



**Minutes of the December 9, 2025
Brown SWCD Regular Board Meeting
Brown County Office Building, Sleepy Eye, MN**

Meeting was called to order at 10:32am 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

ABSENT

1. None

AGENDA

- ◆ Motion was made by Wellner and seconded by Eckstein to approve the agenda as presented with approval to move item #6 to before item #2.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

*Commissioner Braun via phone 10:33am-10:40am

- ◆ Commissioner Braun was not able to attend today's meeting in-person but called in via phone with a quick update on some items at the county level.

CONSENT AGENDA

- ◆ Reviewed the consent agenda items presented which included the November 7, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes, the November 2025 Treasurer's Report, and the Bills Report dated November 5, 2025 to December 3, 2025. Motion was made by Eckstein and seconded by Runck to approve the consent agenda items presented.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried

SWCD STAFF REPORTS

- ◆ Reviewed staff reports provided by Botz, Giefer, Krueger, Olson, Portner and Spence.

PF/FARM BILL WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST REPORT

- ◆ Reviewed staff report provided by Ecker.

NRCS REPORT

- ◆ Reviewed report provided by Kjorness.

COST SHARE REPORT & CONTRACTS

- ◆ Reviewed the cost-share report and presented contract items for approval.
- ◆ Amendment 2, CC2025-02, Scott Peterson, WASCOD, Home 5. Amendment is to increase cost share funds by \$618.00 from \$14,266.20 to \$14,884.20 due to additional tile and granular backfill needed on the project. Grant funds encumbered for the additional amount is FY26-27 Conservation Contracts Grant- \$618.00. Motion was made by Eckstein and seconded by Wellner to approve Amendment 2 to CC2025-02 cost share contract with Scott Peterson for increase in cost share funding.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ CC2025-04, Dean Sellner, Cover Crop (single and multi-species), Stark Township 17, 15, 24 and 21, 105 acres total, one-year contract. All installed as of 9/18/2025 and checked/certified as of 10/6/2025. Total cost share payment of \$5,893.90 from the FY25 Conservation Contracts Grant. Motion was made by Runck and seconded by Eckstein to approve CC2025-04 cost share payment of \$5,893.90 to Dean Sellner.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ CC2025-02, Scott Peterson, WASCOD, Home 5. Final project cost of \$19,845.60. Total cost share payment of \$14,884.20 (75% cost-share) from the FY24 Conservation Contracts Grant- \$7,654.10, the FY25 Conservation Contracts Grant- \$6,612.10, and the FY26-27 Conservation Contracts Grant- \$618.00. Motion was made by Eckstein and seconded by Runck to approve CC2025-02 cost share payment of \$14,884.20 to Scott Peterson.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ 25-CRP-BRO-001, Gregg Anderson, CRP Incentive for 7.66 acres, Burnstown 24. Voucher for \$766.00 CRP Incentive payment. Motion was made by Wellner and seconded by Augustin to recommend the voucher for payment approval to Redwood SWCD, 25-CRP-BRO-001 CRP Incentive payment of \$766.00 to Gregg Anderson.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ 25-CRP-BRO-002, Alan Holm, CRP Incentive for 8.92 acres, Sigel 7. Voucher for \$892.00 CRP Incentive payment. Motion was made by Augustin and seconded by Eckstein to recommend the voucher for payment approval to Redwood SWCD, 25-CRP-BRO-002 CRP Incentive payment of \$892.00 to Alan Holm.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ 25-CRP-BRO-004, Michael Kuck, CRP Incentive for 5.73 acres, Cottonwood 4. Voucher for \$687.60 CRP Incentive payment. Motion was made by Augustin and seconded by Wellner to recommend the voucher for payment approval to Redwood SWCD, 25-CRP-BRO-004 CRP Incentive payment of \$687.60 to Michael Kuck.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ 25-CRP-BRO-005, Willard Tauer, CRP Incentive for 13.33 acres, Sigel 23. Voucher for \$1,333.00 CRP Incentive payment. Motion was made by Runck and seconded by Eckstein to recommend the voucher for payment approval to Redwood SWCD, 25-CRP-BRO-005 CRP Incentive payment of \$1,333.00 to Willard Tauer.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ Cancel: 25-CRP-BRO-003, Arland Roiger, CRP Incentive for .83 acres, Stately 4. CRP1 Contract was not approved, landowner requested cancellation of the contract. Motion

was made by Eckstein and seconded by Wellner to recommend cancellation of contract to Redwood SWCD, 25-CRP-BRO-003 CRP Incentive contract with Arland Roiger.

Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner

Opposed: None; Motion Carried

NEW BUSINESS

- ◆ **Grant Updates:** Reviewed the grant update information provided about two final grant reports submitted to BWSR for the 2025 Conservation Delivery grant and the 2022/2023 CWMA (Cooperative Weed Management Area) grant.
- ◆ **Soil Health Practices Grant Program:** Discussed payments for the completed projects this year for the soil health practices grant program advising there is a delay due to reports needed from the FSA office. Motion was made by Augustin and seconded by Eckstein to authorize District Manager to issue cost share payments for the Soil Health Practices Grant program contracted projects that were completed this year.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck
Abstain: Wellner; Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ **2026 WCA Agreement:** Reviewed the annual WCA agreement information with Brown County. Motion was made by Runck and seconded by Wellner to approve the 2026 WCA Agreement with Brown County.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ **2026 AIS Prevention Work Plan:** Discussed the work plan presented for planned program activities this next year. Once approved, a copy is sent to the DNR as required by statute. Motion was made by Augustin and seconded by Runck to approve the 2026 Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan for Brown County as presented.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
- ◆ **MN Paid Leave Policy Items:** Discussion was held on items related to the Minnesota Paid Leave program that begins January 1, 2026 and that was discussed at last month's meeting to utilize the state program with policy decisions to be made at this meeting.
 - ◇ Motion was made by Augustin and seconded by Wellner to utilize the State of Minnesota's Paid Leave program effective January 1, 2026.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
 - ◇ Motion was made by Wellner and seconded by Eckstein that Minnesota Paid Leave hours to an employee through the State's program are not eligible for accrual of sick leave or vacation leave from the SWCD.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
 - ◇ Motion was made by Eckstein and seconded by Runck to allow employees to 'supplement' their Paid Leave benefit amount with accrued sick or vacation leave hours to match their regular rate of pay.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried
 - ◇ Motion was made by Runck and seconded by Wellner to limit the portion of an employee's Paid Leave that may be taken intermittently to 480 hours per benefit year with a 15-minute minimum use increment.
Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner
Opposed: None; Motion Carried

- ◆ **2026 Pay Scale:** Brown SWCD follows Brown County's non-union pay scale grid. The grid is not approved for 2026 yet per human resources at the county but anticipates it being completed in January. Rather than wait for a subsequent district board meeting, manager requested the board to authorize the pay scale upon approval by the County Commissioners. Motion was made by Wellner and seconded by Runck to adopt the 2026 Brown County Non-Union Pay Scale, as approved by the Brown County Commissioners, effective January 1st, 2026 for Brown SWCD employees.

Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner

Opposed: None; Motion Carried

- ◆ **Personnel Committee – Manager Review Recommendation:** Personnel Committee members Wellner and Eckstein conducted Krueger's annual performance review and gave a report to the board as well as recommended a 1-step pay scale increase effective January 1, 2026 due to a successful performance review. Motion was made by Wellner and seconded by Eckstein to approve Personnel Committee's recommendation for annual performance review and authorize the recommended pay scale increase effective January 1, 2026.

Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner

Opposed: None; Motion Carried

- ◆ **District Manager – Staff Review Recommendations:** Manager conducted annual performance reviews with all staff members and advised all employees are doing a great job and had successful evaluations from manager. Manager recommends a 1-step pay scale increase effective January 1, 2026 for Mary Beth Botz, Teddy Giefer and Isabella Portner, and recommends a job level change to Conservation Technician 2 with a 1-grade level pay scale increase effective January 1, 2026 for Hailey Olson and Jarin Spence. Motion to approve District Manager's recommendation for annual performance reviews and authorize the recommended pay scale increases and job level changes effective January 1, 2026 for all employees.

Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner

Opposed: None; Motion Carried

- ◆ **Social Banquet for Outstanding Conservationist:** Discussed potential dates and details for a banquet at the Sleepy Eye Golf Club for this year's Outstanding Conservationist, Bill Vogel.

- ◆ **Meeting Reports:**

- ◇ Augustin gave an update about the GBERBA Joint Policy/Technical Meeting attended in Mankato on November 14.
- ◇ Eckstein was not able to attend the December 4 RCRCA meeting.

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

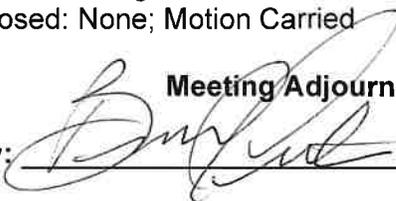
- ◇ Friday, December 19 – GBERBA Executive Meeting, 1:00pm, Webex or Windom (Augustin)
- ◇ Monday, January 5 – RCRCA Board Meeting, 9:00am, Marshall (Eckstein)
- ◇ Tuesday, January 13 – Brown SWCD Board Meeting, 10:30am (All)

Affirmative: Augustin, Eckstein, Fischer, Runck, Wellner

Opposed: None; Motion Carried

Meeting Adjourned – 12:00pm

Secretary: _____



Date: _____

1-13-26