PRESENT: Richard Cook, Tim Little, Mike Ludwig, Richard Peterson, Jim Purfeerst, Steve Pahs, Justin Fuchs, Travis Hirman, Rice County Commissioner Jeff Docken, and Debbie Skarupa.

Chairman Jim Purfeerst called the meeting to order at 8:58 a.m.

MINUTES: Motion by Richard Cook, seconded by Mike Ludwig to approve the January 11, 2017 board minutes. Ayes: Richard Cook, Tim Little, Mike Ludwig, Richard Peterson, and Jim Purfeerst. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL/BILLS PAYABLE: Motion by Richard Cook, seconded by Tim Little to accept the December program summary and February bills payable subject to audit. Ayes: Richard Cook, Tim Little, Mike Ludwig, Richard Peterson, and Jim Purfeerst. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

PUBLIC RELATIONS & INFO. SPECIALIST: Steve said two applications have been received and this Friday is the deadline. A Personnel Committee Meeting will be called and the position will be on the March Board Meeting for board approval.

NEW BUSINESS:

GARY PEDERSEN BUFFER LAW CONCERNS: Board reviewed a letter from Mr. Pedersen and discussed options for compliance with the buffer law. Staff noted that the SWCD does not have the authority to change the requirements, but there may be some alternative practices to consider. Board recommended Gary Pedersen contact conservation office staff to look at available options.

DAY AT THE CAPITOL: Yearly Day at the Capitol and Legislative Briefing will be March 20 and 21. Best to attend the night before briefing so up-to-speed and informed. Discussion. Jim, Tim, Mike, Steve and Dick Peterson will attend the night before and drive back. Registration check for $80 each will be mailed in for everyone. Format is different than previous years and supervisors will leave earlier in the afternoon.
**2015 BOUND COPIES OF AUDIT:** The final copy of the December 31, 2015 audit had been mailed to supervisors. Mike Ludwig asked if it is generally this time of year that we receive them. Yes, within a month or two. Audit was more complicated this year because we are now required to add in the projected PERA retirement liability amounts. Discussion. Motion by Tim Little, seconded by Dick Peterson to accept the 2015 audit as received from the auditor. Ayes: Richard Cook, Tim Little, Mike Ludwig, Richard Peterson, and Jim Purfeerst. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**RICE COUNTY EXTENSION FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR:** We usually nominate our Outstanding Conservationist. Motion by Dick Peterson, seconded by Mike Ludwig to nominate the Steve and Elaine Trnka family for Rice County Farm Family of the Year. Ayes: Richard Cook, Tim Little, Mike Ludwig, Richard Peterson, and Jim Purfeerst. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**RICE COUNTY 4-H AWARDS:** Motion by Dick Peterson, seconded by Tim Little to support Rice County 4-H awards with a donation of $54.00 for 7 awards. Ayes: Richard Cook, Tim Little, Mike Ludwig, Richard Peterson, and Jim Purfeerst. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**MASTER JPB AGREEMENT FOR BWSR RIM GRANT:** BWSR is changing the way they handle the RIM (Reinvest in MN) grant starting January 1, 2017. Districts will be reimbursed by invoicing quarterly work orders. Justin Fuchs explained the proposed changes to CREP and RIM. There is a fair amount of interest in CREP because RIM is not doing active sign-ups. Minimum enrollment is 8 acres for CREP but that may change. More information will be forthcoming. Motion by Richard Cook, seconded by Dick Peterson to enter into the Master Joint Powers Agreement with BWSR for RIM. Ayes: Richard Cook, Tim Little, Mike Ludwig, Richard Peterson, and Jim Purfeerst. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**SCOTT WMO B. SIREK TERRACE PROJECT:** District does not need to sign contracts for more than $20,000 but WMO wants board approval in the minutes. Bill Sirek will pay for a recorded easement on this property.

WMO Bill Sirek 8410 30 Street W - Elko Wheatland Twp. Sec 22 - 5 terraces-$40,909.50.

Motion by Richard Cook, seconded by Tim Little to support approval of the Bill Sirek Scott WMO Contract. Ayes: Richard Cook, Tim Little, Mike Ludwig, Richard Peterson, and Jim Purfeerst. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**SRF JPB MEETING:** Steve Pahs explained we are part of an 11 county state revolving fund joint powers board that has two engineers, two techs and shared employees doing nutrient management plans. Dues may increase. Steve Pahs suggested charging landowners for engineering services to increase funds or collecting earnest money beforehand. It’s necessary to have engineers because NRCS is less able to provide those engineering services. SE MN Water Resources Board may dissolve or combine services with other agencies. Jim felt it was ok to merge the three organizations as some are struggling.
NEW SUPERVISOR ORIENTATION: New supervisor orientation is February 22 from 9:00 -12:00. Mike and Tim will ride with Steve and leave at 7:30 a.m. from the office. Steve is doing an Open Meeting Law presentation.

NEW MN CREP PROGRAM: Justin Fuchs explained the proposed Conservation Reserve CREP procedures. Five year 60,000 acres is target goal. Minimum is eight acres (which may change.) Practices are well head protection, filter strips, flood plain and non-flood plain wetland restorations and all are permanent easements. Cost to process an easement is fairly high.

