

**Becker Soil and Water Conservation District  
Board of Supervisors Regular Meeting  
Wednesday, January 15, 2014**

The regular meeting of the Becker Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors was held on Wednesday, January 15, 2014 in the Conference Room of the Ag Center Building located at 809 8th Street SE, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.

Those present were Supervisors Tony Beck, Duane Grossman, Kathy Stenger, and Jerome Flottesmesch. Others present include Becker County Commissioner Barry Nelson, District Administrator Peter Mead, District Administrative Assistant Jen Wentz, District Secretary Alisa Wendt, District Conservationist Ed Musielewicz, District Technician Ed Clem and District Technician Marsha Watland.

**Call to Order** –meeting was called to order at 8:10 a.m. by Chairman Beck

**Realign Board** – nominations for Chairman are up for renewal. Normally, the Board rotates every 2 years. Vice-Chair typically comes next in line. However, Flottesmesch believes that all members should have a chance.

Flottesmesch nominated Kathy Stenger for Chairperson.

Motion (Flottesmesch, Grossman) that nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast for Kathy Stenger for Chairperson. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Grossman nominated Jerome Flottesmesch for Vice Chair.

Motion (Grossman, Beck) that nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast for Jerome Flottesmesch for Vice Chair. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Beck nominated Duane Grossman for Secretary.

Motion (Beck, Flottesmesch) that nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast for Duane Grossman for Secretary. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Flottesmesch nominates Tony Beck for Treasurer.

Motion (Flottesmesch, Grossman) that nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast for Tony Beck for Treasurer. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

**December Meeting Minutes –**

Motion (Flottesmesch, Beck) to approve the December regular meeting minutes as presented. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

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**Financial Reports and Bills for Approval** – Peter review financial reports for December with the Board paying special attention to the receipts of income and accrued salaries payable in 2014. Jen noted that these figures for 2013 will change slightly once the year-end financial statements have been completed.

Motion (Flottemesch, Beck) to approve the December Financial Reports and Bills for Approval. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

### **Reports –**

*District Conservationist Ed Musielewicz reported on the following:*

- Applications for CSP signup period was extended to Feb 7, 2014.
- Involved with a couple EQIP conference calls recently; policy for practices on payment rates will be coming soon. There was 21 million dollars reported last year.
- There is AWEP funding in 2014 for the Red River Basin
- We do have set asides for Ag waste, surety for watershed one plan and compliance on regulations.
- Some dollars are set and can't be moved from different funding pools.
- Jeff Norby has been working with project design. Recent conference calls have changed some of the field office practices. Cost estimates will need to be more specific in the future with survey and design completed first, and then funding dollars can be appropriated.
- He and Jeff have been working with an engineer from Moorhead and meeting with landowners.
- There are 21 EQIP applications thus far with about 1 to 1 ½ million dollars of disbursements.
- Brink Lake project has received plenty of media attention lately in local newspapers, the BWSR website and their monthly newsletter.

*District Technician Ed Clem reported on the following:*

- Working on tree plans but still seem to be behind from previous years
- Entering eLINK reports on grant projects completed in 2013. State dollars reporting consists of pollution figures and reductions on the soil.
- Presented examples of a typical water and sediment control basin site from the Hay Creek project, the enhancements made, and the soil loss reduction rates that followed.
- Presented examples of a typical filter strip project from Boyer Lake. These programs can be a little trickier to sell to landowners because revenue-producing agriculture land is lost to the practice. This provides extensive Phosphorus reduction. Also, water and soil quality are increased over time as well as additional breeding ground for wildlife habitat.

*Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist Adam Kleinschmidt reported on the following:*

- Introduced himself to the Board
- NRCS and SWCD is a first experience for him; USFW has been his previous work experience. He just recently finished his master's degree at NDSU.
- Will be attending the yearly Pheasants Forever meeting next week.

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- Reviewing CRP contracts that have expired, have not reenrolled and are suitable for buffer projects. From there, he has designed maps on GIS to be distributed to those landowners for possible CRP programs.

*District Technician Marsha Watland reported on the following:*

County Ag Inspector

- Working with ArcMap to review 2013 treatment roads for the Becker Co Highway Dept.
- The CAI Committee will soon be reviewing Township reports and be making updates statewide.
- March 20<sup>th</sup> is the annual township weed training.
- Distributed handouts to the Board regarding NWAC weed species and status list for Becker County. She reviewed some of the major changes for 2014.
- As of July 2014, she will be President for the Minnesota State Association of County Ag Inspectors.

Shoreland

- The Bush grant became available yesterday; she will begin the application process.
- Working with the shoreland design program and making updates to all native plant materials.
- She will attend the Blue Thumb organization training held on January 23. They are a professional organization originating in Rice County with other entities throughout the state. They offer access to information that we otherwise wouldn't have. Being a part of this organization will help us better promote water quality standards. This is a great tool for the shoreland program.
- She will attend an erosion control meeting on January 28.

**Data Practices Policy** – Peter reviewed the need for a policy with the Board. All Public, Private, and Confidential data is covered under this policy. He has included himself as the Responsible Authority as well as the Data Practices Compliance Official. Jen has been designated the Data Practices Designee for District Operations and Alisa as the Designee for programs and practices.

He distributed handouts to the Board on policy regulations as well as a quick reference guide on how to use, collect, store, and release data from and on behalf of the District. This is closely related to FOIA; however, a federal regulations policy related to federal programs. Discussion continued and examples were given regarding our current practices.

