



TITLE: REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

DATE: DRAFT SEPTEMBER 3, 2026

1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the September 3, 2026, meeting to order at 8:00 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Clayton Bartz, Todd Peterson and Shawn Brekke. Managers absent: Don Andringa. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator and Donna Bjerk – Administrative Assistant. Others in attendance included Zach Herrmann - Houston Engineering and Paul Reese – Polk County Commissioner.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

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

3. MINUTES: ,

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve minutes for the regular board of managers meeting on August 6, 2026. **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to approve the August treasurer's reports 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	245.08
First Community Credit Union	815.38
Garden Valley Telephone Company	472.88
GovWeb	3,348.00
H2Over Viewers	23,464.32
Houston Engineering	39,975.78
Liberty Township	920.00
Otter Tail Power Company	295.71
U.S. Post Office	80.00
TOTAL	<u>69,617.15</u>

Two additional bills were presented: Ashley Peterson for \$112.50 (quarterly cleaning).

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to approve and pay the bills to be paid with a total of \$69,729.65 **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

3. BUDGET HEARING:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to recess the regular meeting at 8:32 AM and open the budget hearing, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.** The budget hearing was called to order at 8:32 AM by Chairman Christian. Chairman Christian opened the hearing for discussion. The budget for 2027 was presented as follows:

	<u>Jan - Dec 27</u>
Income	
REIMBURSED EXPENSE	1,000.00
HOMESTEAD/AG CREDIT (HACA)	4,500.00
Rental Income	9,600.00
INTEREST INCOME	50,000.00
TAX LEVY INCOME	<u>250,000.00</u>
Total Income	315,100.00
Expense	
MISC	200.00
MEETING EXPENSE	1,900.00
PUBLICITY	2,000.00
EDUCATION	4,000.00
DUES-MEMBERSHIP	5,000.00
PAYROLL TAXES	8,000.00
EMPLOYEE TRAVEL EXPENSES	8,000.00
FURNITURE-EQUIP	9,000.00
WEB-SITE	15,000.00
BUILDING MAINTENCE/OCCUPANCY	15,000.00
COMPUTER EXPENSE	15,000.00
MANAGER EXPENSE	15,000.00
OFFICE OPERATIONS	15,000.00
PROF SERVICES	20,000.00
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS	50,000.00
PAYROLL EXPENSES	<u>132,000.00</u>
Total Expense	<u>315,100.00</u>
Net Income	<u>0.00</u>

Three petitions (from Polk County) to fund basic water management, water quality and erosion, and water studies education and agency support in accordance with M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, were displayed and presented.

There were no attendees with comments or questions on the budget as advertised.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to adjourn the budget hearing at 8:37 AM and reconvene the regular meeting at 8:37 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

5. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

One Watershed One Plan: The Sand Hill River 1W1P Advisory Committee met in August and was given a presentation from MPCA on the TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) and WRAP's (Water Restoration and Protection Strategy) for the district. The district's comments and feedback were incorporated into the TMDL report.

Finances – WBIF (Watershed Based Implementation Funding) Update: State funds provided through the WBIF program have been used by the SHRWD on several initiatives to date. These include the Sand Hill River Ecosystem Restoration Project Team and repairs to the Sand Hill Ditch in Scandia and Liberty Townships. The district has fully expended their allocation from the 2024-2025 WBIF grant (initial round of funding). The second round of funding (2026-2027) was fully signed as of October 27, 2025. Only work completed after this date is considered eligible for reimbursement through the 2026-2027 WBIF grant. Due to timing constraints to complete the Project Team process for the Ecosystem Restoration project, and construction before winter set in on the Liberty Township repairs, some costs were required to be incurred before October 27, 2025, and after

the 2024-2025 WBIF grant had been fully expended. These expenses will be funded through the SHRWD's water quality/erosion petitioned fund.

- \$28,804.00 (SH River Restoration Project Team) – Necessary to complete Project Team process (received August 20, 2026)
- \$31,158.38 (Liberty Bank Erosion Repair) – Necessary to complete construction in 2025 and remain eligible for the 75% reimbursement through HSEM. (see resolution).

