



11360 Highway 212 STE 6
Cologne, MN 55322

(952) 466-5230 | carverswcd.org

Carver SWCD Board Meeting Minutes – August 21, 2025

Held in conference room 1 at the Carver County Public Works facility in Cologne, MN

Board Members Present:

Chair, Mark Zabel
Vice Chair, Marcus Zbinden
Secretary/Treasurer, Jeffrey Sons (*arrived at 8:10 AM*)
Member, Michael Lynch
Member, Karli Wittner

Others Present:

Carver Co. Public Services Deputy Director, Paul Moline (*arrived at 8:30 AM*)
NRCS District Conservationist, Katie Mattila

SWCD Staff Present:

District Manager, Mike Wanous
Administrative & Finance Specialist, Felicia Brockoff
Resource Conservationist, Terry Meiller

1. Call to Order.

Chair Zabel called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

The Oath of Office was taken by Karli Wittner, Carver District 1 appointed Supervisor. Karli introduced herself to the Board, highlighting her interests in natural resources. She is currently employed by the City of Eden Prairie as the Forestry and Natural Resources Supervisor.

2. Public Comments – None.

3. Agenda Review and Adoption.

Resolution 038-2025: Zbinden moved, Lynch seconded, to approve the August 21, 2025, Board Meeting Agenda as presented. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-absent; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-aye. Motion carried.

4. Agency Reports

- a. FSA report – Jennifer King was unable to attend but included a written report in the Board packets.
- b. NRCS report – Katie reported the first batching for EQIP applications was early August, with a ranking deadline of January 9. Carver County received 19 applications. The CSP application deadline will be in October, with a March ranking deadline. NRCS staff is developing CRP offers that were accepted this year and working on completing status reviews for the contracts that are close to expiration.
- c. Carver County Report – Paul reported the Public Services Division budget hearings were held last week, with a proposed increase of 4.3% to SWCD's annual allocation. Dave Hemze will be presenting Carver County's budget to the County Board at their August 26 Board work session. He also reported the Commissioners will set the preliminary General and WMO levies at their September 2 Board meeting. He also mentioned that budgets in 2027 will most likely look different, mostly due to the proposed cuts to the health and human services areas from the state.

Paul reported the County Board approved their strategic plan last week, with three plan priorities: taxpayer value and customer service; our physical assets; people are our strength.

Paul also reported that the state has fully funded a GreenCorp member again, with the position being filled in October.

5. Consent Agenda Items

Resolution 039-2025: Zbinden moved, Sons seconded to approve the following consent agenda items:

- a. Approval of July 17, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes
 - b. Acceptance of the July 2025 Treasurer's Report
 - c. Authorize the Chair and Manager to sign the 2024 audit management representation letter.
- Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-aye. Motion carried.

6. Regular Agenda Items

- a. BWSR has sent the Soil Health Practices grant agreement that needs to be approved and signed. Mike explained that the federal Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) is supplying part of the funds. The total grant amount is for \$180,000, \$150,000 must be used for on the ground practices, and \$30,000 could be used for SWCD technical assistance. If all of the funds are spent before the grant expiration date (12/31/2028), more funds can be requested. Mike also informed the Board that our current policy for cover crops/soil health will need to be modified to match the requirements of this new grant agreement.

Resolution 040-2025: Zbinden moved, Lynch seconded to approve the grant agreement for the Soil Health Practices totaling \$180,000, authorizing the District Manager to sign the agreement and return it to BWSR in DocuSign. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-aye. Motion carried.

- b. As mentioned in the previous item, the current cover crop cost-share policy will need to be updated to align with the Soil Health Practices grant requirements. Mike reviewed the policy changes that would need to be approved to get us into compliance with the federal obligations under the grant. The consensus of the Board was that under the 'Cover Crop and Conservation Tillage Incentive Payment Structure,' a maximum of 500 acres should be added, this would allow for more producers to take advantage of the grant.

Resolution 041-2025: Zbinden moved, Lynch seconded to approve the revisions to the cover crop cost-share policy as discussed. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-aye. Motion carried.

- c. The SWCD received a grant in 2024 where landowners who enrolled in CRP could sign up for an additional incentive through the SWCD. Since the SWCD received the grant, there haven't been any CRP sign-ups for landowners, until just recently. Landowners who did enroll in CRP with FSA were given information about the SWCD incentive program. Terry reported he came up with a ranking criteria based on priority watersheds. Mike has also worked with our BWSR Board Conservationist (BC), Jen Dullum, to allow us to use the Lake Waconia SWA grant to pay CRP incentives in that watershed also, because the grant funds are very limited.