Motion (Beck, Flottemesch) to approve and adopt the Data Practices Policy for Becker SWCD as presented. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

**2014 Plat Book** – Peter reviewed our recent plat book research and we have chosen Mapping Solutions out of Missouri as opposed to Rockford Maps who printed our current book. The cost to the District is \$17.50 per book; we have the opportunity of renewing the book every two years. He proposes an order of 500 books at a total cost of \$8,880 including shipping.

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Rockford Maps has since produced their own version of a Becker County plat book and have it for sale on their website; they have published this information in our local newspaper.

We have 100 plat books left in our current stock from the 2010 publication.

Motion (Flottemesch, Beck) to authorize the administration to move forward with ordering the 2014 plat book from Mapping Solutions as presented. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

**Ag in the Classroom** – we will participate in this educational session as in the past with a \$125 donation to the program. District and NRCS staff will present materials on soils to the Detroit Lakes and Frazee 4<sup>th</sup> graders during the second week of March.

Motion (Flottemesch, Grossman) to approve the District's participation and donation to Ag in the Classroom. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

**Blue Thumb Network Membership** – Marsha mentioned it earlier in her reports, but Peter presented the idea of Blue Thumb to the Board. They offer support and guidance for landowners and agencies such as ours with suitable plant designs, rain garden structures, and a variety of examples that follow water quality standards. Being a part of this organization will save the District on promotion materials as well as outreach efforts. We have committed to a \$150 donation to the network, as well as in-kind match for outreach activities. This donation covers our membership as well as use of their logo, support, and guidance.

Marsha will attend their meeting in the Twin Cities for new members at the end of this month.

Motion (Flottemesch, Grossman) to approve the District join Blue Thumb Network. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

**Furniture Purchase from John Voz** – with John now a BWSR employee and his new office soon to be located in the USFW building, we propose to purchase his office furniture for Ed Clem's new space. John purchased his own office furniture to match the Districts. We have proposed \$1,800 for this purchase.

Motion (Flottemesch, Beck) to approve the District purchase John Voz's office furniture for \$1,800. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

**2014 Healthcare Adjustments** – Peter presented and he and Jen reviewed the healthcare chart that was written by Darcy Hitesman from Hitesman & Wold law office.

With recent healthcare changes, the District must tax the benefit they offer to their full-time employees as a medical allowance or Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA). All reimbursements for insurance premiums must be taxed, and there are now certain limitations regarding tax-free reimbursements.

In the past, any remaining amount left in this medical allowance account at the end of the year would be lost. Jen discussed Health Care Savings Plan (HCSP) options which would avoid this.

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We will discuss this further once additional specifics have been reviewed with the Minnesota State Retirement System (MSRS) and Darcy Hitesman.

Motion (Flottemesch, Grossman) to approve the following options to all District employees: (1) offer payment of the medical allowance in cash and fully taxable after premiums are reimbursed and taxed or, (2) offer the medical allowance as a pre-tax option for all remaining medical expenses after premiums are reimbursed and taxed and up to the allowed amount of \$2,500 under the law as defined in Code §125. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Peter proposes we increase our current medical benefit allowance to \$850 per month.

Motion (Flottemesch, Beck) to approve the new medical benefit allowance for 2014 and retroactive to January 1<sup>st</sup> in the amount of \$850 per month for each full-time employee. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

**Personnel Performance Appraisals** – Peter reviewed his recent meetings with the employees regarding performance reviews. He asked the Board to complete a performance review on him. The employees have already done the same. He provided the Board with his review on himself and the evaluation each employee gave.

**State Cost-Share Contracts** – the following contracts were presented for consideration:

Contract #13-21 with Ed Kava, tree plan. Estimated project cost \$1,625; eligible cost-share equals 60% or \$1,040.

Contract #13-20 with Todd Andresen, tree plan. Estimated project cost \$305.25; eligible cost-share equals 75% or \$228.

Motion (Grossman, Flottemesch) to approve the cost-share contracts as presented and for the amounts listed. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

**Other** –

Peter proposes to offer Alisa Wendt a salary increase of \$1 per hour for 2014 and retroactive to January 1<sup>st</sup>.

Motion (Grossman, Beck) to approve the increase of \$1 per hour to Alisa Wendt's wages. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Software graphics were discussed. Adobe offers Creative Cloud for cloud storage and website placement as well as access to Adobe products for the monthly fee of \$56.95.

Computer upgrades are needed for the laptop that Jen currently uses. Peter proposes a laptop docking system for Jen's work station in addition to the large screen that she currently uses. This will allow her to take the laptop to meetings, employee trainings, etc. all while retaining her current office settings and systems.

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The purchase of a newer projector is necessary for Board meetings as well as future public program meetings. Our current projector is owned by NRCS and quite old.

Motion (Flottemesch, Grossman) to allow administration to purchase a laptop docking station for Jen, office projector, and Adobe software package as discussed above with a limit of \$6,000.

Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

A committee was created to choose the new computer and software needs of the District once Peter has researched several options and received price estimates. Members will be Kathy Stenger and Tony Beck. They will meet to approve and confirm these purchases.

The vacant Board Supervisor position must be filled. The District is looking at options to replace retiring member Don Lefebvre. The recent offer made was declined. The possible candidate must reside in Area IV which includes  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Detroit, Erie,  $\frac{2}{3}$  of Lake View, and Burlington Townships. Several names were placed on the table for review. Board Chair Kathy Stenger will contact the possible candidate.

Motion (Flottemesch, Beck) to designate Board Chair Kathy Stenger to contact the decided upon candidate for their approval and agreement to serve on our District Board. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

As being no further business, motion (Grossman, Flottemesch) to adjourn at 11:24 a.m.

**Approved: Duane Grossman, Becker SWCD Secretary      Date: February 19, 2014**