Of these expenses (at total of \$59,962.38), the district continued to maximize the WBIF funding and after much negotiation with the partners the district was allocated an estimated amount of \$49,059.50 towards these expenses and the team has chosen to allocate it towards the Liberty Bank Erosion Repair. When the funds are processed and after the numbers are final, the board will be asked to adopt a resolution that will allow the district to use the petitioned funds to pay the remaining balance on the Liberty Bank Erosion Repair Project (est.\$10,000).

Project # 27: The district was awarded a FHM (Flood Hazard Mitigation) grant with a 1:1 match up to \$750,000. Swenby provided the correspondence from the grantee that highlights the program. Swenby has reached out to the district attorney for processes and provided the legal response for recommendations on an informal hearing and a hearing under MN Statute 03D. As a reminder Swenby also provided a preliminary engineers estimate that was developed last year for the project in its entirety. Swenby also attached an option for an MPCA loan (7-year loan term at 1 ½ %) for which the local share may qualify for. The local share could also be funded by the district, or it could be bonded.

Attorney recommendations for proceeding were provided to the managers highlighting MN Statute 103D.635. The sequence below was suggested and discussed:

1. Request a draft report from the engineer so you have draft numbers and technical specifications to present at the;
2. Informal meeting. During the informal meeting the district will present the engineer's technical and cost information along with information regarding the grant and how costs will be allocated if the repair is authorized. Following the informal meeting should the board choose to proceed forward;
 - a. Provide guidance to engineer and request filing of a final report. After filing of final report;
 - b. Notice and hold a hearing. If the repair is authorized:
 - i. Accept grant
 - ii. Direct preparation of plans and bid specifications
 - iii. Award contract
 - iv. Certify assessments for assessed portion of costs

It was also discussed that the board may accept the grant and then have the hearing. However, if the Board is unable to make the necessary findings to authorize the repair, the district will have to give the money back. If there is no hurry to accept the grant, then the above sequence was preferred. However, fiscally, the grant must be accepted before any engineering costs are incurred.

Swenby stated that at prior meetings, it was the preference of the USLID members that an evening meeting be held to accommodate working families. The next USLID meeting is September 21.

The board directed Herrmann to prepare for an informal landowner meeting scheduled for October 7th at 6:30 PM at Sand Hill Watershed District office. The board agreed that they would like to hear from landowners first before incurring costs on a final engineer's report. The board also asked Herrman to evaluate alternative pumping options such as pumping to nearby gravel pits, following the example of Sauk River Watershed, to rule out any other viable options. Herrmann will prepare for a presentation and allow time to offer findings on alternatives to present to landowners on October 7.

The board conversed with Paul Reese regarding a potential funding request from Polk County to attribute to the local share. Swenby will contact the Polk County Administrator to prepare him for a possible request depending on the outcomes of October 7 informational landowner meeting.

FEMA 2022 Damages Update: Herrmann has drafted a technical memorandum as per the recommendation of HSEM. Swenby has submitted this to HSEM with a request for assistance to the district's rep who will work with FEMA on the district's behalf to work through the mitigation proposal. Swenby submitted time extension requests formally to FEMA.

Website: Swenby has met with the team that is building the new site and has given them all of the information they have requested. Early discussions indicate a new live site by January 1. Swenby has another meeting scheduled for next week to discuss the structure of the new site, navigations, and high-priority options for content and how to display them for the public.

Clean Water Council (CWC): Swenby has been busy with this month with her service on the Clean Water Council and Swenby provided a six-month update of the council activities. The council is in the final stages of deciding how to allocate the money dedicated to the Clean Water Fund throughout the entire state of Minnesota. Swenby provided example of the latest correspondence she submitted to protect the WBIF funds, and to combat some of the political decisions that are being suggested. Swenby meets with another watershed district Administrator, the former CWC rep, a Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) rep, and Mn Watersheds Administrator monthly to discuss all CWC council topics together to ensure representation is unified. The next topic of discussion to which is asking for feedback on from MN Watersheds is a CWC policy proposal on chloride. Manager Andriga will be asked to address this while serving on the Legislative Committee for MN Watersheds. Swenby provided a copy of this proposed policy.

