



TITLE: Regular Monthly Board Meeting Minutes

DATE: July 2, 2026

1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the July 2, 2026, meeting to order at 8 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Clayton Bartz, Todd Peterson, and Shawn Brekke. Manager Andringa attended via remote technology and entered the meeting at 8:30 AM. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator and Donna Bjerk – Administrative Assistant. Others in attendance included Zach Herrmann – Houston Engineering (HEI). Attendees via remote technology included Scott McCullum – The Other Place and Scott Henderson – H2Over Viewers.

2. AGENDA APPROVAL:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the agenda with the addition of adding updates from H2Over Viewers and two action items as follows: Project Team expense recommendations and board appointees for Mn Watershed delegate/alternates, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

3. MINUTES:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the minutes from the June 4, 2026, meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson approving the June 2026 Treasurer Report, **Seconded** by Manager 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	156.60
EcoLab	60.88
First Community Credit Union	516.29
Garden Valley Telephone Company	148.95
H2Over Viewers	23,464.32
Houston Engineering	8,259.55
Lakes Community Cooperative	207.40
Otter Tail Power Company	175.21
Red River Watershed Mgmt Board	2,309.85
Rinke-Noonan	379.00
United States Geological Survey	6,530.00
Wild Rice Electric	252.39
TOTAL	<u>42,460.44</u>

Additional bills presented included the City of Fertile water billing for \$59.71 and a bill from Hardware Hank for \$23.24.

Swenby highlighted one bill that was paid June 30, 2026 because expenses related to that project are date sensitive. This expense is reflected in the June Treasurer's report on the check register and is as follows: Houston Engineering for \$5,019. Swenby stated that the check will be dispersed pending board approval.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve the bills to be paid, including the additional bills Swenby presented. **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

Board approval was requested for up to \$69,910 for the expenses incurred on the Climate Action Grant. All expenses must have been incurred prior to June 30, 2026 and because that date is so close to the meeting date, Houston Engineering does not have the exact dollar amount expended and has not finalized the time allocations for that grant

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve up to \$69,910 for expenses incurred prior to June 30, 2026 attributed to the Climate Action Control, **Seconded** by Manger Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

5. THE OTHER PLACE REQUEST (9 AM):

Scott McCullum, owner of the neighboring property The Other Place, requested consideration for compensation for staging during the district's building project and for gravel needs due to district usage. McCullum testifies that he spoke with a contractor who promised \$500 per month in rent to use his property as staging during the district's construction.

Contrary the contractor the district hired denies this verbal agreement was made. Swenby did reach out to the architect and the architect denies making an agreement with neighboring landowners. McCullum did not know the name of the person he made the agreement with. Swenby asked if it could be possible that it was a contractor who was bidding on the project, as many contractors visited the site before bidding.

The Board reviewed available recollections and photos, and acknowledged uncertainty about the duration and extent of use of Mr. McCullum's property. The board asked that McCullum provide invoices for gravel and grading. The matter will be placed on the August agenda for board consideration after staff gathers additional information from photos, contractors, and legal counsel if needed.

6. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

Legal Ditch Transfer: Rich Sanders, Polk County Highway Engineer has agreed to transfer the ¼ mile of the Kittleson Diversion to the district as it relates to the SH Ditch, and PC Ditch 95. This information was provided to John Kolb on June 6 to proceed forward.

FDRWG meeting and tour: Swenby provided information about the FDRWG meeting that was held at the district office in June. Swenby reported that the meeting was very well attended and the storage solutions for the Sand Hill were well received.

Ditch Inspections: Swenby reported that all systems were inspected. In addition to last year's punch list items (Ditch 119 cleaning, boundary revision, project 20 culvert, over flows), Several items were noted (some were carryovers from last year). Two of the items have already been completed since the inspection. The following items were highlighted:

1. SH Ditch:

- a. Two beaver Dams. Swenby reported that Dean Johnson was hired to remove this in mid June and marked as complete.
- b. A Culvert that was repaired last year has shown riprap erosion due to too small of gradation. Staff recommends the addition of larger rock.
- c. Corn stalks were noted in some banks.

