

Whitewater Joint Powers Board Minutes
December 21, 2023
Whitewater State Park Visitor's Center

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5 **1. Call to Order:** Chair Josh Elsing called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

6 Board Members Present: Josh Elsing, Ross Greden, James Rentz, Mark Thein, Bob Walkes and Lynn
7 Zabel

8
9 Board Members Absent: None

10
11 Others Present: Dale Hadler, Public Observer; Sheila Harmes, Coordinator Whitewater Watershed; Jenna
12 Rasmusson, Wabasha SWCD

13
14 **2. Public Comments**

15 No comments

16
17 **3. Approve Minutes of October 19, 2023, Meeting**

18 A motion was made by Mark Thein and seconded by Ross Greden to approve the minutes.

19 Vote: Yes – All.

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21 **4. Approve Agenda**

22 On motion by Bob Walkes and seconded by Ross Greden, the WWJPB voted to approve the amended
23 agenda, amended to remove 7b(3)(g). Vote: Yes – All.

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25 **5. Approve Consent Items**

26 Sheila Harmes explained the bills payable totaling \$16,798.77. A motion was made by Mark Thein and
27 seconded by Bob Walkes to approve the consent items. Vote: Yes – All.

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29 **6. Board Reports**

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31 Mark Thein – Attended a drinking water protection meeting in Lewiston, set up by the MN Dept of Health.
32 The meeting was the first of many civil engagements to collect input on the drinking water
33 plan for the state. The WWJPB discussed the \$50 incentive for the public to attend and the
34 information discussed.

35
36 James Rentz – Olmsted SWCD closed out the buffer contract and spent it on surveying equipment. Skip
37 Langer received the 2023 Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District employee
38 award.

39
40 Ross Greden – Winona SWCD is now fully staffed. Discussion ensued about cover crop programs
41 adopted by Olmsted Co, utilizing the ARPA funds.

42
43 Bob Walkes – Wabasha County will approve their levy at the next meeting, will be right around 4%.

44
45 Lynn Zabel – Attended the MASWCD Convention. Heard a presentation on SWCD staffing; assessments
46 were done and SWCDs in the State are significantly underfunded. The assessment shows
47 that SWCDs need to add 3 to 4 new staff to meet demands of new funding.

48
49 Josh Elsing – Winona County levy will be set at 9.4%. He testified at the Capitol subcommittee meeting
50 as an ag expert, regarding the EPA Petition. The new Winona County Jail is done, and
51 discussions continue between the City of Winona and County of Winona regarding a
52 potential shared law enforcement center.

53
54 **7. Board Discussion and Action Items**

55
56 **a. Financial Update – Sheila Harmes**

57 Sheila Harmes gave an update on the checking and money market accounts.
58

59 **2023 Audit Proposal**

60 Sheila Harmes checked into whether an audit is required annually. Yes, per the Joint Powers
61 Agreement, BWSR and the state Auditor's Office, an audit is required each year.

62 On motion by Mark Thein and seconded by Ross Greden, the WWJPB voted to accept the 2023 Audit
63 Proposal from Peterson. Vote: Yes – All.

64
65 **MCIT Premium for 2024 – Due January 2024**

66 Per Sheila Harmes, the premium will be due at the end of January, before the next WWJPB meeting.
67 She gave an estimate of the cost - \$1500. She will include it on the bills payable for the February
68 meeting and indicate it was already paid.

69
70 On motion by Mark Thein and seconded by Bob Walkes to approve the MCIT Premium payment at
71 the billed rate. Vote: Yes – All.

72
73 **b. Whitewater Drinking Protection Grant Projects**

74 **1) Septic System Upgrade Payment – Kieffer**

75 On motion by Mark Thein and seconded by Bob Walkes, the WWJPB voted to approve the
76 Kieffer septic system upgrade payment. Vote: Yes – All.

77
78 **2) Update on Pending Septic System Projects**

79 Sheila Harmes shared an update on pending septic system projects, Behrens and Klees.

80
81 **3) Cover Crop Contract Payments**

- 82 a. Reiter Living Trust
- 83 b. Silver Spirit Farm
- 84 c. Eric Bergan
- 85 d. Kent Cray
- 86 e. Eric Klein
- 87 f. Ben Klein

88
89 Jenna Rassmussen, Wabasha SWCD, shared information regarding the cover crop
90 process with the landowners. Discussion ensued about cover crops and environmental
91 concerns.

92 On motion by Mark Thein and seconded by Bob Walkes, the WWJPB voted to approve all
93 the cover crop contract payments. Vote: Yes – All.

94
95 **c. Local Advisory Team Grant Update**

96 Meetings have occurred to work with the farmers to develop best management practices in Elgin and
97 Altura. The Utica meeting is on hold until the new well is drilled. The next meetings for Elgin and
98 Altura will be in January 2024 and the EPA petition will be on the agenda for discussion.

99
100 **8. Agency Reports**

101 None

102
103 **9. Adjourn; Next meeting February 15, 2024**

104 On motion by Mark Thein and seconded by Ross Greden, the WWJPB voted to adjourn at 10:20 a.m.
105 Vote: Yes – All.

106
107 Respectfully submitted by:

108 Anne Schwertel, PL&ES Administrative Specialist

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111
112 Signed: 
113 WWJPB Secretary/Treasurer