International Water Institute (IWI) and FDRWG Communications Committee: Swenby has one more year left on her term serving as a board member on the IWI. Swenby has made the decision that she would not seek reappointment in an effort to free up some time better devoted to other commitments. Swenby would also like to discontinue her participation serving on the communications committee on the FDRWG. Since her commitment to IWI and the FDRWG, Swenby has taken on other roles such as the Clean Water Council and she serves more larger roles on multiple MN Watershed committees such as the strategic planning committee, handbook committee, communications committee and the executive committee. Manager Peterson confirmed that during the MN Watersheds summer tour and MAWA meetings, there is value in active, local representation at MN Watersheds. Swenby asked if there were an objections to stepping down from the IWI board and the FDRWG communications committee, to which there were none.

Paul Reese, at this time asked the board to consider allowing Swenby to serve on the West Central Regional Water District after the first of the year, if Swenby is willing and able.

Ditch Maintenance Updates: The contractor has met with Swenby and has met separately, on-site with Houston Engineering at various locations for instructions to ensure the construction meets the engineering specs. Jeremy Brault has been hired for the mowing and spraying on Project # 12 and gave an estimate of \$3,000 to which Swenby accepted. Last week portions of Project #12 were sprayed by L&M. All low-lying trees and shrubs were targeted in a five-mile stretch. Brault will mow portions this fall. Additionally, the helicopter sprayer was contracted for \$500 per mile to spray the Sand Hill Ditch for low lying woody brush/willows. He used the chemical Triclopyr.

Mn Watersheds Summer Tour: Swenby attended along with Manager Peterson. Manager Peterson gave a verbal report of the activities during the tour and meetings.

USLID: Swenby met with members of the USLID (Union Lake Sarah Improvement District), MPCA (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency), Polk County Planning and Zoning and EPSWCD (East Polk Soil and Water Conservation District to discuss concerns about algae on Union Lake Sarah. Members of the USLID have approached the district to inquire about funding for a feasibility study, in preparation for a grant for alum treatments on the lake. The USLID plans to apply for a Clean Water Legacy Partners Grant to perform a feasibility study, and if they are not a recipient they may consider asking to partner with the district.

Beaver Obstructions: Beaver obstructions were reported in the upstream jurisdictional area of the Bear Park Project. Trappers have been notified to trap and began trapping.

Project Team Funding: A memo from the FDRWG was presented to inform districts of what to expect for funding for the 26-27 FY.

Manager Appointments: Clayton Bartz who is appointed to serve representing the eastern side of the watershed is anticipated to retire after nine years of service. Knowing that a new board manager will be reappointed from the eastern side of the district in 2027, Swenby informed the managers of four names that have been brought to her attention who reside on the eastern side. The board discussed with Paul Reese Polk County's process for appointing board managers to serve on the Sand Hill River Watershed District. It was suggested that the board of managers evaluate criteria for qualities they foresee in a board manager to fill the gaps of what attributes may be helpful and submit guidance documents in preparation to the Sand Hill Advisory Committee and the Polk County Commissioners.

2026 Construction Maintenance Items: Herrmann met onsite with the contractor for maintenance items on MN 102 Boundary revisions, Project 12, Project #17 overflows, Project #20 overflows, Project #20 culvert and spot cleanings, SH Ditch culvert rip rap repair and Project #119 cleaning. Swenby will prepare a letter to be mailed to landowners adjacent to Ditch #119 to inform them of the upcoming cleaning.

Project # 5 Outlet Stabilization: Herrmann continues to work on a concept design. Herrmann plans to have a preliminary findings ready to present at the October board meeting. Swenby reminded the managers that this project is funded by WBIF.

Bear Park: Herrmann reported that low water and dense vegetation has impacted their ability to complete the survey in certain reaches and plans to continue with a drone survey. Herrmann believes that the district is on schedule to have a project team meeting in early November to make sure we can apply for a LSOHC grant in November.

SH River Storage Solutions: HEI is reviewing the list of potential “red flags” for the project provided by the MnDNR and has made a site visit. HEI has been in contact with the landowner to ensure they understand the scope of review. HEI will initiate discussions with MnDNR on further review of the site.

Redetermination of Benefits: Herrmann provided a summary of his findings on the watershed boundaries related to systems being redetermined. Herrmann also provided a summary of his findings highlighting Sections 25 and 26 of Reis Township which currently drains north and south.

7. ACTION ITEMS.

Budget Approval: A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve the administrative budget for 2027 as resented during the budget hearing, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve the following resolution relating to the budget and levy for 2027, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz.

BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Managers of the Sand Hill River Watershed District:

WHEREAS, the Board of Managers of the Sand Hill River Watershed District have adopted budgets for 2027, said levies shall be for the year 2027 and shall be collectible with the taxes recovered in the year 2027; and said levies are all based on the 2026 taxable market values; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Annotated (M.S.A) Sections 103D.905, 103D.911, and 103D.915, the Board of Managers, Sand Hill River Watershed District is authorized to levy an ad valorem tax against all taxable property, in the District for various purposes; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Minnesota statutes, published notice was given by the said Board of Managers, Sand Hill River Watershed District, for a hearing, which was held on September 3, 2026, whereby the 2027 budget of the Sand Hill River Watershed District was determined, and the said Board of Managers is legally authorized to tax the levies listed below.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Managers, Sand Hill River Watershed District:

- 1. In accordance with M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, the Sand Hill River Watershed District does hereby levy an ad valorem tax of \$250,000 to be assessed at the appropriate mill rate on all taxable property within the district. The proceeds of said levy shall be used and credited to the District's General Fund to pay for the general*

administrative expenses and any expenses involved in the construction and maintenance of any projects of common benefit to the District.

2. *In accordance with M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, the Sand Hill River Watershed District does hereby levy an amount not to exceed 0.00798 percent of all taxable market value (\$164,595.30) to pay the costs attributable to the basic water management features of projects initiated by petition of a political subdivision within the Watershed District. In 2027, these funds will be used for a variety of water management related efforts such as water management and retention, records retention and housing, technical assistance, project teams, project construction/maintenance, beaver control and NRE benefits.*
3. *In accordance with M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, the Sand Hill River Watershed District does hereby levy a second amount not to exceed 0.00798 percent of all taxable market value (\$164,595.30) to pay the costs attributable to the basic water management features of projects initiated by petition of a political subdivision within the Watershed District. In 2027, these funds will be used for water quality and erosion efforts.*
4. *In accordance with M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, the Sand Hill River Watershed District does hereby levy a third amount not to exceed 0.00798 percent of all taxable market value (\$100,000) to pay the costs attributable to the basic water management features of projects initiated by petition of a political subdivision within the Watershed District. In 2027, these funds will be used for data collection, watershed studies, education and agency support.*
5. *That the Auditors of the Counties of Polk, Norman and Mahnomen shall make said levies in accordance with the provisions of the Minnesota Watershed Act, Chapter 103D, as amended. This entire levy (\$164,595.30, \$164,595.30, and \$100,000) can be levied as one assessment, prorated per taxable market value between the three counties, and our office can do the breakdown.*

A roll call vote was held.

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

The Motion was carried.

Furniture proposal: Swenby reported that she has looked online for a solution to display the district's diorama table. Matching solutions with the reception desk in the size that is needed for the diorama table are not cost effectively found. To maximize the space Swenby asked for an estimate for another file cabinet to fit the entire space, that will serve a dual purpose of storage and display. The budget given to Swenby for furniture/appliances in the new space was \$15,000. Of that budget \$5,195 has been spent for appliances and office furniture for the new space.

Because the cost was quite large, Swenby wanted board action to determine necessity and cost for an aesthetic, professional, additional storage and functional display table for the diorama. The cabinet is a custom size to ensure that the diorama table will be able to be displayed. **A Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to approve \$3,739.00 to purchase a multi purpose storage/display table. **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

8. OTHER BUSINESS

The managers received information from the Drainage Work Group. Paul Reese informed the board that Polk County has a new commissioner and will be expecting additional turnover at the retirement of Joan Lee and Warren Strandel.

9. PERMITS:

Three permits were presented to the board for review.

26-013: Michael Donovan, Section 16 – Reis Township, culvert/crossing installation
Recommends approval pending sizing. Applicant is encouraged to seek City of Beltrami approval.

26-014: Mn DOT., Section 9 – Garfield Twp., Replace existing culverts
Several questions are still pending from Mn DOT. Table until questions have been answered.

26-015: Mahnomen County Highway Department, Section 17 – Bejou Township, culvert replacements
Recommends approval

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve permit 2026-013 and 2026-15, and to table permit 26-014, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

10. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting will be held October 8, 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 10:42 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

Donna Bjerk, Administrative Assistant

Shawn Brekke, Secretary