



**Minutes of the December 13, 2023
Brown SWCD Regular Board Meeting
Brown County Office Building, Sleepy Eye, MN**

Meeting was called to order at 4:21pm by Craig Fischer.

PRESENT

1. Craig Fischer – Chair
2. Mark Wellner – Vice-Chair
3. Brad Augustin – Secretary
4. Bill Eckstein – Treasurer
5. Rae Runck – PRI
6. Melanie Krueger – District Manager

AGENDA

- ◆ Motion was made by Eckstein and seconded by Runck to approve the agenda with one additional item of Comp Time Payout and the removal of item #16- 2024 Health Insurance under the New Business section.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried

CONSENT AGENDA

- ◆ Reviewed the consent agenda items presented which included the November 8, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes, the November 2023 Treasurer's Report, and the Bills Report dated November 4, 2023 to December 8, 2023. Motion was made by Wellner and seconded by Eckstein to approve the consent agenda items as presented.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried

SWCD STAFF REPORTS

- ◆ Reviewed the staff reports provided by Krueger, Larson, and Botz.

PF/FARM BILL WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST REPORT

- ◆ No report, position is currently vacant. Manager gave an update on the hiring process.

NRCS REPORT

- ◆ Reviewed report provided by Kjorness.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

- ◆ Commissioner Braun was not able to attend the meeting but emailed manager a list of current updates from activities at Brown County to share with the group.

COST SHARE REPORT & CONTRACTS

- ◆ Reviewed the updated cost-share report and then presented contracts for approval.
- ◆ SCS2022-02, Gerald Mathiowetz, WASCOD, Mulligan 17. Final project cost of \$32,128.00. Total cost share payment of \$21,371.00 from the Brown SWCD FY21, FY22, and FY23 cost share grants, \$2,327.24, \$8,010.46, and \$11,033.30, respectively. The balance of project cost share funds being provided to landowner through EQIP. A motion was made by Eckstein and seconded by Wellner to approve SCS2022-02 cost share payment of \$21,371.00 to Gerald Mathiowetz.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ Amendment 1, WBIF-WW-21-08-01, Lorin Helget, WASCOD, Albin 14. Amendment changes the contract install date from 12/1/2023 to 12/31/2023. A motion was made by Eckstein and seconded by Runck to recommend for approval, Amendment 1 to WBIF-WW-21-08-01 with Lorin Helget for contract install date change.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ Amendment 2, WBIF-WW-21-08-01, Lorin Helget, WASCOD, Albin 14. Amendment 2 changes the contract install date from 12/31/2023 to 12/31/2024 and increases the project cost share amount. The project is being redesigned to add a second WASCOD which changes the estimated project cost to \$25,941.85 with an updated 85% cost-share amount of \$22,050.57 A motion was made by Eckstein and seconded by Runck to recommend for approval, Amendment 2 to WBIF-WW-21-08-01 with Lorin Helget for contract install date change and increase in cost share funds.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried

NEW BUSINESS

- ◆ **Grant Updates:** Krueger advised the FY23 Conservation Delivery Grant funds have been spent as of 11/30/2023 and final grant report submitted to BWSR.
- ◆ **2024 AISP Work Plan:** Discussed the draft 2024 Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan as presented by manager.
 - ◇ Motion was made by Runck and seconded by Eckstein to approve a \$5,000 contribution to MN Traditions social media project for 2024.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
 - ◇ Motion was made by Wellner and seconded by Eckstein to approve the 2024 Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan for Brown County as presented.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ **2024 Personnel Policy:** Manager gave an update on the development of Personnel Policy for the district and then advised one item, Earned Sick and Safe Time, needed to be approved and in place by January 1st. Motion was made by Augustin and seconded by Wellner to adopt the Earned Sick and Safe Time section of the Personnel Policy as presented, effective January 1, 2024.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ **2024 Pay Scale:** Brown SWCD follows the non-union Brown County pay scale grid which is anticipated to be approved by Commissioners next week with a 3% general wage increase. Motion to adopt the 2024 Brown County Non-Union Pay Scale, as approved by the Brown County Commissioners, for Brown SWCD employees effective January 1, 2024.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried

