

**Shell Rock River Watershed District
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2023**

Managers present: Al Bakken, Mick Delger, Mike Lee, Dan DeBoer, Brad Kramer and Mike Hanson

Managers absent: Joe Pacovsky

Manager Delger called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. on December 12, 2023 at the Shell Rock River Watershed District, 305 S 1st Ave., Albert Lea, MN 56007.

No one from the public wished to speak during the public forum.

Manager Kramer offered the following motion:

Move to approve the agenda with correction: Change agenda item 5b from a motion to a resolution.

Manager Hanson seconded the motion.

After discussion, a roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Manager Hanson offered the following motion:

Move to approve the consent agenda as presented.

- a. Minutes of the November 14, 2023 SRRWD Regular Board Meeting
- b. Minutes of the December 5, 2023 SRRWD Personnel Committee Meeting
- c. November 2023 Treasurer's Report Subject to Audit
- d. November 2023 Project Fund Treasurer's Report Subject to Audit
- e. Authorize Payment of Claims
- f. Authorize Payment of Project Fund Disbursements

Manager Lee seconded the motion.

After discussion, a roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Administrator Henschel reviewed the Personnel Committee's recommendation of a 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and provided comparable adjustments of other agencies.

Manager DeBoer offered the following motion:

Move to approve Personnel Committee recommendation – Cost of Living Adjustment.

Manager Kramer seconded the motion.

After discussion, a roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Administrator Henschel provided insight on the history of the manager per diems, offered comparable per diem rates of other watershed districts, and explained the Personnel Committee's recommendation. The recommendation includes raising the per diem from \$55.00 per day to \$100 per day for meetings under four hours and \$125 per day for meetings over four hours.

Manager Hanson offered the following motion:

Move to introduce Resolution 2023-12

Resolution 2023-12

**Shell Rock River Watershed District
Board of Managers Per Diem Compensation and
Reimbursement for Travel and Necessary Expenses**

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statute § 103D.315, subd. 8 (2023) provides for up to a \$125 per day per diem for watershed district managers for meetings and performance of other necessary duties;

WHEREAS, effective January 1, 2024, the Shell Rock River Watershed District Board of Managers ("Board of Managers") desires to establish the per diem rate for the Board of Managers to \$100 per day for attendance at meetings and the performance of other necessary duties under four hours and \$125 per day for attendance at meetings and the performance of other necessary duties lasting more than four hours;

WHEREAS, the Board of Managers considers the following as necessary duties: expenses incurred by Board Managers for attendance at meetings and events, mileage (at federal mileage rate) or commercial transportation expenses, parking fees, toll charges, hotel accommodations, meals if travel over 30 miles, expenses for use of personal equipment (not to exceed \$25), and child care as allowed by Minnesota law;

WHEREAS, attendance at parties, county fairs, festivals, parades, or other social events are not eligible for per diem payments;

WHEREAS, no per diem payments may be made for meetings with groups unless authorized in the minutes and there is a subsequent report of meeting to the Board of Managers;

WHEREAS, no more than one per diem per day can be collected;

WHEREAS, the Board of Managers desires to reimburse the Managers for travel and necessary expenses as allowed by Minnesota Statute § 103D.315, subd. 8 (2023);

WHEREAS, the Statute allows for a mileage rate not to exceed the federally established mileage rate;

WHEREAS, the District desires the District staff, in conjunction with professional services as needed, to establish a policy stating necessary duties and reasonable expenses, how mileage will be determined, who is authorized to approve travel expenses, what supporting documentation and records are required, and limits and time restrictions on reimbursements.

NOW THEREFORE,

- Section 1: The District hereby authorizes the District to increase the per diem rate for the Board of Managers to the allowable statutory amount of \$100 per day for attendance at meetings and the performance of other necessary duties under four hours and \$125 per day for attendance at meetings and the performance of other necessary duties lasting more than four hours.
- Section 2: The District hereby authorizes the District to reimburse the Board of Managers for travel and necessary expenses as allowed by applicable law.
- Section 3: The District hereby authorizes the staff to establish a policy stating how mileage will be determined, necessary duties and reasonable expenses, who is authorized to approve travel expenses, what supporting documentation and records are required, and limits and time restrictions on reimbursements.

Manager Lee seconded the motion.

After discussion, a roll call vote was taken and the resolution was unanimously approved.

Administrator Henschel and attorney Stephanie Haedt explained the Earned Sick and Safe Time Leave Policy (ESST) including accrual hours, uses, and part-time, temporary, and seasonal employee differences.

