



**Sauk River Watershed District Regular Meeting  
 MINUTES**

**Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Located at: Sauk River Watershed District Office, Sauk Centre, MN at 6:00 p.m.

<b>Managers Present:</b>	Bill Becker, Scott Klatt, David Zerr, Eugene Mensen, Kevin Lahr, Paul Hartmann, Russell Miller, Donavon McKigney
<b>Staff Present:</b>	Jon Roeschlein, Administrator; Hannah Schacherl Jansen, Legal Counsel; Scott Wittkop, Ditch and Permit Manager, Steve Zeece III, Water Resources Manager; Garrett Monson, District Engineer
<b>Guests Present:</b>	Randy Neumann, Jerry Rapp, Robert Floerke, Steve Notch, Shawn West, Paul Wildman
<b>Manager’s Absent:</b>	Mike Proell

**Public Comments – None**

1. **Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance** – The meeting was called to order by President Becker at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. **Additions/corrections to the agenda** – President Becker asked for corrections or additions to the agenda. There were none. **Manager Zerr made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Manager Lahr. The motion passed with all in favor.**
3. **Consent Agenda**
  - a. Financial Reports/Meeting Minutes
    1. Checks for March
    2. Receipt Book
    3. Revenue Guideline
    4. Cash Balances
    5. Expenditure Report
    6. March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Regular Board Meeting Minutes

There were no questions regarding the consent agenda. **Manager Hartmann made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Manager McKigney. The motion passed with all in favor.**
4. **Reports – Action Items, Reports and Project Updates** – *Administrator Roeschlein and staff*
  - a. Administration
    - i. Administrator Report – Administrator Roeschlein briefly reviewed his administrators report. He noted that the accounting firm Abdo Financial Solutions has been retained to complete the 2023 and 2024 audit preparation. If all goes as planned, Abdo will have the 2023 prep completed and in the hands of Peterson Company by May 16<sup>th</sup> for them to be able to complete the 2023 audit. Roeschlein also informed the board that that the Chevrolet Traverse went in for repair and required a new transmission.

1. Seasonal Technician Update – Administrator Roeschlein informed the board that a seasonal technician has been hired. Brenna Moen of Osakis was hired for the summer of 2025. Brenna is currently completing her degree in Environmental Studies in Bemidji. She will start training and orientation a day or two before starting full time on May 12<sup>th</sup>.
- ii. Monitoring Department Updates – Abi Parker provided a written report of the Monitoring Department. There were no questions regarding this report.
- iii. Education & Pubic Outreach Department Updates – Kory Klebe provided a written Education and Public Outreach memo. There were no further questions.
  1. 2024 Annual Report was distributed. **Manager Lahr made a motion to approve the 2024 Sauk River Watershed District Annual Report. Manager Zerr made the second. Motion Carried.**
- iv. Water Resources Manager Update- Steve Zeece III, Water Resources Manager, provided his monthly Water Resources report and highlighted a few items in the report. The board had no further questions.
- v. Permit Manager Report – Scott Wittkop, Permit Manager, provided his written report and highlighted a few things. There were no questions.
  1. Permit #24-082 – Exception Request for CSAH 2 – Scott Wittkop reported to the board that Stearns County submitted a permit application to the district for the CSAH 2 reconstruction project extending from the Sauk River in Cold Spring to 1200 feet south of the intersection of County Road 165. The reason for this exception request is that stormwater opportunities within the CSAH 2 project corridor are limited due to site constraints generated by the combination of existing wetland locations and soils and subsoils not suitable for volume reducing practices and the number of ditch sections available to create infiltration swales and right-of-way space. Staff believe that the applicants requests are reasonable and given the linear nature of this project, on-site conditions, proposed treatment, and compliance with the state’s stormwater permit requirements. Though the project design does not provide the treatment required by the district’s administrative rules, there is currently no treatment other than what is provided by the existing ditches and vegetation. The proposed treatment includes the construction of 5 stormwater infiltration swales and one infiltration basin and the use of 10 existing ditch features. The project otherwise complies with district rules. The documentation is filed in the district office. Question A. Do special conditions apply to the applicant’s property that do not apply generally to other property within the district? Yes, this is a linear project on an existing roadway with limited amount of space available for construction of treatment sites. Though the adjacent wetlands, soil types and topography are not unique to this property, the linear nature of the project, narrow property, and public use create unique circumstances. **Roll call vote was taken: Lahr, aye; Hartmann, aye; McKigney, aye; Klatt, aye; Becker, aye; Zerr, aye; Miller, aye; Mensen, aye; Proell, absent.**

