



Rice Soil and Water Conservation District

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RICE S.W.C.D.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY – January 8, 2025 – 8:00 am

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Roger Bongers, Richard Peterson, Al Malecha, John Larson Gene Kuntz

Others in attendance: Steve Pahs, Emmie Scheffler, Teresa DeMars, Allison Henderson, Al Kraus,
Commissioner Charlie Peters, Commissioner Jim Purfeerst, Ted Suss, Dante Rand Cedar
Lake Association

Meeting called to order at 8:00 am by District Manager Steve Pahs. Introductions were done.

Changing of the Supervisor positions:

Chair – Roger Bongers

Vice-Chair – John Larson

Treasurer – Gene Kuntz

Secretary – Richard Peterson

Public Relations and Information – Al Malecha

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson to approve the supervisor positions as listed above. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

December Board Minutes:

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the December board minutes as written. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

December financial statement and bills payable:

The December financial statement is not complete due to year end processes. It will be presented at the February board meeting. The December bills payable was reviewed.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the December bills payable, subject to audit. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS: Thompkins Building. The lease was reviewed by the County Attorney's office.

Building owner wants a 5-year commitment. All utilities except for telephone and internet are included in the lease, as well as snow removal.

Proposed timeline is to move at the end of February.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the lease on the condition that all previously mentioned concerns are addressed before signing the lease. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA: (payment approval)

- A. MCIT PC Renewal/WC Renewal for 2025 - \$10,673.00
- B. MASWCD 2025 Dues - \$7,431.37
- C. CRWJPO Membership Dues - \$3,750.00

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by John Larson to approve the consent agenda items as listed. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

- A. **Supervisor Committee Assignments – action:** the list of committees the supervisors sit on was reviewed by all and volunteers were accepted.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by John Larson to accept the committee assignments as agreed to. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

- B. **Izaak Walton League Proposal – Ted Suss – 15 min presentation on a plan to work with farmers on adopting regenerative ag practices:** Izaak Walton league is looking to partner with the local SWCD to assist in reaching out to farmers about regenerative farming by providing one-on-one connections, mentors, small support groups to help them get started.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Al Malecha to endorse the work of the Izaak Walton League. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

- C. **The Importance of Area Meetings:** the area meetings are held twice a year. Information was shared regarding the importance of supervisors attending them.
- D. **Steve Devney LC22-06-CC, cover crop contract – cancellation – action:** cover crop did not get planted in 2024 and funding source expired in December 2024. Best situation is to cancel current contract and enter into a new one-year agreement for 2025.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson to approve the cancellation of the Steve Devney LC22-06-CC cover crop contract. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

- E. **Mark Legvold CRP24-16-CC, cover crop, one-year - \$465.50 – action:** Mark Legvold had a one-year contract for 2024 for this same property. It should have been set up as two-year agreement. This contract will be for 2025 for the second year on that same property.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the Mark Legvold CRP24-16-CC, one-year cover crop contract for \$465.50. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

- F. **Dave Legvold CRP24-18-CC, cover crop, one-year - \$262.50 – action:**

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the Dave Legvold CRP24-18-CC one year

cover crop for \$262.50. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

G. Southeast Regional Groundwater Protection and Soil Health Initiative – information:

The southeast regional groundwater protection and soil health initiative aims to promote a variety of management practices that will help reduce nitrogen inputs on agricultural land. Converting traditional row crop systems to alternative crops, small grains, and utilizing cover crops, reduces nitrate leaching, increases nitrogen retention, limits soil erosion, and protects our water resources. The following southeast Minnesota county soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) are interested in participating in the program: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona.

H. Designate the Faribault Daily News as the Official Newspaper – action:

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson to designate the Faribault Daily News as the official newspaper of the Rice SWCD. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

I. Designate 1st United Bank as the Official Depository – action:

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Richard Peterson to designate 1st United Bank as the official depository for the Rice SWCD. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

J. Faribault Daily News annual subscription - \$236.60 – action:

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the annual renewal of the Faribault Daily News subscription at \$236.60. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

K. New Trimble R12 Survey unit - \$45,738.00 – action: the current Trimble the district is using is 8 years old. It no longer receives software updates and is frequently losing connections while surveying. It could be used for training new staff and as a backup. The new Trimble proposed is the same equipment NRCS uses. It comes with built-in Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by John Larson to approve the purchase of the new Trimble R12 survey unit at \$45,738.00. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

L. Copy machine lease – discussion: the current copy machine is under a 60-month lease with 15 months to go. Do we want to continue leasing or purchase our own machine? District manager will look at other options in the meantime.

