations: The Personnel Committee recommends a 3% COLA raise for Swenby. The Personnel Committee recommends an hourly increase to \$24 per hour for Bjerk.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve the committee's recommendations for wages effective January 1, 2026, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Manager Andringa passed around the packet from the Mn Watershed's Conference for the managers who were unable to attend.

9. PUBLIC/MANAGER COMMENT

There was no public comment.

10. PERMITS:

No permits were presented to the board.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

Due to the January holiday, the next regular meeting will be held January 8, 2025, as a special meeting, at 8 AM. As there was no further business to come before the board, a **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to adjourn the meeting at 10:14 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

Donna Bjerk, Administrative Assistant

Shawn Brekke, Secretary