



STEELE COUNTY
Soil and Water Conservation District

235 Cedardale Drive SE
Owatonna MN 55060
507-451-6730 Ext. 3
www.steeleswcd.org

The regular monthly meeting of the Steele County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors was called to order by Mark Ditlevson at 5:00 PM on Wednesday December 20, 2023 at the Steele County SWCD Office, 235 Cedardale Drive SE, Owatonna MN, 55060.

<u>SWCD Supervisors Present:</u>	<u>SWCD Staff Present:</u>	<u>Others Present:</u>	<u>Absent:</u>
Mark Ihlenfeld, Treasurer	Eric Gulbransen	Jim Smith, NRCS	Mike Klecker, Vice Chair
Dan Hansen, PR&I	Adrienne Gransee	Jim Brady, County Commissioner	
Dave Melby, Secretary	Ian Pringle		
Mark Ditlevson, Chairman	Adam Arndt		

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The December agenda was reviewed, no additions were made.

The November minutes were distributed to the Supervisors. No changes were noted. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Melby, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

The November Treasurer’s Report was read by Ihlenfeld. Motion was made by Melby, seconded by Hansen, to approve the November Treasurer’s Report. Motion was carried by voice vote.

Bills: (See attached) Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Ihlenfeld, to approve paying the bills. Motion was carried by voice vote.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Meeting Reports – MASWCD Annual Convention, December 11-13 – Mark Ihlenfeld, Dave Melby, Eric Gulbransen, and Ian Pringle all attended the annual convention. Ihlenfeld and Melby reported on the business meeting. The annual budget was passed without discussion and there was an update about new staff members who have been added. The resolutions were discussed. The new funding was a major topic of discussion at the event and the official signing for the RCPP grant was held during the convention. All who attended reported that it was a well-organized, enjoyable, and informative event.
2. Governor’s Pheasant Opener Recap – Eric Gulbransen reported on this event. There were 26 hunter hosts, and 22 hunting groups that participated. The event was quite successful with the gun club’s youth shoot being one of the stand-out portions of the event.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. 2024 Count Ditch Inspector Contract – Eric Gulbransen presented the contract as had been discussed in the previous meeting. It was signed and will be returned to the County.
2. 2024 IRS Mileage Rate – Adrienne Gransee presented the updated mileage rate of \$0.67 per mile. This is an increase of 1.5 cents from 2023.
3. Cover Crop Program Funding – With the change in funding from the State and the Local Capacity grant being discontinued, there was a need to discuss possible funding options for the District’s Cover Crop and No-till/Strip-till programs. Several options were discussed. It was decided that with the addition of new funds coming from grant programs the District would like to use those, if possible, to continue the programs. The topic will be discussed again once more details about the new grants are available.
4. Shared Soil Health Position with Rice SWCD – Eric Gulbransen approached the Board to get feedback about a possible shared Soil Health position. The position would be for 1-2 days per week and their main focus would be outreach and promotion. The Board was not opposed to the idea; they did suggest that finding someone who is actively practicing the soil health practices they would be promoting would likely be the best way to get people engaged.
5. Cover Crop Contract Payments – Adam Arndt presented the contracts listed below for approval for payment. Motion was made by Melby, seconded by Ihlenfeld, to approve the payments.
 - 1-21-CC, Capacity FY21, \$2,400
 - 2-21-CC, Capacity FY21, \$4,800
 - 3-21-CC, Capacity FY21, \$3,200
 - 4-21-CC, Capacity FY21, \$2,340
 - 6-21-CC, Capacity FY21, \$3,200
 - 1-22-CC, Capacity FY22, \$3,200
 - 3-22-CC, Capacity FY22, \$3,200
 - 1-23-CC, Capacity FY23, \$4,800
 - 2-23-CC, Capacity FY23, \$9,600
6. Cover Crop Contract Cancellation – 5-20-CC, Local Capacity FY20, \$2,400 – Adam Arndt presented this contract for cancellation. The landowner had completed and been paid for 2 years of the 3 year contract. They need to do some work in the field that will disturb too much and put them in violation of the contract terms. The Board discussed the options for how to remedy the situation. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Hansen, to cancel the contract and not pursue repayment of the first 2 payments made to the landowner. Motion carried by voice vote.
7. Statement of Economic Interest – Gulbransen informed the Board that they should be receiving the paperwork for their annual reporting in the mail shortly. They were told to contact the office if there were questions or concerns.
8. Annual Reviews – The Personnel Committee met with the staff prior to the Board meeting and they reported to the Board about those reviews. There was a discussion about a cost of living adjustment and about step increases for the staff. The Board decided on a 3% cost of living adjustment and a step increase for all staff who have completed their probationary period. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Melby, to approve the changes as discussed. Motion passed by voice vote.

Agency Reports

Jim Brady informed the Board that the County is interviewing for the open Treasurer position. He also stated that Scott Goldberg announced his retirement. He will be leaving the County on April 12, 2024. They are also looking for one more person to fill a position on the Board of Adjustment.

Jim Smith gave an update for NRCS. They are expecting a large influx of available funds and will possibly be offering funding for forestry practices such as buckthorn removal from existing wooded areas and restoring native trees.

Staff Reports

Adam Arndt has been completing cover crop field checks so that payments could be issued. He has also been working on County ditch and buffer inspections. There are new violations that he is going to be turning over to the County to move into the next phase of enforcement.

Ian Pringle has been focused on completing a variety of trainings including conservation planning. He has also been accompanying Arndt on field checks and inspections.

Eric Gulbransen reported on the MAWQCP farmers breakfast that he participated in along with Rice SWCD. There were 2 farmers from Steele who attended; one signed a contract at the breakfast and the other brought the information home for further review and to share with his son. Gulbransen reported that WCA is wrapping up for the season. He also informed the Board of a webinar discussing Open Meeting Law and Remote Attendance from MCIT that will be available on Jan 17.

Adrienne Gransee gave the Board an update on the 2024 calendar, which has gone to print and is expected to be mailed within the week. She also let them know the status of the tree sales and that the planning meeting for Area 7 Envirothon has been scheduled. In addition to those things she has spent her time getting the various office spreadsheets set for 2024.

Motion to Adjourn: Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Melby, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Adrienne Gransee,
Administrative Assistant

December Bills

Cedardale Dev Co		December Rent		\$792.00
Spectrum		Internet		\$89.99
Cedardale Dev Co		Garage Rent		\$600.00
Pererson Company		2022 Audit		\$4,025.00
Elan		Gas	\$345.47	
		Phone	\$87.24	
		Convention Registration	\$2,310.00	
		Postage	\$9.15	
		Credit Card Reader	\$63.29	
		Website - Email campaign	\$29.00	\$2,844.15
Tri-M Graphics		2024 Calendar Postage		\$1,616.56
Schlatters Inc		Tile Probes & Tips		\$568.00
MN Dept of Ag		2024 Tree Dealers License		\$450.00
Dagry		Tree planter repair		\$101.20
			TOTAL	\$11,086.90