



TITLE: DRAFT REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

DATE: FEBRUARY 5, 2026

1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the February 5, 2026, meeting to order at 8 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Don Andringa (attended via remote technology beginning at 9 AM), Clayton Bartz, Todd Peterson and Shawn Brekke. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator, Donna Bjerk – Administrative Assistant. Others attendance included Zach Herrmann – Houston Engineering and David Johnstad - Landowner.

2. AGENDA APPROVAL:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the agenda as presented with timing flexibility for placement of the Project Team discussions. Manager Andringa has asked to move those discussions and board decisions to when he is able to dial in, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

3. MINUTES:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to approve the minutes from the January 8, 2026, meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson approving December 2025 Treasurer Report. **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.** Swenby pointed out modifications on the Investment Portfolio report. This report will now highlight liabilities due to the new Paid Family Medical Leave and the security deposit collected by the district for office rental.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson approving January 2026 Treasurer Report. **Seconded** by Manager Brekke.

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

April J. Swenby	337.78
Association of MN Counties	650.00
EcoLab	60.68
First Community Credit Union	886.75
Garden Township	4,945.00
Garden Valley Telephone Company	2,876.85
H2Over Viewers	32,201.73
HN Quality Plumbing	2,490.00
Houston Engineering	22,292.00
Lacey Berhow	437.50
Lakes Community Cooperative	449.93
Office Experts	2,900.00
Otter Tail Power Company	190.41
Rinke-Noonan	530.50
Schmitz Builders, Inc.	37,744.84

Stuhaug Sanitation	336.96
Todd's Landscaping	599.75
Wild Rice Electric	120.45
TOTAL	<u>110,051.13</u>

Additional bills presented included Schmitz Builders for Pay Request #7 in the amount of \$41,983.50, Lacey Berhow in the amount of \$87.50, Anchored Threads Embroidery for \$67.00 and the City of Fertile for \$118.84.

Swenby stated that it appears that the City of Fertile had made a mistake on their billing and over charged the district almost \$50. She contacted them this morning for clarification and informed the board that the amount due to the City of Fertile may be less.

After today's billing the contract is settled with the contractor for the building addition. The project was under budget with the approved 10% overage that was allowed. The total change orders that were additional to the contract amount totaled \$24,150 for the new building portion. The managers were given a report of expenditures for the building project. There are a few punch list items that are minor that the contractor will come back in the spring to finish, such as cabinet touch up, and the exterior door painting.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to dispense the reading of the bills each month and approve the bills to be paid, including additional bills Swenby presented. **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.** The total amount of bills to be paid was \$152,307.97.

Swenby will check with Ottetail and the electricians for any rebates available for the new furnaces/electrical purchased. The managers discussed the costs for brick repair on the existing building. Swenby will ask the lowest bidder to meet with the board for his opinion on what is necessary for repair, in March.

5. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

H2Over Re-cap: Bryan Murphy will provide an education session/recap on the Redetermination of Benefits for the SH Ditch on February 11 at 10 AM. The managers were provided with a summary of monthly activities from H2Over Viewers.

Project # 27: Swenby has been working with Mark Johnson's office to provide information for legislation for funding. His office is pursuing a bill to help fund the pump for Union Lake in the amount of 1.5 million.

BWSR Response to Tribal inquiries: Swenby met with BWSR this month. The managers were provided with a response from BWSR to tribal inquiries about watershed's. The district was asked to provide the approved Conflict of Interest policy.

She also reported that Brett Arne has transferred locations and will no longer be the district's BC. Swenby stated that they have advertised for his position and she relayed feedback as to what qualities are needed for the district.

WBIF Reimbursements: Swenby was able to get written approval to pay for the remaining 25% of expenses that occurred after October 27 for the sheet pile repair for in Liberty Township with WBIF allocations. Typically, WBIF dollars are unable to be used as match with state dollars. However, HSEM did not require match, they partnered for the repair of the legal ditch system. HEI was asked to provide written documentation that 25% or more of this effort was a "clean water project" and a case was made that HSEM was paying for the repair and not the clean water component. Our system is unique and typically in the past we have used multi source funding to achieve our goals in this stretch. BWSR approved this based on the history of the area and the unique circumstance of the project. After discussion, the board agreed that Swenby should submit the remaining 25% for WBIF reimbursement.

Upcoming Activities: Mn Watersheds Legislative Days and the FDRWG Conference. Managers will get back to Swenby if they are able to attend.