- d. Texas Crossing accumulated eroded material in bank.
- 2. **Project # 27:**
 - a. HEI is working with a subcontractor diving team to develop a cost estimate and repair plan as approved by the board in June of 2026.
- 3. **Project # 12:**
 - a. A culvert was eroded and failing under a township road. Swenby will work with the Township for their repair.
 - b. Corn stalks were noted in many banks.
- 4. **Project # 20:**
 - a. Corn stalks were noted in many banks.
 - b. A culvert was noted as needing a riprap apron. This was reported by a landowner.
 - c. Sediment build up at the rock drop. Staff will monitor and consider spot removal.
- 5. **Project # 17:**
 - a. Staff noted small trees/brush in North roadside of banks and suggested possible mowing/spraying.
- 6. **Ditch #119:**
 - a. Staff reminded the managers that a clean out was needed and was asked for by a landowner. The board approved this last fall and it is on the schedule for 2026.
- 7. **Project 3:**
 - a. Staff noted wooded brush in field side and will consider spraying/mowing. Staff suggests that at redetermination hearings the district host a discussion with landowners their opinion on cleaning.
- 8. **Project #5:**
 - a. A landowner has requested cleaning near the outlet end.

Swenby has met with two contractors for recommendations on the SH Ditch brush/trees for these recommendations and is awaiting their proposals.

The Board discussed the Texas crossing where eroded material and bank conditions are affecting farm equipment access. Manager Andringa described the site and the landowners need to remove or reshape sloughed material. The Board discussed whether the work benefits the drainage system, landowners, and township access. A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to authorize the district to pay one-third of the engineer's estimate for the repair, with the landowner and/or township expected to contribute the remaining shares, Seconded by Manager Andringa. A roll call vote was held.

	Yea	Nav	Absent	Abstain
Christian	☒	☐	☐	☐
Andringa	☒	☐	☐	☐
Brekke	☒	☐	☐	☐
Bartz	☒	☐	☐	☐
Peterson	☒	☐	☐	☐

The Motion was carried.

Staff will coordinate with the landowner to follow engineer guidance.

To address corn stalks in drainage systems, Swenby provided prior examples of letters sent to manage corn stalk debris, potential obstructions. The managers discussed recurring corn stalk accumulation Swenby noted in multiple public drainage systems. A general letter will be sent to landowners adjacent to affected systems reminding them of obstruction concerns and the need to help reduce district maintenance costs. Staff may also review conditions again after harvest.

Polk County Fair: Managers were invited to be present at the booth for the Polk County Fair next week.

Project Team: Meetings were held May 28. Swenby provided the minutes. Swenby also provided correspondence from a MnDNR meeting highlighting potential obstacles that Herrman should evaluate before incurring design costs. Minnesota Rule 6115.0190 prohibits activity to stabilize or impound a flowing spring and urged the district to identify the presence of any flowing wells stating that a known flowing spring is present

to the north on Section 16 (Liberty WMA). The MnDNR also suggested identifying the presence of rare features or species by using the Natural Heritage Information System.

The MnDNR confirmed that at this location three permits would need to be applied for (appropriations, public waters, dam safety). Federal and state wetland regulations also apply but are not administered by DNR.

Swenby reported that additional correspondence was received from MnDNR groundwater technical staff about the site, and they suggested there is also possibility that remnant peat or calc fens could possibly be present.

Houston Engineering recommended an on-site inventory to determine whether features are flowing springs, groundwater seeps, wetlands, or other conditions that could affect project viability.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson authorize Houston Engineering to complete an inventory of the proposed site (complete with flowing springs, fens and remnant peat), coordinate with DNR resources as appropriate for cost savings, and work with the landowner after crops are off, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. . A roll call vote was held.

	Yea	Nav	Absent	Abstain
Christian	☒	☐	☐	☐
Andringa	☒	☐	☐	☐
Brekke	☒	☐	☐	☐
Bartz	☒	☐	☐	☐
Peterson	☒	☐	☐	☐

The Motion was carried.

Other Updates: The managers were given information to read on their own regarding delisting of impaired waters in the Sand Hill, a Fargo-Moorhead Diversion tour Swenby attended, and watershed audit cost comparisons in Minnesota.

7. REDETERMINATION OF BENEFITS – H2OVER VIEWERS (9:30 AM) .

Scott Henderson of H2Over Viewers presented hypothetical assessments to the managers to better explain how assessments are viewed for future maintenance. Henderson's displayed condensed spreadsheet showing sample impacts of proposed redetermination of benefits and outlet/protection allocations for the Sandhill Ditch system and related systems. The Board discussed how current assessments may compare to proposed/draft assessments, how outlet and protection benefits are incorporated, and how landowners may experience increases or decreases depending on parcels and benefited acres. Henderson noted that additional adjustments remain and that landowner informational meetings may occur during winter, with final hearings to follow depending on boundary review and other timing considerations.

The Board discussed the need for Houston Engineering to review district boundaries, including areas where the Sandhill River and Sandhill Ditch may not align with existing watershed boundaries. Houston Engineering is also scheduled to provide a technical review of the proposed area and the ditch alignment parcels for ROW, and a technical review of permitted culverts/tile and drainage patterns in comparison of the proposed area. The Board noted that boundary revisions may affect the timeline for redetermination work.

