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**Whitewater Joint Powers Board Minutes**  
**December 20, 2024 at 2:00PM**  
**Whitewater State Park Visitor's Center**

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Josh Elsing called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m.

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

Board Members Absent: None

Others Present: Sheila Harmes, Coordinator Whitewater Watershed

2. **Public Comments**

No comments.

3. **Approve Minutes of October 17, 2024, Meeting**

A motion was made by James Rentz and seconded by Lynn Zabel to approve the minutes.

Vote: Yes – All (5).

4. **Approve Agenda**

On motion by Ross Greden and seconded by Brian Mueller, the WWJPB voted to approve the agenda.

Vote: Yes – All (5).

5. **Approve Consent Items**

Sheila Harmes explained the bills payable and explained the need to void a check. The WWJPB discussed the MCIT annual invoice, yet to be received, and is due at the end of January 2025.

Bob Walkes joined the meeting.

A motion was made by Brian Mueller and seconded by Lynn Zabel to approve the consent items.

Vote: Yes – All (6).

6. **Board Reports**

Ross Greden – At the December SWCD meeting, a new NRCS forester, Eli Lindsey, was mentioned. Winona SWCD organizes and hosts the progressive agriculture safety day, and it is estimated to host about 300+ students. The 2025 progressive agriculture safety day is scheduled for May 20th.

James Rentz – The SWCD sent a letter in support of an increase to the soil health initiative to the State. Also, Brian from NRCS provided a 2-page handout of the various programs being offered, specifically at the federal level. It was recommended that more copies be distributed around.

Bob Walkes – The AMC conference was held the previous week, he sat in on the meeting with Jennifer Berquam regarding expansion of Olmsted's cover crop program. A 5% levy was approved by Wabasha County.

Lynn Zabel – Attended the state SWCD convention and routine employee evaluations were conducted.

Brian Mueller – The Prairie Island community had 40 acres approved by the federal government to become sovereign land. Brian Mueller stated Olmsted County Board appointments changed; Dave Senjem will be representing Olmsted County on the Whitewater JPB during 2025.

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59  
60 Josh Elsing – Winona County tax levy passed at 3.67% and budget approved. The SWCD was given an  
61 increase in funding and the 4-H coordinator was approved to full time. Josh shared some  
62 information about the Driftless Ag Alliance.  
63

64 Ross Greden added that the Midwest Forage Association sent information about a Manureshed Action  
65 Summit in Sauk Center on January 28<sup>th</sup> and Mankato on January 30<sup>th</sup>.  
66

67 **7. Board Discussion and Action Items**  
68

69 **a. Financial Update – Sheila Harmes**

70 Sheila Harmes gave an update on the checking and money market accounts.  
71

72 **b. Whitewater Drinking Water Protection Grant Updates**  
73

74 **1) Grant Status (Grant concludes December 31, 2024)**

75 Sheila Harmes expressed her gratitude to the Wabasha and Winona SWCD staff for their  
76 efforts in finalizing the cover crops. Once all cover crop payments are completed following the  
77 meeting, the remaining funds will be minimal and are expected to be used to cover Sheila  
78 Harmes' billed time.  
79

80 **2) Cover Crop Contract Payments (15 contracts)**

81 WWJPB went through the contract payments, with Sheila Harmes explaining funding sources  
82 for the contracts depending on location. All payments were approved through the consent  
83 items, however, a separate vote was taken to address the cover crop contract payments.  
84

85 On motion by Brian Mueller and seconded by James Rentz, the WWJPB voted to approve the  
86 cover crop contract payments. Yes – 4; No – 0; Abstain – 2 (RG, BW). Motion passed.  
87

88 **c. Clean Water Fund Competitive Grant Submittal**

89 Sheila Harmes shared a competitive grant submittal, on behalf of the Whitewater, to support some of  
90 the activities for nutrient management and groundwater protection. She expanded on the categories  
91 for the grant applications and explained the process through BWSR. Unfortunately, the Whitewater  
92 did not receive the grant.  
93

94 **d. 2024 Accomplishments**

95 Sheila Harmes shared the summary of the grants administered this year, as included in the packet.  
96

97 WWJPB discussed cover crop programs.  
98

99 **8. Agency Reports**

100 Sheila Harmes – next LAT meeting for Elgin is on January 15<sup>th</sup> and Altura is on February 6<sup>th</sup>. Utica  
101 continues to be on hold.  
102

103 **9. Adjourn; Next meeting February 20, 2025**

104 On motion by Bob Walkes and seconded by Brian Mueller, the WWJPB voted to adjourn at 2:55 p.m.  
105 Vote: Yes – All (6).  
106

107 Respectfully submitted by:  
108 Anne Schwertel, PL&ES Administrative Specialist  
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110  
111  
112 Signed:   
113 WWJPB Secretary/Treasurer