

**Whitewater Joint Powers Board
August 20, 2015
Whitewater State Park Visitor's Center**

Minutes

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Matt Flynn called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m.

Board Members Present: Matt Flynn, Roland Wood, Steve Jacob, Richard Hall, Arlene Nelson
Board Member John Keefe arrived at 9:01 a.m.

Others Present: Daryl Buck; Winona County SWCD, Erik Smith; USGS, Sheila Harmes; Winona County Planning & Environmental Services; and Joyce Tlougan; Winona County Planning & Environmental Services.

2. **Approve Minutes of July 16, 2015**

A motion was made by Steve Jacob and seconded by Roland Wood to approve the minutes.
Voting yes: All

3. **Approve Agenda**

Sheila Harmes added that she would like item f. under Board Discussion and Action Items, amended to action item. Steve Jacob added to include discussion.

A motion was made by Steve Jacob and seconded by Richard Hall to approve the agenda as amended. Voting yes: All

4. **Approve Consent Items**

Bills & Payroll

Sheila Harmes explained the bills and payroll listed. A motion was made by Steve Jacob and seconded by Richard Hall to approve the Consent Items.

Voting yes: All

5. **Board Reports**

Arlene Nelson

Reported Matt Schmidt had attended the last Winona County Soil and Water District meeting. There will be a SWCD Governance 101 workshop in St Paul on September 16-17meeting. This is for new supervisors and employees; Jerry Mueller and Wanda Anderson will be attending. An update was given on the Bismarck Soil Health Tour.

Steve Jacob

Advised that Winona County hired a new administrator, Ken Fritz. The Winona County Board had discussion on a one-half percent sales tax to improve roads. He asked Matt Flynn what

Joint Powers Board Members

Matt Flynn, Chair Olmsted Co. Commissioner	Steve Jacob, Vice-Chair Winona Co. Commissioner	Richard Hall Wabasha Co. Commissioner
Roland Wood, Secretary/Treasurer Wabasha SWCD Supervisor	Arlene Nelson Winona SWCD Supervisor	John Keefe Olmsted SWCD Supervisor

Olmsted County had done. Matt advised that Olmsted County recently passed a one-quarter percent tax. Richard Hall advised Wabasha County is discussing an Excise Tax. Steve voiced concern that the state is pushing costs to counties. Steve advised the Successful Dairy Farm event was well-attended and included both organic and conventional farm operations. A robotic milking operation was very impressive.

Richard Hall

Spoke about road improvements in Wabasha County. When considering between an excise tax and a bond he would choose a bond. Once a tax is set, it is difficult to remove. Discussions need to be made with legislators to get money for roads.

Roland Wood

Advised that tours were done for the Conservation Farmer and Woodland Farmer of the year. Wabasha SWCD has a new hire that will be starting August 24th, and will be assisting Matt Kruger. Roland said Wabasha County had approved the 2016 grant. He advised he had gone on the CTIC Conservation in Action Tour and saw various methods of farming. There were attendees from 22 states on the tour, so it was very well-attended.

Matt Flynn

Following up on the discussion on the Olmsted County tax, Olmsted passed a one-quarter percent tax. This tax is above and beyond city tax. Discussion included how counties should move forward and how the Legislature should fix the Transportation Fund. Matt noted that most of the counties receive more from the state than they put in. The 10 metro counties put in more and receive less.

John Keefe

Spoke of the Olmsted County, FSA, NRCS/SWCD office location and options for re-locating. Matt Flynn noted that FSA, NRCS, and SWCD have been in the same building for years and Olmsted County has more up-to-date office accommodations. Having FSA, NRCS and SWCD all located in the same building is ideal. Discussions have been going on for two years to re-locate, but the county has not received any answers from the federal agencies involved (in Texas). Olmsted County would like to move forward and move SWCD to Olmsted County office space. Daryl Buck mentioned that Winona SWCD does not have a current lease, but pays rent on a month-to-month basis. They are waiting on a decision out of Washington. John said that no one wanted the entities separated, but Olmsted County wants to utilize a nice county building.

6. Board Discussion and Action Items

- a. Financial Update: Sheila Harmes updated the Board on finances.
- b. Subsurface Drainage Impacts on Groundwater: Dr. Erik Smith from USGS gave a presentation on a new project that he is working on. He has funding to conduct a study on subsurface drainage impacts on groundwater. The study will determine whether drainage has

an impact on groundwater recharge. Portions of the Whitewater are well-suited for this study; most of the ideal parcels are in Olmsted County.

Tile drainage system installation systems are increasing in Southeast Minnesota and its widespread impact is unknown. Potential study sites need to meet these criteria:

- Field with low slope – preferable less than 3% (site cannot have receiving runoff from nearby fields)
- Row-crop agriculture (preferably corn-soybean)
- Soils preferable for drainage
- Less than 50 feet to bedrock
- Field with patterned tile system
- Field size of a minimum of 10-15 acres (area needed for monitoring equipment is less than an acre)
- Willing landowner

The presentation included an overview of what the study equipment includes. Monitoring wells are used to gauge flow of water beneath the surface and a small weather station records atmospheric conditions. The study will be conducted for a 2 – 3 year period and the landowner will be compensated for land that is out of production during this time.

Outcomes of the project include:

- a better understanding of drainage impacts on vulnerable lands and
- improved state recharge estimates

Erik's presentation included a map of the Whitewater Watershed with suitable parcels highlighted. John Keefe offered to drive Erik to some of these parcels after the meeting.

c. Ag Certainty Update:

Sheila advised the MDA is working out a region-wide agreement. She said Mark Root is the Area Certification Specialist and that she will assist Mark with open houses, etc. Sheila reported that at least 24 farmers are currently certified.

d. Mississippi – Winona civic engagement grant update:

Sheila advised she had submitted the final report for the grant and that it is complete. When it is approved by MPCA, copies of the final report will be provided to board members.

e. Bismarck Soil Health Tour Update:

Sheila Harmes explained that five attended with the grant funds received. They reported it was a great opportunity and that more area farmers should go. She would like to follow-up with a local soil health workshop.

f. Grant Applications Discussion:

Sheila Harmes had requested to change this to an action item when the Board approved the Agenda. She requested permission to submit a request for proposal for the BWSR Clean

Water Fund. She would like to apply for the Accelerated Implementation Grant. Under a current McKnight grant that the University of Minnesota Water Resources Center has, two GIS staff at Winona County are now trained on the Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF). This GIS-based tool can be used to produce maps of selected small agricultural watersheds and identify most suited locations for various conservation practices. Sheila would like to submit a proposal to create these maps for some areas of the Whitewater and use them with interactions with citizens. The proposal needs to be submitted by August 28th. Matt Flynn asked how much the grant was for, Sheila advised it had been from \$30,000.00 - \$50,000.00. A motion was made by Steve Jacob and seconded by John Keefe to approve Sheila's request to apply for the Clean Water Fund Accelerated Implementation Grant. Vote: Yes: All

Discussion followed relative to the July Fish Kill that occurred in the South Branch of the Whitewater River.

7. Public Comments

Daryl Buck advised the Buffer Initiative would be coming out next week from BWSR. Winona Soil and Water Conservation District will receive \$24,000.00. They will be starting Nitrate and Nitrogen tests. Test kits and letters will go to rural land owners.

8. Adjournment: 10:09 a.m. Richard Hall made a motion and John Keefe seconded the motion to adjourn. Voting yes: All

8. Next Meeting: September 17, 2015

Respectfully submitted by:

Joyce Tlougan
Recording Secretary

Signed _____
Roland Wood, Secretary/Treasurer