

HUBBARD COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MINUTES FROM February 9th, 2022 REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Hubbard County Soil and Water Conservation District
Board of Supervisors meeting held via Zoom.

Members present: Marcel Noyes, Chair
Don Rettinger, Vice-Chair
Lynn Goodrich, Secretary
Don Sells, Treasurer
Heidi Anderson-Thomas, PR&I

Others present: Crystal Mathisrud, District Manager
Annette Olson, Administrative Assistant
Brandon Spain-Brist, Forestry Resource Technician
Claire Hansen, Conservation and Outreach Technician
Tom Krueger, Hubbard County Commissioner
Jody Peek, NRCS Area Lead
John Carlson, DNR Private Forest Management Coordinator
Andrew Seagren, CWSWCD Forester/Easement Technician
Josh Petuchowski, PARO Sales

Chair Noyes opened the Zoom meeting at 8:30 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA:

Staff requested the new MNSWCD forestry association bill be added to New Business: Action, letter J.

A motion was made by Supervisor Rettinger to accept the agenda as modified, seconded by Supervisor Anderson-Thomas. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.

Supervisor Goodrich moved to approve the minutes as presented. Supervisor Rettinger seconded the motion. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.

DNR PFM Partnerships & Policies – John Carlson: Treasurer Sells was having connection/technical issues and the Board allowed John Carlson to present while Mr. Sells was trying to join the meeting. John is the DNR Private Forest Management Coordinator in St Paul and lead for all things private landowners. The woodland stewardship plan is a part of the forest stewardship program. Statewide requests for PFM plans have gone up to over 1,000 written per year, when compared to past years. The DNR is sticking with 18 staff foresters and letting the private sector grow. Some forestry consultants are distrustful of SWCD's seeking plan writing authority, as they are concerned about losing business. The DNR is looking to put basic parameters and standards in place for plan writers. It was recommended we match our rate to the

current DNR rate (today: \$300 base plus \$7/acre) typically at or higher than private rate. Prices vary between SWCD's.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Staff mentioned that there are a couple year-end corrections needing to be added that will affect the Profit and Loss report by \$5.74 in payroll taxes and \$360.00 in Unearned Revenue on the Balance Sheet for Contracted Services that were missed before the January reports were sent out. An updated version will be sent to supervisors. Treasurer Sells presented the treasurer's report to the board, subject to the auditor's review.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Grazing Workshop Update Annette:** There are currently 13 guests and 3 supervisors registered. Small change in agenda.
- **2022 Work Plan/Strategic Planning/Organizational Restructure Agenda:** The meeting is set for February 23rd from 9am-2pm. A draft agenda will be sent to supervisors with requests for comments and suggestions to be returned.

Action:

- **2022 Calendar of Events DRAFT: Supervisor Goodrich suggested that the Board approve it in its present form as a live document knowing it will change as events get firmed up, added, or cancelled.**

NEW BUSINESS

- **PARO (full-service bookkeeper) – Josh Petuchowski, Senior Manager, IB Sales:** Josh presented in place of Sarah Doan on PARO services: PARO sources accountants and bookkeepers, 99.9% of their work is remote. Next step in the process is a kickoff call where communication expectations will be sorted. PARO currently has 170 employees and 1000 freelancers. There will be no change in rates throughout the year unless there is change in scope. PARO will continue to use QuickBooks through the SWCD account. PARO will communicate the need for onboarding, likely a month of overlap with a 12-month term. This can be reviewed and updated as needed. The quote for services is \$800/month and hours will vary month to month. Audits can be done by current providers or through PARO CPA's. Options will be discussed at the Strategic Planning meeting and a decision will be made at the March meeting.
- **TSA 8 Engineers Update & Report – Don Rettinger:** TSA 8 has lost several staff and there have not been any new hires. Bill Westerberg is the only engineer left, there were formerly more engineers. There will be a meeting in March to discuss services and equity of services. TSA has been a more affordable resource in the past and assists local staff with small projects. Emails and letters of support may be helpful to voice concerns. HC SWCD will send a letter of support to maintain needed TSA 8 services.
- **LFT Meeting 2/24/2022 (Don Sells/Heidi Anderson-Thomas):** MN Forest Resource Council and SWCD Forestry meeting coming together for LFT meeting to work together and more efficiently. SWCD forestry meeting plans to work together better with

landowners. RIPE 100 Rural Investment program being proposed. Supervisor Sells will add more information to his report

Chair Noyes called for a break at 10:30am.