Mapping updates: Swenby has been working with HEI to update the district web-site mapping system. The public map viewer is built with a technology that ESRI is deprecating. The district will need to update this to

new technology. HEI estimated this will take about 8 hours. While work was required to be done, Swenby asked them to include the district's new boundary and some other punch list items that will improve features for staff and the public. Additionally, the search feature was updated to include a searchable permits for the public (this noted by MPCA that it wasn't available anymore). Permits being able to be searched by name, township and lands if valuable for the public and was a feature of the district's old system but was not included in the new system.

Calendar year end: Swenby reported that the month of January consisted of calendar and quarter year end reporting and requirements along with quarterly reimbursement requests in addition to reimbursements from HSEM for Liberty Township and Project # 17 that were filed and submitted.

Additional information: The managers were given information on the drainage conference that was attended by Swenby and Manager Peterson

6. ENGINEER'S REPORT

SH Ditch- FEMA 2022 Damages: Herrmann is working through a mitigation plan that will not result in redundant work that will complement any capital improvement projects resulting from the project team efforts. Herrmann plans to have this ready to present in the next couple of days.

LOMA: Herrmann and his team have began working the LOMA request for Michael Corbo. This has been completed and submitted to FEMA who has 60 days to review.

7. ACTION ITEMS.

Advisory Committee: Swenby provided a proposed revised list of the Advisory Committee. Several members were unable to be reached; however, messages were left to return the call. Swenby stated that Paul Stromstad has tried to return her call a couple of times and they have not been able to connect. All members who were not reached were reached out to at least twice. Swenby also presented a list of new members that were suggested last month and indicated who was willing to serve.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz adopt the presented membership list of the Advisory Committee, remove those who have not returned Swenby's call with contingency that they can always be added back if requested upon board approval. **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.** Swenby will continue to reach out to Paul Stromstad.

Riverwatch Sponsorship: A request for Riverwatch sponsorship was presented. Swenby reported that last year the district sponsored \$2,000 (Gold). Manager Brekke suggested that the IWI reach out to all schools in our district to ignite participation in the Riverwatch program.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke move forward with a gold membership in the amount of \$2,000 to sponsor the Riverwatch Forum, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

Bulletin Board: In September of 2025, Swenby asked for approval to purchase an exterior locking bulletin board to keep meeting notices available to the public at all times when the building is not open and to keep the building looking professional and neat. The bulletin board presented at this time was quite large and was ranging from \$1300 -\$1500 for a lockable exterior bulletin board.

Due to the new lettering on the doors, taped paper signage didn't look professional and was obstructed for reading, so Swenby purchased a smaller exterior bulletin board on her own for \$348.95, with the understanding that Swenby would personally pay for it, should the board not deem this necessary. She asked if the board would like to consider reimbursement for the exterior bulletin board that she purchased.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to reimburse Swenby \$348.95 for the exterior bulletin board that was purchased, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

Project Team: The project team met January 29. Swenby reported that there was excellent attendance and participation. Three project concepts were presented for consensus. Two received unanimous consensus to proceed forward and staff recommends moving forward with the project team recommendations for Bear Park and for SH River Storage. Swenby reported that she has reached out to the FDRWG for placement on their next agenda to establish two additional project teams for FYE 26, should the board like to move forward.

Startup project team funding is up to \$5,000 for each project team. Beginning July 1, 2026, it will start over to up to \$10,000 per project team if approved at a 50/50 cost share. Swenby did not expect facilitation to be necessary for these two project teams at this time.

Swenby reiterated that unanimous consensus is defined by those that attended and those that responded after the meeting. As of today's date, four project team members have not responded at all. Permitting authorities have abstained.

The Sand Hill River Ecosystem – 2 stage channel concepts along the Sand Hill Ditch did not receive unanimous consensus, with one member not reaching concurrence. Managers were provided with a written statement for a non-concurrence position. Swenby suggested that the board consider waiting to see what develops from the request the district made last fall from the Corp of Engineers feasibility request and see what develops from the storage site and Bear Park project teams, should the board move forward with that recommendation. Both of those, if successful, may warrant the SH River Ecosystem project team to reconvene and perform new voting based on those two factors. Swenby added that from a staff perspective, the storage site/s (if the board moves forward with those recommendations) and the redetermination, it is a very aggressive priority list, and much time will be devoted to those two efforts. Giving more time and thought to these ideas may be beneficial.

Swenby provided video recordings of the Project Team meeting held last week which entailed discussion regarding the concept of a two-stage channel. The board was also given copies of draft consensus forms. The board was also given timelines graphics highlighting the history of the project team that was physically distributed during the meeting.

Swenby provided a conflict-of-interest statement from one Project Team member.

