

Whitewater Joint Powers Board Minutes
February 15, 2024
Whitewater State Park Visitor's Center

1. Call to Order: Chair Josh Elsing called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

Board Members Present: Josh Elsing, Ross Greden, James Rentz, Brian Mueller, Bob Walkes and Lynn Zabel

Board Members Absent: None

Others Present: Sheila Harmes, Coordinator Whitewater Watershed; Dawn Bernau, MDA; Dale Hadler, Public Observer

2. Public Comments

No comments

3. Approve Minutes of December 21, 2023, Meeting

A motion was made by Bob Walkes and seconded by Ross Greden to approve the minutes.

Vote: Yes – All.

4. Approve Agenda

On motion by Bob Walkes and seconded by Lynn Zabel, the WWJPB voted to approve the agenda.

Vote: Yes – All.

5. Approve Consent Items

Sheila Harmes explained the bills payable. A motion was made by Bob Walkes and seconded by Ross Greden to approve the consent items. Vote: Yes – All.

6. Board Reports

Josh Elsing – Gave overview of the role and responsibilities of the WWJPB and the initial formation of the board for introduction to Brian Mueller.

Bob Walkes – There have been some discussions in Wabasha County regarding building inspections.

Ross Greden – Explained at the last Winona County SWCD there was an agenda item regarding the Southeast MN Nutrient Management Project, which is a response to the EPA petition. Discussion took place regarding the fact that livestock producers were shouldering the blame as the reason for the increase in nitrate levels, but no evidence to validate that claim. Additional conversation took place about the responsibility of well upgrades by landowners.

Lynn Zabel – Discussed subsidies available to landowners and the possibility of hiring a Feedlot Officer for Wabasha County.

James Rentz – Oronoco is upgrading their sewer/water systems, to include some landowners who currently have a private well.

Brian Mueller – Mentioned cover crops and there have been some solid waste discussions at the County level.

Josh Elsing – Winona County's special committee is still meeting regarding options for a Law Enforcement Center. A state flag resolution mimicking Wabasha and Houston Co was presented to the Winona County Board, but it was denied. Winona County is in discussions regarding a broadband expansion. The County Board received the housing study report.

7. Board Discussion and Action Items

59 **a. Local Advisory Team Grant Update – Dawn Bernau**

60 Dawn Bernau gave a summary of the SE Minnesota EPA petition and Minnesota’s response. She
61 provided a timeline of the Petition as well as the interagency workplan submitted to the EPA.
62

63 The work that the Minnesota Department of Agriculture is currently doing under the Nitrogen Fertilizer
64 Management Plan and Groundwater Protection Rule will be expanded on a voluntary basis to
65 townships which had elevated nitrate in the Township Testing Program. Outreach and education will
66 continue to include a nutrient management conference, Nutrient Management Initiative to improve
67 fertilizer efficiency, and on-farm trials.
68

69 The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency plans to conduct a multi-year process to review current
70 feedlot rules. New feedlot rules will include extensive research and consider additional requirements
71 for transfer of manure, BMPs for land application in sensitive areas & manure storage to avoid runoff.
72

73 **b. Election of Officers**

74 On motion by Ross Greden and seconded by Bob Walkes, the WWJPB voted to keep the officer
75 positions the same as last year (Chair = Josh Elsing; Vice Chair = Lynn Zabel; Secretary/Treasurer =
76 Bob Walkes; Alternate Secretary/Treasurer = James Rentz). Vote: Yes – All.
77

78 **c. Financial Update – Sheila Harmes**

79 Sheila Harmes gave an update on the checking and money market accounts.
80

81 **2023 Audit Management Letter**

82 Sheila Harmes shared the audit management letter from Peterson Company, to be signed by Sheila
83 Harmes and WWJPB Chair, Josh Elsing.
84

85 **d. Whitewater Drinking Protection Grant Projects**

86 **1) Cover Crop Contract Payments**

87 **a. Rachel Walkes**

88 On motion by Ross Greden and seconded by James Rentz, the WWJPB voted to approve
89 the cover crop contract payment. Vote: Yes – All.
90
91

92 **e. Whitewater Well Sealing Grant**

93 **1) Well Sealing Cost Share Payment**

94 **a. Robert Christie**

95 On motion by Bob Walkes and seconded by Ross Greden, the WWJPB voted to approve
96 the well sealing share payment. Vote: Yes – All.
97

98 **f. 2023 Accomplishments on grants**

99 Sheila Harmes reported on the 2023 accomplishments of the Whitewater Joint Power Board, as
100 included in the agenda packet.
101

102 **8. Agency Reports**

103 Josh Elsing shared that discussions took place at the Winona County Board meetings regarding protocol
104 for the County Feedlot Officer should unannounced MPCA/EPA inspections of Winona County feedlots
105 take place again in the future.
106

107 **9. Adjourn; Next meeting April 18, 2024**

108 On motion by Ross Greden and seconded by Bob Walkes, the WWJPB voted to adjourn at 10:25 a.m.
109 Vote: Yes – All.
110
111

112 Respectfully submitted by:
113 Anne Schwertel, PL&ES Administrative Specialist
114

115 Signed: 
116 _____
117 WWJPB Secretary/Treasurer