- ◆ **Personnel Committee – Staff Review Recommendation:** Personnel Committee conducted Krueger’s annual performance review and gave a report to the board as well as recommended a pay scale increase due to a successful performance review. Motion was made by Augustin and seconded by Eckstein to approve Personnel Committee’s recommendation for a pay scale increase to Step 6 at current Grade Level effective January 1, 2024 for Melanie Krueger.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ **District Manager – Staff Review Recommendation:** District Manager conducted Larson’s annual performance review and gave a report to the board as well as recommended a pay scale increase due to a successful performance review. Motion was made by Eckstein and seconded by Augustin to approve district manager’s recommendation for a pay scale increase to Step 2 at current Grade Level effective January 1, 2024 for Dru Larson.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ **Personnel Committee – Hiring Recommendation:** The Personnel Committee members gave an update about the hiring process conducted and then gave a recommendation for board consideration and approval to hire three applicants.
 - ◇ Motion was made by Augustin and seconded by Runck to authorize Personnel Committee recommendation to hire Hailey Olson for a full-time Conservation Technician 1 position at Grade 5, Step 1 wage with standard benefits and probation phase, with an anticipated January 2024 start date to be determined upon job acceptance.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
 - ◇ Motion was made by Runck and seconded by Wellner to authorize Personnel Committee recommendation to hire Jarin Spence for a full-time Conservation Technician 1 position at Grade 5, Step 1 wage with standard benefits and probation phase, with an anticipated January 2024 start date to be determined upon job acceptance.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
 - ◇ Motion was made by Augustin and seconded by Runck to authorize Personnel Committee recommendation to add a sixth position to Brown SWCD staffing for a full-time Conservation Technician position to begin in May-June 2024.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
 - ◇ Motion was made by Wellner and seconded by Runck to authorize Personnel Committee recommendation to make a conditional job offer to Teddy Geifer for a full-time Conservation Technician 1 position at Grade 5, Step 1 wage with standard benefits and probation phase, with an anticipated May-June 2024 start date, and with the offer being contingent upon receiving college degree.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ **Office Furniture Changes:** Discussed the need to redo the office workstation layout due to an increase in the number of staff members at the district. Manager has started initial discussions with River Bend and requested authorization for the purchase of up to \$20,000 with the intent to reuse as much existing furniture as possible to reduce cost. The cost will be included in the overall 2024 budget. If authorization is given, the plan is to finalize the new layout by end of December to early January with a tentative mid-to-late February installation. Motion was made by Wellner and seconded by Runck to

authorize District Manager to work with River Bend to determine a new office furniture workstation layout and complete a purchase up to \$20,000 maximum.

Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner

Opposed: None; Motion Carried

- ◆ **December Office Closure Update:** Manager advised she will no longer be taking vacation leave at the end of December so the office will be open during the last week of the month from December 26-29.
- ◆ **Annual Planning Meeting:** Discussed the Annual Planning meeting typically held in January. It was agreed to cancel that meeting for 2024 and consider an orientation learning based workshop instead for Supervisors and staff.
- ◆ **Comp Time Payout:** Discussion was held on paying out comp time leave hours at end of year to manager versus carrying them over to 2024. Motion was made by Runck and seconded by Augustin to authorize payout of all unused comp time leave hours to District Manager, Melanie Krueger, at end of year.

Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner

Opposed: None; Motion Carried

*Fischer exited meeting at 6:02pm.

◆ **Meeting Reports:**

- ◇ Augustin gave an update about the GBERBA Policy/Technical joint meeting attended on November 17 in Mankato.
- ◇ Augustin, Eckstein, and Runck gave an update about the MASWCD Area 6 meeting attended on November 28 in Courtland.
- ◇ Eckstein gave a report about the RCRCA Board meeting attended on December 7.
- ◇ Augustin and Eckstein gave an update about the MASWCD Convention events and meetings attended on December 12 and/or 13.

◆ **Upcoming Meetings/Events:** A motion was made by Eckstein and seconded by Runck to approve the upcoming meetings/events:

- ◇ Personnel Committee Meetings as needed (Eckstein, Wellner, Krueger)
- ◇ Thursday, January 4 – RCRCA Board Meeting, 9:00am, Marshall (Eckstein)
- ◇ Wednesday, January 10 – Brown SWCD Board Meeting, 4:15pm (All)


Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Runck, Wellner

Opposed: None; Motion Carried

Meeting Adjourned – 6:30pm

Secretary: _____

Date: _____



1-10-24