U OF M MASTER GARDENERS: The Rice County Master Gardeners have asked if we would make a donation toward their Horticulture Day on March 11. Motion by Mike Ludwig, seconded by Dick Peterson to donate two potted trees to the Master Gardener’s for their Horticulture Day. Ayes: Richard Cook, Tim Little, Mike Ludwig, Richard Peterson, and Jim Purfeerst. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

SUPERVISOR REPORTS: Alternative practices and buffers were discussed. No-till by itself can resolve a lot of erosion issues along with row direction. G. Pedersen land was discussed. If doing structural practices with cost share and has application for cost share, we can extend those deadlines. Steve Pahs did a slake test with neighboring soils - one no-till and one conventional till to show how quickly conventional tilled soil dissolves and washes in water. Jeff Docken is proud of Rice County ditch program as 16.5’ buffers were put in long before the buffer laws came into effect. Dick Peterson spoke on Zumbro Watershed Partnership’s pre-meeting program, state water trails and regional FFA Forestry Contest. BA may get FFA here. Jim Purfeerst said George Poch was elected president of Hiawatha Valley RC&D. Joint Powers Board and MN Water Resources Board may merge. Rice & Steele Counties Crops Day is Feb. 21 at Steele County Community Center from 8:30 to 2:30. Hefty Brothers Soil Clinic is February 13 from 8:30 to 3:00 in Mankato.

ACTING D.C. REPORT by Leslie Diaz-Alvarez:

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Received 1 application. The application cutoff date was Friday February 3, 2017.
- NRCS accepts CSP applications on a continuous basis.
- NRCS would like to keep promoting this program in Rice Co. The CSP helps you build on your existing conservation efforts while strengthening your operation. Whether you are looking to improve grazing conditions, increase crop yields, implement no-till to reduce erosion or develop wildlife habitat, adopting CSP enhancements will achieve a higher level of conservation.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- NRCS have 15 eligible applications, we started the ranking process.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP-EQIP)
- NRCS is still accepting applications- Cutoff date will be March 3, 2017

Conservation Compliance/Planning (Plans, tract splits, 1026’s)
• Received 7 AD-1026 requests this month and addressed 7 previous/current AD-1026 requests
  o Completed 5 - Maintenance Requests
  o Completed 3- Small Area Exception (Open land into Production)

**DISTRICT MANAGER’S REPORT by Steve Pahs:** Staff did a lot of work for state reporting. One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) Policy Committee Meeting is March 1st. Richard Cook can’t attend so Mike Ludwig will. Steve will give annual ditch report to Rice County Commissioners on February 21 and attend Zumbro meeting. Soil Health Group will meet March 9 at Joe’s Sports Bar at 4:00 p.m. Jeff Docken said Galen Malecha is on the 1W1P Committee. CRWP Facebook post was discussed. Jeff Beckman from Goodhue County is looking for three farmer positions on the CRWP Board.

**OTHER:**

**DISTRICT TECHNICIAN’S REPORT by Bridget Evers:**

- New CRP contracts
- State Cost Share projects Survey and Designs
- EQIP projects
- Scott WMO projects
- Reporting in E-Link
- Scott WMO Meeting

Upcoming:
- Continue New CRP Sign ups
- Survey and designs for Cost share items and CRP program (wetland restorations)
- EQIP survey and designs with Colin
- Feedlot surveying with Kate (JPB Engineer)

**NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT REPORT by Travis Hirman:**

I sent out 250 reminder letters last month. Currently, there are five bills in the legislature pertaining to buffers. Shoreline classification was changed on County Ditch #12 so just 16.5’ buffers are required now.

- MMP update for Bucks Unlimited (Goodhue, Dairy, 1074 acres). MMP update for Metogga Lake Dairy (New Prague, Dairy, 1103 acres).
- Year end BWSR grant reporting.
- Sent out a 2nd round of buffer letters. I targeted those who will need 50 ft. buffers, aren’t obviously compliant, and have not yet contacted our office. Around 250 were sent.
- Continued to implement and track buffer compliance. The letters created another flurry of landowners contacting our office for assistance. One site visit was performed this month.
- Looking ahead: Continue to assist landowners with buffers, 1 day basic engineering course, and Nitrogen conference in Mankato.
RESOURCE SPECIALIST REPORT by Justin Fuchs:
I will be doing MN Dept. of Ag nitrate testing. Will give R&B Labs a list of landowners and advertise. They will send out information towards the end of March.

- BWSR Re-Invest in Minnesota (R.I.M.) mandatory webinar regarding new work order forms for R.I.M. re-imbursements.
- Work on WCA annual reporting and E-Link WCA financial reporting.
- Electronic filing of WCA records, currently filing 2013 records.
- Set up Rice SWCD YouTube Channel with soil health videos.
- Set up conference room TV and wireless connectivity.

SOIL HEALTH TOPIC VIDEO: Justin Fuchs showed a YouTube video entitled “Soil Solutions to Climate Problems” by Michael Pollen and another a YouTube video called “Chasing Ice” - A climate change documentary.

ADJOURN: Motion by Mike Ludwig, seconded by Dick Peterson to adjourn. Ayes: Richard Cook, Tim Little, Mike Ludwig, Richard Peterson, and Jim Purfeerst. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

VIDEO: Steve showed a NASA YouTube video called, “A Year in the Life of CO2.”

Submitted by: 

Debbie Skarupa – Admin. Assistant

Board Secretary - Timothy J. Little