



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 June 12, 2024 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	Ian Pringle
Dan Hansen, Secretary	Adam Arndt	Rick Gnemi, County Commissioner	
Dave Melby, Vice Chair	Adrienne Gransee		
Brad Hagen, PR&I			
Mark Ditlevson, Chairman			

The June agenda was reviewed, no changes were made.

The May minutes were distributed to the Supervisors prior to the meeting. Motion was made by Melby, seconded by Hansen, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

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

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

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Meeting Reports – NRCS Local Workgroup Meeting – Blooming Prairie – Dave Melby, Mark Ditlevson, Eric Gulbransen and Jim Smith attended this meeting. They were joined by others from neighboring Districts and NRCS offices. The topic of discussion was the specific areas of concern that NRCS should be focusing on in this particular work region. After discussion votes were cast. The results will be tallied and results sent out at a later date.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. 2025 Proposed Budget – Adrienne Gransee presented the proposed budget to the Board. She reviewed changes to both the anticipated income and expenses. There were changes to the grant funding that she reviewed and the most significant change to expenses was in personnel services due to the addition of another staff member. There was no change to the requested amount of County funding. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Melby, to approve the budget as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS:

2. Conservation Award Winners – The list of conservation winner candidates was given to the Board members. There was discussion about the options for each category, and winners were selected as listed below. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Hagen, to approve the selections, Motion passed by voice vote. Dave Melby abstained from discussion about the selection for Wildlife Conservationist and from voting.
 - Conservation Farmer – Paul Knutson
 - Outstanding Windbreak – Jim & Dennis Deml
 - Wildlife Conservationist – Dave Melby
3. Cover Crop and Strip Till/No-till funding options – With the change in funding from the State the District will be changing how the Cover Crop and Strip Till/No-till programs will be funded. There was a discussion about the current structure of the programs, possible changes and options for funding sources. The Board decided to address this again in July.
4. 2024 Tree Program Results – Adam Arndt reviewed the results of the tree program with the Board. There were less trees sold this year, primarily due to a lack of availability from suppliers.
5. Governance 101 – July 16-17 – Gransee confirmed that there are 2 hotel rooms reserved for the meeting. Mark Ditlevson and Brad Hagen both intend to attend.
6. July and August Meeting Dates – Due to conflicts in July and August the board meeting dates need to be changed. Options were discussed and meeting dates were set for July 18 and August 6th.
7. CRWJPO Working Sub-Agreement – Eric Gulbransen presented the sub-agreement to the Board. The agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of the District as it applies to the Cannon River Watershed Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Melby, to approve signing the sub-agreement. Motion carried by voice vote.
8. No-till/Strip till Contract Payments – Arndt presented the contracts listed below for payment. Motion was made by Melby, seconded by Hansen, to approve payment of the contracts. Motion carried by voice vote.
 - 1-23, 160 acres, \$6,400
 - 2-23-NTST, 100 acres, \$5,000
 - 1-NT, 160 acres, \$8,000
 - 1-ST-21, 130 acres, \$5,200
 - 2-ST-21, 130 acres, \$5,200
9. Erosion Control Ordinance – Gulbransen provided the Board with examples of ordinances from other counties to review. There was discussion about how those orders were written and the possibility of negative reactions from local landowners. There were questions about how to determine the amount of soil loss and what the added commitment would be from District staff. It was decided to continue to review existing orders and return to this discussion at a later time.

NEW BUSINESS:

10. Other – SEMASWCD Area 7 Meeting – Gulbransen reminded the Board about the meeting on June 17 in Stewartville. Dan Hansen, Mark Ditlevson and Mark Ihlenfeld are planning to attend.

Brad Hagen provided the Board with information for a meeting in Austin on June 14 regarding RCPP grant funding.

Agency Reports

Jim Smith updated the Board on the status of the EQIP and CSP applications. He stated that 51 EQIP applications have received pre-approval, and of the 57 CSP applications 29 will be moving forward. The Forestry CSP applications in Steele county are currently in the plan development stage.

Rick Gnemi gave a brief update about the open or soon to be open positions at the County. He stated that the new Administrator is scheduled to begin next week. He also stated that there are several commissioners running opposed this year so there could be a shift in the County Board.

Staff Reports

Eric Gulbransen reported on the managers meeting that he attended. One of the more intriguing topics was the Employee Assistance Program. He was impressed by the number of areas where they offer assistance to interested staff. Gulbransen informed the Board of the status of an ongoing WCA violation; the paperwork has been submitted and they are currently waiting for a response. He also gave an update on the shared soil health position. It has been offered to a candidate and there is a meeting on Friday to discuss the details.

Adam Arndt discussed a report on the water quality in Minnesota that was comparing testing results between 1999 and 2021. The results are positive and there are lower numbers for the various dissolved nutrients and a fairly significant drop in the turbidity. He talked with the Board about the 4H Plant Science event that he assisted with. There were 20 kids who participated and they handed out a total of 85 kits. Lastly, Arndt told the Board about an upcoming field day on September 4 that will be held at Mark Ditlevson's farm.

Adrienne Gransee gave a brief update on the status of the 2023 audit. She reminded the Board about the Administrative conference that she will be attending, and spoke about the topic that has been selected for the fair booth.

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

Respectfully Submitted by,



Adrienne Gransee,
Administrative Assistant

June Bills

Cedardale Dev. Co	June Rent		\$792.00
Spectrum	Internet		\$89.99
Cedardale Dev. Co	Garage Rent		\$600.00
Wolcyn	Trees		\$29,601.15
Elan	Tree Week Meals	\$162.55	
	Meal	\$36.00	
	Fuel	\$91.22	
	Hotels for Training	\$707.88	
	Monthly Payroll	\$57.98	
	4H Project Supplies	\$170.82	
	Annual Web Hosting Fee	\$324.00	
	Phone	\$87.21	\$1,637.66
MNL	Native Plants & Seeds		\$2,989.20
Tree Pro	Tree Tubes		\$712.50
No-Till Farmer	1 year subscription		\$59.95
		TOTAL	\$36,482.45