The Board agreed with the scenarios presented, based on the staff ranking system, and directed staff to develop contracts with the highest-ranking CRP offers that would be approved by the Board at the September Board meeting.

- d. Felicia reported that the Carver SWCD does not currently have a data access policy, as it relates to Minnesota Statutes, section 13.025. Recently, the Minnesota Department of Administration sent out an informational email stating all governmental units need to have an approved policy that is reviewed annually. She has drafted a policy from the template provided by the MN Department of Administration and explained that Carver County uses the same template for all of their departments.

Resolution 042-2025 – Zbinden moved, Lynch seconded to approve the Carver SWCD Data Practices Policy: Requests for public Data as presented. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-aye. Motion carried.

- e. Richard Gruenes with the state AgBMP Loan Program has contacted our office about our revolving loan fund. Currently, there is approximately \$220,000 in our fund, but explained that Carver County Environmental Services fund is down to \$0, and they have more SSTS applications that could be funded. Richard asked if we would allocate some of our funds for these SSTS applications in Carver County, and also mentioned that if we didn't allocate the funds, he could actually 'take' our funds, and disburse them to other Counties in Minnesota. Mike explained that in the past, our AgBMP program funded more rural applications such as Ag waste pits and manure handling equipment, conservation tillage equipment, and a few SSTS loans before Environmental Services received an allocation from MDA. Under what Richard is proposing, as the District Manager, Mike would be able to review and approve these SSTS applications in the MDA system, where previously all applications went to the SWCD Board for approval.

Resolution 043-2025 – Lynch moved, Sons seconded to authorize the District Manager to approve SSTS applications submitted to our AgBMP program through Carver County Environmental Services, while keeping about a \$100,000 balance for any applications the SWCD may receive for other AgBMP projects. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-aye. Motion carried.

- f. MASWCD is accepting nominations for their annual awards program, including the Outstanding Conservationist for each County. The Board discussed a few potential landowners in Carver County.

Resolution 044-2025: Zbinden moved, Lynch seconded to select Augie Kreye and Pat Beier as the 2025 Outstanding Conservationists. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-aye. Motion carried.

7. SWCD Board Committee & SWCD Staff Monthly Reports

- a. Personnel Committee (Zabel, Zbinden) – has not met.
- b. Metro Conservation District's (MCD) Committee (Zbinden; Lynch alt.) – the next meeting is next Wednesday at 4 PM, Zbinden plans to attend virtually.
- c. Education & Outreach Committee (Sons, Lynch) – has not met.
- d. Budget Committee (Sons, Zbinden) – the budget hearing was held on August 14, with the proposed increase to the SWCD remaining at 4.3%.
- e. WMO Advisory Committee (Zbinden; Sons alt.) – a recap of the July 29 meeting included the 2026 WMO budget discussion, and the GreenCorps member will be hired in October. The committee also discussed a feasibility study for the Maplewood Road ravine.
- f. South Fork Crow River 1W1P (Zabel; Lynch alt.) – no meeting until 2026.

g. The SWCD staff monthly progress report was presented and discussed.

8. Board of Supervisors Announcements

a. Upcoming meetings/events:

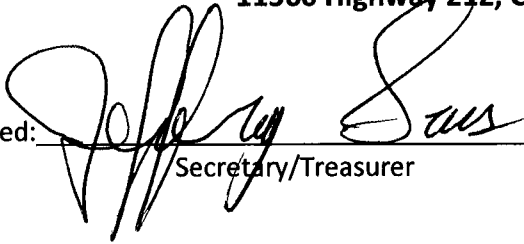
- September 1 – Labor Day, SWCD office closed
- September 18 – SWCD Board meeting 8:00 AM
- October 16 – SWCD Board meeting 8:00 AM

9. Adjourn

Resolution 045-2025: Sons moved, Zbinden seconded to adjourn the meeting at 10:16 AM Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-aye. Motion carried.

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, September 18, 2025, at 8:00 AM
Location: Public Works Headquarters, Conference Room 1
11360 Highway 212, Cologne, MN 55322

Approved: _____



Secretary/Treasurer

Date signed: September 18, 2025