Meeting reconvened at 10:35am.

- **Pricing for Brandon's FSP Written:** HC SWCD will plan to state "Current DNR Plan Writing Documents" in policy. This will be approved in the March meeting. Brandon has written two plans prior to this decision. We plan to charge the client the DNR rate as the training was done under DNR supervision. Rates were recently at a base rate of \$350 for a plan and \$7/acre at time of commitment. Brandon will be working with school forests who have not paid for services in the past. Brandon will bring more information to the board if he continues to work with school forests.
- **Year End Reporting – Feb 23rd 9am-2pm:** Crystal and Annette submitted all required reporting to eLINK and are waiting for response. Annette will work on updating the profit loss, balance sheet, quarterly report, and updated January report.
- **Tchotchkes – Marcel Noyes:** Quote for \$14 per cup and water containers will be similar. SWCD can purchase the items to reduce the price. Crystal will investigate getting locally made pottery as well.
- **Technician's Annual Review (Brandon & Jake):** Branden and Jake have been with the SWCD for one year and their reviews are scheduled for February 28th and March 1st. Crystal will meet with the personnel committee and bring to the Board in March.
- **Strategic Planning:** Crystal will send out a draft agenda, documents, and Zoom link.

Action:

- **2021 Audit Engagement Letter from Peterson:** Annette sent out a copy of the audit letter and agreement for the upcoming 2021 financial audit. Fees for the audit will be \$3,150. **Supervisor Sells moved to hire Peterson to do the annual audit at the rate of \$3,150. Supervisor Anderson-Thomas seconded the motion. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.**
- **MASWCD Dues for 2022:** Annual due membership dues are \$4,976.44 with an increase of about \$1,100 from previous years. **Supervisor Goodrich moved to pay the MASWCD dues and ask that the MASWCD review costs and expenses to reduce dues rates in the future. Supervisor Anderson-Thomas seconded the motion. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.**
- **Declare Bank:** Supervisor Sells moved to maintain banks as currently existing, Northview as primary and Citizens National as secondary. Supervisor Goodrich seconded the motion. **Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.**
- **Declare Newspaper:** Supervisor Goodrich made a motion to continue the relationships with the Park Rapids Enterprise as declared newspaper. Motion seconded by Supervisor Sells. **Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.**
- **COLA Increase for Staff:** Crystal suggested that merit-based reviews at the same timeline as the COLA that it should be considered in the review process instead of

changing wages twice in a year for technicians. This will be discussed in a strategic meeting.

- **Work Plan & Budget for MRH 1W1P:** The MRW 1W1P Work Plan and MOA will be presented to the County Commissioners for formal approval on February 15th. **Supervisor Sells moved the HC SWCD Board approve the Work Plan Budget, the MOA, and MRH Watershed Comprehensive Plan and the resolution for Mississippi Headwaters 1W1P. Supervisor Goodrich seconded the motion. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.**
- **MOA for MRH Watershed Comprehensive Plan:** This item is covered above.
- **Resolution for MRHW:** This item is covered above.
- **New Hire - Community Conservationist Recommendation from Personnel Committee:** This item will be covered later in the meeting.
- **MN SWCD Forestry Association:** Every year \$60 has been paid and not \$15 associate member annual dues. The \$15 dues for additional members may be for a voting member. Supervisor Sells clarified that the \$15 option is for individual, non SWCD memberships. **Supervisor Goodrich moved to pay the membership fees of \$60 to the Minnesota SWCD Forestry Association. Supervisor Anderson-Thomas seconded the motion. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.**

PUBLIC INPUT

- **Tom Krueger, Hubbard County Commissioner:** Reports that the Heritage Living Center is losing money. The board is looking at how to spend AARP money, 1 million has already been spent to maintain the HLC facility. Holding off on continued spending of the ARP funds so they can potentially be used to offset the losses at Heritage. The county would like to see it purchased by a nonprofit as rates will continue to go up. Not many counties own a nursing home, there are only about 6 in the state. The occupancy rate was down to 50% of capacity, prior to covid-19 pandemic it was around 80%+. It used to be profitable, but there have been issues with staffing, covid, and competition. The county would like to be out of the ownership.

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

Jody Peek gave her report, her notes are available upon request.