Question B. Is there undue hardship to the applicant as distinguished from mere inconvenience, if the strict letter of the rules is carried out? Yes, there is a public need for this project and the requirements of Section 7, 3(c) would require the applicant to obtain additional usable space, alter the road right-of-way boundaries and/or substantially increase the amount of construction which, given the adjacent wetlands and land uses, may be contrary to the intent of the Administrative Rules. **Roll call vote was taken: Lahr, aye; Hartmann, aye; McKigney, aye; Klatt, aye; Becker, aye; Zerr, aye; Miller, aye; Mensen, aye; Proell, absent.** Question C. Will the proposed activity for which the exception is sought not adversely affect the public health, safety, and welfare; or not create extraordinary public expense; and will not adversely affect water quality, water control, or drainage in the district? Yes, the applicant has described how the project will ultimately result in an improvement in stormwater management/treatment compared to the current state through the use of existing/proposed infiltration areas. Stormwater treatment is being added to an area that does not currently have any stormwater treatment. **Roll call vote was taken: Lahr, aye; Hartmann, aye; McKigney, aye; Klatt, aye; Becker, aye; Zerr, aye; Miller, aye; Mensen, aye; Proell, absent.** Question D. Is the intent of the district's rules met? Yes, the proposed design will have a net improvement on water quality over the existing conditions through the use of the proposed treatment areas and existing feature. Stormwater treatment is being maximized to the extent possible. **Roll call vote was taken: Lahr, aye; Hartmann, aye; McKigney, aye; Klatt, aye; Becker, aye; Zerr, aye; Miller, aye; Mensen, aye; Proell, absent. Manager Hartmann made a motion to grant the exception request for permit #24-082 with Stearns County. The motion was seconded by Manager McKigney. The motion passed with all in favor.**

vi. Environmental Technician Report – The Environmental Technician's report was presented. There were no further questions from the board.

b. Projects

i. Long (Higgins) Lake Outlet Project Updates – Roeschlein presented a verbal update on the Long (Higgins) Lake Project. He noted that he contacted Central Specialties to have a discussion regarding potential use of the gravel pit area for infiltration during a warm season draw down on the lake.

c. Committees

i. Water Quality/Projects – Managers Becker, Hartmann, and McKigney – no report.

ii. Rules – Managers Klatt, Lahr, Mensen – Administrator Roeschlein reported that the Rules Committee monitored the discussion held with the implementation team in April regarding the regulatory review project that is being undertaken by the collaborative. Roeschlein provided a copy of the scope of work for the regulatory review and noted to the board that task 1 is almost complete. Task 2 will commence immediately following the final collection of ordinances. Task 2

is the most important step in this process. It is anticipated that the district will have a final report on this by midsummer 2025.

- iii. Public Relations/Education – Managers Zerr, Miller, Proell – No report
- iv. Budget Committee – Executive Board
- v. Personnel Committee – Executive Board

**5. Items for Upcoming Meetings or of Interest**

**6. Upcoming Meetings to be Announced**

a. Regular Board Meetings

- 1. Tuesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Regular Board Meeting, 6 p.m. at the SRWD Office
- 2. Tuesday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Regular Board Meeting, 6 p.m. at the SRWD Office

b. Other Meetings

- 7. Manager McKigney made a motion to adjourn the regular board meeting at 6:55 p.m. The motion was seconded by Manager Miller. The motion passed with all in favor.**

**Regular Drainage Authority Meeting  
MINUTES**

- 1. **The Drainage Authority meeting was called to order by President Becker at 6:55 p.m.**
- 2. **Additions/corrections to the agenda item** – President Becker asked if there were changes or additions to the agenda. There were none. **Manager Hartmann made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Manager Zerr. The motion passed with all in favor.**
- 3. **Drainage Specific Public Comment Period** – Stearns County Commissioner Steve Notch discussed the fact that Environmental Services is reviewing the potential to adopt a soil loss ordinance and will have discussions with County Commissioners. He was unsure where this would go but they are currently reviewing other ordinances that have been adopted in other parts of the state.
- 4. **Reports**
  - a. Ditch & Permit Manager – Scott Wittkop, the Ditch & Permit Manager, informed the board that Chad Martini, Stearns County Ditch Inspector, indicated the potential that Stearns County ditch 35 abandonment proceeding may be moving forward. He also reported that landowner Todd Malecha is working on rebuilding his irrigation bridges over Pope CD 6. Patrick Backowski is still working to redesign his crossings as they are a little more complicated to complete. Wittkop updated the board on CD 17 and showed drone video of the main channel. He reported that he and Administrator Roeschlein are visiting about how to proceed on this matter and will bring a proposal back to the board with the recommendation on how to get this ditch into repair.

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- b. Buffer Violations
    - i. CD 51 Gary Berndt– Wittkop provided a draft letter regarding buffer violations for Gary Berndt along CD 51. **President Becker made a motion to invite Gary Berndt and Owen Berndt to the July meeting. The motion was seconded by Manager Hartmann. The motion failed. Manager Lahr made a motion that Wittkop first start with a call to the landowner Owen Berndt and have a discussion about coming into compliance. The motion was seconded by Manager Zerr. The motion passed with all in favor.**
    - ii. CD 9 Albert Yarke - Wittkop provided a draft letter regarding buffer violations for Albert Yarke along CD 9. Being no further discussion on that matter, Wittkop will mail the letter to Yarke.
5. **Items for Upcoming Meetings or Information of Interest –**
6. **Upcoming meetings to be announced**
- a. Regular Drainage Meetings
    - i. Tuesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025 – SRWD Office
    - ii. Tuesday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025 – SRWD Office
7. **Adjournment of Drainage Authority Meeting – Manager Hartmann made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:42 p.m. The motion was seconded by Manager Mensen. The motion passed with all in favor.**