Manager Hanson offered the following motion:

Move to approve Personnel Committee recommendation - Earned Sick and Safe Time Leave Policy.

Manager DeBoer seconded the motion.

After discussion, a roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Administrator Henschel and attorney Stephanie Haedt continued by discussing the updates needed to the SRRWD Employee Handbook including ESST. These updates will come before the board in early spring.

Administrator Henschel offered highlights from the MN Watersheds Annual Conference and Tradeshow. All SRRWD staff and two managers attended the event on November 28-December 1, 2023 in Alexandria, MN. The conference provided multiple workshops including Watershed Management, Staff Development, and Drainage Information. The SRRWD celebrated winning "Best Picture" for their video and the 20-year Longevity award at the annual banquet and award presentation.

The total proposed Administrative budget for 2024 is \$270,800.00 and the proposed Project Fund budget is \$18,603,001.00. The proposed Administrative levy is \$250,000.00, Liability Insurance Fund levy \$20,800.00 and the Debt Service levy is \$178,625.00.

Manager Kramer offered the following motion:

Move to approve the 2024 Administrative Levy and Certify the Administrative Levy to the Freeborn County Auditor-Treasurer.

Manager Hanson seconded the motion.

After discussion, a roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Manager DeBoer offered the following motion:

Move to approve the 2024 Debt Service Levy and Certify the Debt Service Levy to the Freeborn County Auditor-Treasurer.

Manager Lee seconded the motion.

After discussion, a roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Manager Hanson offered the following motion:

Move to approve the 2024 Liability Insurance Levy and Certify the Liability Insurance Levy to the Freeborn County Auditor-Treasurer.

Manager Kramer seconded the motion.

After discussion, a roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Manager Bakken offered the following motion:

Move to approve the 2024 Administrative Budget.

Manager Kramer seconded the motion.

After discussion, a roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Manager Bakken offered the following motion:

Move to approve the 2024 Project Budget.

Manager Lee seconded the motion.

After discussion, a roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Project and Program Manager, Courtney Phillips, reported that the Shell Rock River and Winnebago watersheds will apply for Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) funding. If allocated, the planning group would use the \$42,000 grant for a soil health questionnaire, no-till mailer, and a street sweeping study with the City of Albert Lea.

Manager Hanson offered the following motion:

Move to apply for MPCA WRAPS funding.

Manager Lee seconded the motion.

After discussion, a vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Courtney continued by discussing the Watershed Based Implementation Funding Grant Program (WBIF). The SRRWD has been aggressive with spending \$325,000.00 of previous WBIF dollars on projects; however, other watersheds have not. BWSR is redistributing unused and returned watershed-based implementation funds to accelerate water management outcomes and improve consistency and efficiency across the state. The 1W1P planning group will apply for \$925,000.000 for rain gardens, cover crops, septic system installations, and structural practices. The funds need to be spent by the end of 2025. A Policy Committee meeting will take place next week.

Manager Hanson offered the following motion:

Move to apply for Watershed Based Implementation Supplemental Funds.

Manager Kramer seconded the motion.

After discussion, a vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Courtney continued by discussing the purchase agreement for the Bryson Wetland permanent conservation easement. The 41-acre parcel is located across from the Orr and IC&E property. The Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources will fund the permanent easement and the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council will fund the wetland restoration. The property was appraised and the purchase price for the easement is \$420,000.00.

Manager Hanson offered the following motion:

Move to approve purchase agreement – Bryson

Manager DeBoer seconded the motion.

After discussion, a vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Courtney concluded with an update on the Fountain Lake In-Lake Habitat Restoration. The Public Waters permit was received which involves some fishing spawning timeline exclusions. The large project will be split between three bid packages including in-lake work, shoreline restoration work, and vegetation and native planting components. The bids will be live on QuestCDN tomorrow

and bids will be due January 3, 2024 but an award date of January 9, 2024. The project needs to be completed by the end of June, 2024.

During Managers Items, Manager Bakken questioned the status of the Country Club property and requested an update at the next board meeting. Administrator Henschel reported on the tree removal at the Confined Disposal Facility (CDF). Manager Bakken mentioned volunteer trees at the two-stage ditch project on Judicial Ditch 9.

Administrator Henschel reminded the Board of Managers of the next board meeting on January 9, 2024 and the upcoming County Drainage conference in Alexandria on February 7-8, 2024.

Manager Bakken offered the following motion:

Move to adjourn the meeting.

Manager Hanson seconded the motion.

After discussion, a roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimously approved.