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Whitewater Joint Powers Board Minutes
February 17, 2022
Whitewater State Park Visitor's Center

1. **Call to Order:** Josh Elsing called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

Board Members Present: Josh Elsing, Matt Flynn, Steve Jacob, James Rentz, Bob Walkes and Lynn Zabel

Others Present: Sheila Harmes, Coordinator Whitewater Watershed; Emily Zanon, MPCA; and Jeff Vetsch, U of M Researcher

Board Members Absent: None

2. **Public Comments**

None

3. **Approve Minutes of December 15, 2021 Meeting**

A motion was made by S. Jacob and seconded by M. Flynn to approve the minutes.

Vote: Yes – All.

4. **Approve Agenda**

On motion by S. Jacob and seconded by B. Walkes, the WWJPB voted to approve the amended agenda.

Vote: Yes – All.

5. **Approve Consent Items**

S. Harmes explained the amended bill payable, due to correction of Winona County payment to include mileage. Also to include the last U of M invoice and the postage amount for the 1099 mailing.

A motion was made by M. Flynn and seconded by J. Rentz to approve the amended consent items.

Vote: Yes – All.

6. **Board Reports**

M. Flynn – No report.

L. Zabel – No report.

J. Rentz – SWCD is looking over the organizational options for the Soil and Water Conservation District.

B. Walkes – No report.

S. Jacob – An MPCA WinLaC Chloride Monitoring Grant, with COVID requirements, was presented to the Winona County Board. Commissioner Ward and he did not think the COVID language was appropriate. Ultimately, the grant was shifted to Wabasha County SWCD to administer.

Sheila Harmes shared that the collection of data in this grant was time sensitive (collected only during winter months). Also, Winona County Planning Department and the Winona SWCD are both short-staffed and not able to conduct monitoring.

L. Zabel, as Wabasha SWCD representative, noted that when the grant was presented to the Wabasha County SWCD, he felt they could complete the work, as required. The Covid-related language wouldn't be an issue.

5 **J. Elsing** – He was concerned with the potential negative affect on farmers and agriculture that
6 chloride monitoring could have as salt is in many things, such as manure, fertilizers and
7 chemicals. He also shared information about nitrogen reduction and management strategies.
8

9 **7. Board Discussion and Action Items**

0 **a. Election of Officers**

1 On motion of M. Flynn and seconded by S. Jacob, the WWJPB voted on Josh Elsing to serve as Chair.
2 Vote: Yes – All.

3 On motion of S. Jacob and seconded by J. Elsing, the WWJPB voted on Lynn Zabel to serve as Vice
4 Chair. Yes – All.

5 On motion by J. Elsing and seconded by S. Jacob, the WWJPB voted on Bob Walkes to serve as the
6 Secretary/Treasurer. Vote: Yes – All.

7 On motion by M. Flynn and seconded by L. Zabel, the WWJPB vote on J. Rentz as the Alternate
8 Secretary/Treasurer. Vote: Yes – All.
9

0 **b. Financial Update – *Sheila Harmes***

1 Sheila Harmes gave an update on the Whitewater Joint Powers Board checking and money market
2 accounts.
3

4 **c. Whitewater 319 Nitrogen Reduction grant**

5 **1) Ray Archuleta Soil Health event – sponsorship (\$500)**

6 S. Harmes explained the Soil Health event, which was well attended, and explained other
7 contributions from other entities towards the event. On motion by B. Walkes and seconded by J.
8 Rentz, the WWJPB voted to sponsor \$500 towards the event. Vote: Yes – All.
9

0 **2) March 10th workshop for grant participants – Update**

1 S. Harmes gave an update on the March 10th workshop, which is a joint effort between Dodge
2 and Olmsted County. A \$250 donation, from the 319 grant, will go towards the workshop to help
3 cover costs for speakers. Anna Cates, a State Soil Health Specialist in the MN office for Soil
4 Health, will be speaking at the workshop.
5

6 **3) Farm Finance virtual webinars**

7 Utilizing the 319 grant, consultants would conduct virtual webinars to work with farmers to
8 identify what is profitable and not profitable for them and suggest adjustments to help them. The
9 idea is in very early stage of planning but could include guest farmers as speakers.
0

1 **d. Sale of Whitewater JPB computer**

2 S. Harmes is moved out of the Lewiston office and there was not any interest from the SWCD's in the
3 computer, nor Winona County IT. An employee at one of the SWCD's would be interested in purchasing
4 the computer for personal use. The cost would be for 50% of the original cost. On motion by B. Walkes
5 and seconded by L. Zabel, the WWJPB voted to sell the computer to the employee. Vote: Yes – All.
6
7

8 **e. Surface Water Assessment Grant - Update**

9 January 15, 2022, was the end date for the Surface Water Assessment Grant. Included in the agenda
0 packet was the final data report submitted by Sheila Harmes. The data goes to a statewide database for
1 all water quality monitoring data.
2

3 **f. 319 Nitrogen Test Plot Summary Report – *Jeff Vetsch***

4 Jeff Vetsch gave a presentation regarding the 319 Nitrogen Test Plots, which included fifteen trial
5 comparisons conducted in the Whitewater watershed between 2018 and 2021. He went over the
6 challenges COVID presented during the testing and the methods and results of the work being done.
7

8 J. Elsing shared information about trends he's seeing in the agricultural industry – stock residue and
9 nitrogen management. He expanded on individual farming management strategies for each farmer and
0 what variables are taken into consideration.

1
2 **8. Agency Reports**

3 Emily Zanon (MPCA): The Whitewater 319 Grant, which started in 2018, ends September 2022. About
4 \$232,000 has been put into the watershed work. She suggested a year end presentation of the overall
5 accomplishments of the Whitewater 319 Grant, which she would be willing to work on with staff. Also,
6 MPCA monitors all the watersheds in the state once in every 10 years. The MPCA collected the last 3
7 years and next year will assess the data to see if water quality has improved.

8
9 The MPCA should be finishing up the chloride monitoring this Spring. The sites selected through WinLaC
0 focused on road crossings, where potentially there would be salt application, as well as places with easy
1 access but close to a wastewater treatment plant discharge as water softeners is a source of chloride. She
2 volunteered to come back to share the data found through the collection process.


3
4 Lastly, to clarify about the earlier discussion regarding the Chloride monitoring grant, since 2007, the
5 MPCA organizes all work by watershed. MPCA's goal is to get funds to local entities to do important work
6 at the local level; Wabasha County SWCD was able to complete this task. The agency regrets that this
7 particular grant did not work out with Winona County and looks forward to continue to do work with Winona
8 County. She's available for any questions about MPCA grants.

9
0 S. Jacob respectfully disagreed with the MPCA decision.

1
2 **9. Adjourn; Next meeting April 21, 2022**

3 On motion by S. Jacob and seconded by B. Walkes, the WWJPB voted to adjourn at 10:55am.
4 Vote: Yes – All.

5
6
7 Respectfully submitted by:
8 Anne Schwertel, PL&ES Administrative Specialist

9
0
1 Signed: 
2 _____
3 WWJPB Secretary/Treasurer
4
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