



Public Comment and Response

Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD) Board Meeting

Meeting Date: Tuesday, February 18th, 2020

Further questions may be directed to SRWD Staff:

320.352.2231

524 4th Street South

Sauk Centre, MN 56378

www.srwdmn.org

Comments have been summarized to capture the main points from each landowner. If there are questions or concerns regarding the information in this document, please contact the SRWD office.

1. David Zerr - Osakis
 - a. JD2 Pond assessment paid by only a few watershed residents for all of the watershed to benefit. How would that go over if only Sauk Centre paid for the building as a comparison?
 - i. Answer: As we have discussed previously, the current JD2 Sediment Pond project has an established benefitted area that is to pay for any maintenance and upkeep of the project. The SRWD has assessment tools available now that were not available when the existing benefit area was established. As indicated at the end of the February board meeting, the board has requested that information be gathered for the board to discuss options for future funding of the maintenance. In regards to the building, since the SRWD serves to address water quality concerns watershed wide, and an adequate building with assist us in doing that work more efficiently, the building funding was always intended to be spread watershed wide instead of targeted toward a specific area of the watershed, and therefore the hypothetical question posed is not something we can provide a detailed answer for. If you would like to discuss this further, we (SRWD Staff) would be happy to meet with you during our business hours – Monday-Friday from 8am to 4:30pm.
 - b. What is the board's position on the future of the JD2 Sediment Ponds, and in the future will the assessments be watershed wide?
 - i. Answer: As indicated above, the board has requested information to have this discussion at the March board meeting. This is a complex



consideration as it is not as simple as a motion to change the funding structure. Please be advised that if the board chooses to change the funding mechanism for the JD2 Sediment Pond project, it will take time to make the necessary changes to the project. It will also not affect the current assessment, but would be applied to future assessments for the project.

2. Commissioner Jerry Rapp – Douglas County
 - a. SRWD Board passed a motion to assess cemeteries for projects with special assessments. He would like to see this motion rescinded. Stated that he would “deal with it later” if the board chose not to rescind the motion.
3. Sherry Kutter – Grey Eagle
 - a. Water does not get dirty on its own, and it does not get cleaned on its own. It takes a lot of time, work and money.
 - b. Provided information on local farmer subsidies, which also come from tax dollars, and how the farmers receiving those may be contributing large amounts of pollution to our water bodies.
 - c. The economy is based on lake water quality to some extent.
 - d. The current SRWD building is too small, and the cost of the new building is a drop in the bucket compared to the subsidies some of the local farmers are receiving.
 - e. Todd and Stearns Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) also support the SRWD.
4. Paul Hartmann
 - a. Has not seen a presentation on the building design and or the future of the SRWD since October.
 - i. Answer: The board had reviewed the building design multiple times, and even proposed changes to the building at different points throughout this process. Once a design was decided upon, it was not necessary to have the board review the same design. If members of the public wish to see the design, they are welcome to submit a public data request to staff and/or set up a meeting with staff for that information.
 - b. How will the SRWD pay their bills if the proposed legislative bill to cap the SRWD levy at \$500,000 is approved?
 - i. Answer: The Board will have to adjust its budget and programs if the legislation is approved.
 - c. December memo from Sarah Boser says phosphorus was an assumption. Why was this not tested? This was a worthless waste of \$600,000.
 - i. Answer: The December memo stated that there were assumptions made in order to run the calculations. Those assumptions are:



1. “The 17,600 cubic yards of sediment represents “new” material deposited in the ponds since the last cleanout (based on our survey and as-built information, we are confident in this assumption)”
 2. “Based on the way the samples were processed and analyzed, the bulk density (conversion of volume to mass) was not as clearly defined as we had hoped. We are assuming accuracy in the conversion the lab provided for this, though the lab did have some reservations.”
 3. It is your opinion that this was a worthless waste of \$600,000. The data we have shows that the project is removing large amounts of phosphorus and sediment at an extremely economical price.
5. David Drager – Long Prairie
- a. Several checks have missing information on the accounting report – why?
 - i. Answer: These are the payroll checks. The practice of the SRWD has been that that information not be published in the board packet, which meets reporting requirements as long as the packet provided for public review matches the information in the board packet. That being said, the amount of the paychecks is public information and may be requested from the SRWD office via a public data request.
 - b. Who of the board lives on a ditch/public drainage system?
 - i. Lee Bautch
 - ii. Donavon McKigney
 - iii. Larry Ladwig
 - c. How can your work run over the amount of a bid? If a bid is received for work, the contractor should be responsible for completing the work within that dollar amount.
 - i. Answer: While it is important to stick to the estimated cost whenever possible, there are unforeseen situations that arise in construction and it would be in poor taste to refuse compensation to the contractor for those additional costs. There is a balance necessary (especially in regards to drainage systems and water quality projects) where the cost is assessed to landowners and both SRWD Staff and Board discuss these situations to determine a solution that keeps the interest of the contractors AND the landowners in mind. It is important to note that for the additional costs to be paid, a change order must be created and approved by the engineer, SRWD staff and the SRWD Board.
6. David Zerr – Osakis (During Meeting Recess)



- a. Can the public address the board during meetings? What if more questions arise?
 - i. Answer: Since Board meetings are considered a business meeting and not a public engagement session, the appropriate format is to address the board only during public comment. If a hand is raised during another point in the meeting, the board may or may not choose to call on that individual. If additional questions arise, staff would be happy to talk with the public in between meetings, provide additional information, and consider adding items of concern to the next meeting agenda if further board discussion would be necessary. To further answer the question specific to a meeting recess – the Board should not be conducting business or discussing business during a meeting recess. More information can be found in Robert’s Rules of Order.
7. Alicia Elfering – Freeport (During Drainage Meeting Public Comment)
 - a. Trying to be informed by attending board meetings, but having a hard time hearing a lot of the discussion. Please look into microphones and or speak up so all can hear.
 - i. Answer: This is an excellent point. We appreciate your continued attendance at meetings to be informed, and understand the challenge of hearing all discussion as it can be difficult for us to hear each other at times throughout the meeting as well. We will look into the option of microphones, and in the meantime, we will make an effort to project our voices while speaking. Thank you for bringing this to our attention.