REPORTS ON PROJECTS AND MEETINGS

Chair Noyes: Supervisor Noyes attended a meeting with the Hubbard County Board of Commissioners. Supervisor Noyes also attended a workshop for a Mississippi River Headwaters 1W1P planning committee which was well attended and hoping to move forward to agreement. He will also be attending the grazing workshop. Supervisor Noyes attended a water advocacy presentation on Twin Metals non-renewal. He spoke to commissioners about committee assignments and having them in our meetings helps the SWCD.

Supervisor Rettinger: Attended TSA8 meeting in Bemidji and worked on the personnel committee and attended the last meeting.

Supervisor Sells: Attended SWCD forestry meeting on January 20th. Supervisor Sells also attended the carbon market and RIPE100 presentations. Supervisor sells shared two forestry resolutions, the first encourages BWSR to continue support for forestry programs. The second resolution tries to bring together BWSR, NRCS, DNR, etc. to form a forestry CREP. Results of the DNR/SWCD tree planting sale survey were shared.

Supervisor Goodrich: Supervisor Goodrich attended the Twin Metals Webinar. He will be attending the Grazing workshop virtually and represented HC SWCD at the HCTA meeting. Supervisor Goodrich was involved in the interview process for the Conservation Outreach Technician and will be making a hiring recommendation to the Board today.

Supervisor Anderson-Thomas: Supervisor Anderson-Thomas attended a forestry association meeting. She also watched the USDA climate smart and forestry program which is a voluntary program. She will be attending the SWCD grazing workshop, a presentation on wake boat studies in Minnesota, and the LFT meeting.

District Manager's Report: District Manager Crystal Mathisrud reported on the following: The Northern Water Land Trust proposal was accepted and funded. This means an intern will be coming onboard and continuing plans and partnerships for grants. Crystal is organizing presentations to schools and use of the virtual lab with quiz questions. Crystal is also working on a proposal with CPL on school forests. Crystal's report is available upon request.

Administrative Assistant's Report: Annette Olson reported on the following: Misprint of forest stewardship acres from 250 to 2,500. Annette's notes are available upon request.

Other Staff

Claire Hansen reported on mason bee houses and seed starting in schools and Brandon Spain-Brist reported on new tree slurry for tree sales. Staff notes are available upon request.

CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence presented at this time.

WORKING LIST OF PRIORITIES:

Leadership- Supervisor Noyes met with commissioners this month. Supervisor Rettinger's work with TSA8. Crystal's working on grants and potential for Crystal to testify at the state legislature. Crystal and Jake will also be presenting at the NACD national convention and making connections for future funding.

Financial Management- Contracting an outside accountant.

Supervisor Goodrich recommended to Chair Noyes that we close the regular meeting and go into closed session at 12:20 pm to discuss new staff hire, *per Statute 13D.05 Subd 3.(a)*. **Supervisor Noyes made a motion to close the open session. Supervisor Sells seconded the motion. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.**

Supervisor Goodrich moved to close the closed session and reopen the open session. Supervisor Rettinger seconded the motion. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.

Chair Noyes re-opened the regular board meeting at 12:45 pm.

The Personnel Committee recommended Claire Hansen for the open position. **Supervisor Goodrich made a motion to hire and transition Claire from a part time employee to a the full-time position of Community Conservationist and award her an hourly increase to \$23/hr and full-time benefits and have this transition exclude her from a probationary period and that this transition take place on March 7, 2022. Supervisor Anderson-Thomas seconded the motion. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.** *District Manager, Crystal Mathisrud prepared Claire's appointment letter with March 6, 2022, as her official starting date.*

NEXT MEETING

The next regular board meeting of the Hubbard County Board of Supervisors will be on Wednesday, March 9th, 2022, at 8:30 a.m. via ZOOM. Items on the agenda include: Nathan Wiese (Nitrates in Hubbard County), 2/24/2022 LFT Meeting Review, Grazing Workshop Review, Financial Committee 2023 Budget update, Spring Newsletter, schedule off-site nitrate clinics, check equipment for lake testing, SWCD Managers Meeting, SWCD Legislative Days, start reviewing sunseting resolutions, PARO full-service bookkeeper, technicians annual review, and items covered at the strategic work session.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Supervisor Goodrich to adjourn the meeting; meeting adjourned at 12:55 pm.

APPROVED: March 9, 2022
Date

SECRETARY 
Lynn Goodrich, Secretary