8. ENGINEER'S REPORT.

FEMA 2022 Disaster Mitigation Funding: The initial grant expires in July. Herrmann provided mitigation plans for all 17 locations along the Sand Hill Ditch. He also provided engineers estimates for each of the damaged locations as well as a total. The last correspondence from FEMA was received yesterday.

Project Teams:

Bear Park: A channel survey is scheduled for this summer, and Herrmann continues to work on the Purpose and Need document. Houston Engineering summarized a plan-of-work approach for the Bear Park project team, including channel survey work, downstream impact review, alternative development, project team review, and preferred alternative selection. The Board discussed schedule, costs, grant funding opportunities, Flood Damage Reduction Work Group funds, and possible DNR funding support. Houston Engineering will revise the schedule and cost estimate for further Board consideration in August.

SH River Storage Solutions: Herrmann continues to work on the Purpose and Need document. Herrmann presented a plan of work document for board approval.

MPCA Climate Action Grant: The district was awarded an MPCA Climate Action Grant which has a deadline of June 30, 2026. Herrmann will present the report in August to the Board.

Project Inspections: Herrmann is working on developing a repair plan for Project # 27. He is working with the contractor to complete 2025 repairs/cleanings on legal systems.

9. ACTION ITEMS.

Mn Watersheds Appointees: A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to appoint Manager Andringa as the district's delegate and Manager Peterson as the district's alternate, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. A roll call vote was held.

	Yea	Nav	Absent	Abstain
Christian	☒	☐	☐	☐
Andringa	☒	☐	☐	☐
Brekke	☒	☐	☐	☐
Bartz	☒	☐	☐	☐
Peterson	☒	☐	☐	☐

The Motion was carried.

Web-site accessibility: Swenby has met with six companies for solutions for web-site accessibility. All companies offered different solutions making it difficult to compare "apples to apples". She has narrowed her preference down to two companies and provided the proposals she was given to the managers. Discussion was held regarding the pros/cons of each company. Swenby provided a breakdown of the current annual costs that the district has for web-site. Swenby explained that annual costs (hosting, domain, SSL, search engine for minutes, etc.) and explained that if the district chooses Gov.web, the annual costs will increase around \$300.

Swenby stated that web accessibility may look different going forward, and accessibility audits may be suggested as part of a district policy. The company Swenby recommends does perform audits for an additional charge and depending on attorney's advice can be performed annually or every 3-5 years depending on the level of changes made to the site by staff.

To help with efficiency, Swenby states that before the district contracts with an accessibility vendor, the current site be completely updates so that when the "keys" are handed to staff, minimal changes are made.

The board discussed at length website accessibility requirements, vendor options, costs, risks, and implementation considerations. The Board discussed both vendor options, accessibility requirements for documents and PDFs, records management, and long-term website maintenance.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to proceed forward with Gov.web for a one time set-up fee and complete transfer of the district web-site, not to exceed \$7,000, with the annual hosting/service fee noted separately, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. A roll call vote was held.

	Yea	Nav	Absent	Abstain
Christian	☒	☐	☐	☐
Andrinaa	☒	☐	☐	☐
Brekke	☒	☐	☐	☐
Bartz	☒	☐	☐	☐
Peterson	☒	☐	☐	☐

The Motion was carried.

10. MANAGER REPORTS

There were no manager reports.

11. OTHER BUSINESS/PARTNERING AGENCY INFO.

The managers received information Mn Watershed's regarding the Drainage Work Group, the Red River Watershed Management Board and the Mn Watershed's Summer Tour.

12. PERMITS:

Permit 26-006: Troy Gullekson, Liberty Township Section 28, Install approach/culvert

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to approve permit 26-006, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. A roll call vote was held.

	Yea	Nav	Absent	Abstain
Christian	☒	☐	☐	☐
Andrinaa	☒	☐	☐	☐
Brekke	☒	☐	☐	☐
Bartz	☒	☐	☐	☐
Peterson	☒	☐	☐	☐

The Motion was carried.

13. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting will be held August 6, 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 11:01 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. A roll call vote was held.

	Yea	Nav	Absent	Abstain
Christian	☒	☐	☐	☐
Andrinaa	☒	☐	☐	☐
Brekke	☒	☐	☐	☐
Bartz	☒	☐	☐	☐
Peterson	☒	☐	☐	☐

The Motion was carried.

Donna Bjerk, Administrative Assistant

Shawn Brekke, Secretary