M. James Melchert CS-22-03, cost share contract - \$1,473.81 – cancel: project costs were lower than estimated so this funding source is not needed.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson to cancel the James Melchert CS-22-03 cost share contract for \$1,473.81. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

N. CS FY2022 grant closeout and return of funds - \$1,473.81 – action: funds were not fully expended and grant closed December 31, 2024, therefore remaining funds are to be returned to BWSR.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the CSFY2022 grant close out and

return of funds of \$1,473.81. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

NRCS REPORT:



January 8th, 2025

NRCS Report for the Rice SWCD Board Meeting

General:

- ⇒ **Faribault office is open!**
- ⇒ Taylor, Marlene, Cody, and Lucas are working out of the Faribault Office
- ⇒ Chris is working out of the office a few days a week, will be in other offices in our team the rest of the time.

Farm Bill Updates:

CSP:

- ⇒ FY25 Sign Up 1 Deadline is past, we are taking applications for sign up 2
- ⇒ CSP SU1 Ranking Deadline is on March 21st

EQIP:

- ⇒ EQIP sign up 1 deadline is past. Producers can still sign up under sign up 2 for potential funding this year.
- ⇒ We will be ranking contracts January 10th

CRP:

- ⇒ Until a new Farm Bill or other legislation is passed, CRP applications and approvals are at a halt.

WETLAND/HEL:

- ⇒ Rice County has 13 requests awaiting HEL determination for new land from the compliance team
- ⇒ Rice County has 15 requests awaiting a certified wetland determination from the compliance team

Upcoming Events/Deadlines:

- Steve Breaker of the Le Center Office retired on 12/31/24. He had 36 years with the agency and was always very helpful to the rest of our relatively newer team. Chris Schmidt will be helping out with workload in Le Center until his position can be filled.
- Minnesota Ag Expo in Mankato – January 22nd -23rd – Cody will be attending
- Taylor will be attending the Selling a Sustainable Future training in Mankato on January 13th – 14th

DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT: current focus is on year-end reporting. All BWSR reports are due by February 1st. Will be coordinating the move to the new office and also assisting new supervisors in transitioning.

SUPERVISOR REPORTS:

Richard Peterson: no report

Al Malecha: no report

Gene Kuntz: no report

John Larson: no report

Roger Bongers: no report

Staff Reports:

Emmie Scheffler:

I have been working on getting EQIP designs done for the January deadline. I have been working on Cannon items and have submitted all the ownership changes to BWSR for Rim sites.

Al Kraus:

- Alan had some time off in December
- Soil Health Incentive Programs
 - Responding to interest from farmers for the 2025 planting season
 - 13 farmers (6 Rice County, 7 Steele County) attended (or will be attending) soil health workshops using grant funds from Mn Office of Soil Health – the grant Rice SWCD received.
 - We still have some funds to pay 2 more registrations
- Rice SWCD Cover Crop Interseeder
 - Storage at Dan Morgan's farm confirmed
 - Exploring options for field activities in 2025
- Bridgewater Streams project
 - Farm cropping data has been compiled, results nearly completed
 - Meeting with collaborating farmers and other partners to be held in late March
- Submitted grant request to MDA for Rice-Steele Soil Health Nitrogen Rate – Return on Investment Project
 - Will learn about our success with the grant on February 15th
 - Also looking to schedule some upcoming breakfasts to generate interest in the AgWaterQualityCertification program.

Teresa DeMars:

Past Month

- Hollinger's blog post
- January newsletter
- Vacation time

Next Month

- CRWJPO Webinar Planning/marketing
- February newsletter
- Envirothon marketing
- Native plant sale marketing
- Winter Soil Health Workshop in Owatonna

Al Henderson: working thru the backlog of WCA delineations. They are slowing up. Continuing to learn both WCA and buffer programs.

Commissioner Jim Purfeerst: New County chair is Commissioner Jerry Hoisington and Charlie Peters is Vice-Chair. Currently in labor negotiations with labor units. 911 Center will be moving to the old law enforcement center in the future.

Commissioner Charlie Peters: excited to learn

Dante Rand, Cedar Lake Association: still waiting on the lake management plan from MPCA. Once they get that, they can look into available grants. Could future SWCD meetings have a virtual component?

OTHER/CORRESPONDENCE:

UPCOMING EVENTS:

January 7-10 National No-Till Conference in Louisville, Kentucky.

January 9-10 2025 Minnesota Organic Conference by the Minnesota Department of Ag in St. Cloud.

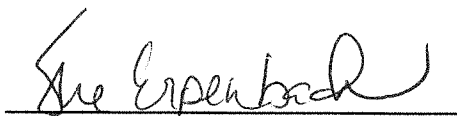
January 10-11 Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Convention in Des Moines, Iowa.

January 29-30 2025 Soil Management Summit by the University of Minnesota in Mankato.

ADJOURN:

Motion to adjourn by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson. All aye, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.

Submitted by:



Sue Erpenbach – Administrative Assistant



Board Member –