The board briefly discussed the option of “doing nothing” on the Sand Hill Ditch.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz accept the recommendation of the project team that the SHRWD Board of Managers take steps to find funding and initiate project design for Bear Park Dam Modifications to optimize existing flood storage and improve fish passage and to pursue the establishment of a Project Team through the FDRWG, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.** Manager Andringa was experiencing technical difficulties and refrained from voting. Herrmann confirmed that the district has a large amount of historical data that can be used for this purpose.

The managers established Project Team Membership for a “Bear Park Dam Modification” to submit to FDRWG. Swenby stated that a facilitator is not necessary. Membership is as follows:

- Nick Kludt, MN DNR and/or Nathan Olson MN DNR
- Rachel Klein, EPSWCD
- Rodger Hemphill, MN DNR
- Mike Gunderson, Landowner
- Scott Olson, Landowner
- Roger Black, Downstream Landowner
- Zach Herrmann, District Engineer
- April Swenby, Administrator

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to accept the recommendation of the project team that the SHRWD Board of Managers take steps to find funding and initiate project design for off channel storage to reduce peak flows downstream to pursue the establishment of a Project Team through the FDRWG, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

The managers established Project Team Membership for a “off channel storage” to submit to FDRWG. Swenby stated that a facilitator is not necessary. Membership is as follows:

- Nicole, Berndt, WPSWCD
- Stephanie Klamm, MN DNR Hydrologist and/or Nathan Olson/MN DNR
- Paul Engelstad, Landowner
- Alex Engelstad, Landowner
- Zach Herrmann, District Engineer
- April Swenby, Administrator

The board was informed that the project team was presented with the following statement and unanimous consensus/concurrence was not reached with one member not concurring: “That the SHRWD Board of

Managers take steps to find funding and initiate project design for a Two-Stage Channel along the Sand Hill Ditch to reduce channel erosion and deposition, reduce road overtopping, reduce overland flooding, and improve water quality. The project must “do no harm” downstream. Implementation will be segmented based on available funding. The project, as a whole and as segmented, must “do no harm” downstream.” A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke table action on the project team’s proposal at this time, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

Swenby presented an RFP she received on Saturday, January 31, stating that “new” for 2026, LSOHC is supporting funding design/feasibility separately from construction funding and that this year they are accepting applications for proposals for these activities. Submittals are due by February 27. Swenby added that the district could use this funding to design a Two Stage channel and shoot for a design of the entire system, pending criteria for the application. Should the Board later decide to act on moving forward pursuing funding at a later date, a design could be funded using this source instead of local dollars or waiting for other grant dollars. The board discussed this opportunity at length balancing the opportunity with the readiness of moving forward with any potential project. The board recognized that should they like to move to a direction of a two-stage channel, this provides a funding mechanism for plans and specs that would otherwise be a cost locally. The board can apply, and if received, turn the funding down if the board chooses, but not applying turns away opportunity. A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke directing staff to pursue funding through LSOHC for design of a two Stage channel along the Sand Hill Ditch and to design as much as the grant criteria will allow, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

LCCMR Funding: The Red River Watershed Management Board authorized the development of an LCCMR application for funding of the Rural Floodplain Mapping Initiative. Houston Engineering is working with the International Water Institute on this Grant application. The application is due on March 18, 2026, but if funded it would be after July 1, 2027, that the funding would become available. Manager Brekke does not want to pursue. No motion was needed just recognition that they don’t want to pursue. There are not a lot of details about what the local share will be towards this effort, and the board was unable to determine a cost vs. benefit. The managers did not wish to pursue this.

8. **MANAGER REPORTS**

Manager Brekke reported that he learned the bike trails have been removed along the river by Climax and were removed about ten years ago. Manager Peterson attended the Drainage Conference.

9. **OTHER BUSINESS/PARTNERING AGENCY INFO.**

The managers received information from the RRWMB legislative meetings, Drainage Work Group, Mn Watersheds, and USGS flood forecast updates.

Swenby drew attention to the information from Mn Watersheds related to the MCEA’s new proposal for requiring EAW’s on drainage improvements. Additionally on February 11th there is a meeting with the Attorney General with an agenda item labeled “accumulative effects on drainage”. Swenby will be attending this.

Additionally, Swenby updated the managers on the Clean Water Council representative for the watershed and the applications presented to the Governor’s office.

10. **PERMITS:**

No permits were brought before the board.

11. **ADJOURNMENT:**

The next regular meeting will be held March 5, 2026, 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 10:18 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

Donna Bjerck, Administrative Assistant

Shawn Brekke, Secretary