

Carver SWCD Board Meeting Minutes – November 20, 2025

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

Board Members Present:

Mark Zabel, Chair
Jeffrey Sons, Secretary/Treasurer
Michael Lynch, Member
Karli Wittner, Member

Board Members Absent:

Marcus Zbinden, Vice Chair

SWCD Staff Present:

Mike Wanous, District Manager
Felicia Brockoff, Administrative & Finance Specialist

Others Present:

Cindy Hoffmann, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician
Tim Sundby, Carver County Water Resources Supervisor

1. Call to Order.

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

2. Public Comments – None.

3. Agenda Review and Adoption.

The pollinator project approval listed under 6-d on the Agenda has been removed, they will be brought to the December Board meeting for approval. It was also noted under the Personnel Committee, Terry's 21-year anniversary is November 22.

Resolution 058-2025: Lynch moved, Wittner seconded, to approve the November 20, 2025, Board Meeting Agenda as amended. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

4. Agency Reports

- Carver County Report – Tim Sundby gave a presentation on the Lyman Bridge, Big Woods Lake ravine projects, and Seminary Fen where ETA funds were provided through the SWCD.

Public works has constructed a new bridge on Lyman Blvd. In the state bonding bill to complete the project, they were required to do a wetland restoration to fix the ravine. An old pipe was removed, and wetland improvements were completed for the restoration. Funding for the project was provided by WBIF, \$180,000 and an \$80,000 match from the Carver County WMO. Tim reported a lot of riffle points were installed, due to the large change in elevation levels. Under the bridge, large rip rap rocks were installed, which is a requirement.

Tim also reported they are working with the City of Chaska, TEL Industries, and MN Native Landscapes to repair a large ravine draining into Big Woods Lake. He explained that rock chutes will be set up before water can enter the lake. There will also be toe protection installed, and removal of

Buckthorn and replacing the area with native species. \$40,000 in WBIF has been allocated for the project.

The City of Chaska has identified a large ravine as C2, which is causing lots of sediment to enter the Seminary Fen. The project costs to repair this have included \$870,000 from a WBIF grant to the City of Chaska, \$85,000 from the Carver County WMO, and \$15,000 engineering assistance from the SWCD ETA program.

Tim also reported on the goldfish issue in Hazeltine Lake. In the past 5 years, approximately 600,000 goldfish have been removed. The internal load in the lake has been knocked down by 50%, and the lake now has emerging vegetation. He also reported on Meuwissen and Benton Lakes. They have found that Meuwissen has been determined as the nursery spot for carp. After an EGS system has been installed to remove carp, Meuwissen Lake is now under the state standards for phosphorus. They are also starting to see the benefits in Benton Lake.

- b. NRCS report – Cindy reported they were able to come back to work on November 13. Katie and Cindy are trying to catch up meeting with producers, getting payments out the door, but they are limited on what payments they can process. She reported there will be a lot of changes coming with the passing of the One Big Beautiful Bill, but they aren't sure what those changes will look like yet.

The application deadline for 2026 EQIP was August 1. The last they heard was ranking deadline was planned for January 9, 2026, but they're waiting to see if the date changes. There were 19 EQIP applications received for Carver County.

She also reported they are working through practice certifications and annual payments for existing CSP contracts. The original application deadline for FY 2026 CSP sign-up was originally October 31, 2025. They are waiting to see if that date will change.

Cindy also thanked the SWCD for answering questions for producers about their CRP plantings, while staff was on furlough. FSA should start making the CRP payments soon, they just received authorization yesterday to do so. All construction projects were also on hold during the furlough, but she reported 1 project is back up and running, while others will most likely be delayed.

- c. FSA Report – Jennifer was unable to attend today.

5. Consent Agenda Items

Resolution 059-2025: Sons moved, Wittner seconded to approve the following consent agenda items:

- a. Approval of the October 16, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes
- b. Acceptance of the October 2025 Treasurer's Report

Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

6. Regular Agenda Items

- a. At last month's meeting, Supervisors discussed making personal contributions towards the MN State Envirothon. Today is "Give to the Max" day, so staff will make the contribution today, on behalf of the Supervisors.
- b. Registration has been sent in for the MASWCD Convention for both Supervisors and Staff who were interested in attending. The convention dates are December 2-3.

- c. Kim Kuntz has recently completed construction of his two grassed waterways and has requested his reimbursement payment through the SWCD. Kuntz's project will be funded through the South Fork Crow River WBIF and the SWCD's FY23 state cost-share program. The total cost of Kuntz's project was \$11,322.90, cost-share funding from South Fork Crow River was \$8,492.18 (75%). The SWCD's cost-share portion is set at \$1,565.00, which gets Kuntz close to 90% of cost-share for the project.

Resolution 060-2025: Sons moved, Lynch seconded to approve a payment of \$1,565 to Kim Kuntz utilizing the FY23 cost-share funds. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

- d. Seth will bring completed pollinator projects to the December Board meeting for approval.
- e. Discussion on the Minnesota Paid Family Medical Leave that will start January 1, 2026. Mike explained that every employer has to have a policy in place, and we need to decide how to cover the premiums, supplemental payments, intermittent leave blocks of time. The Board reviewed the draft policy Mike put together, based on examples provided on the MN Paid Family Medical Leave website. The SWCD Board set the following additional requirements for the policy:
 - The premiums will be split between the SWCD (0.22%, small employer rate) and the employee (0.44%).
 - The SWCD will not allow supplemental payments for employees while they are using the MN Paid Family Medical Leave.
 - The minimum block of time employees can use for the MN Paid Family Medical Leave will be 3 consecutive working days, or the equivalent of 24 hours.

Resolution 061-2025: Lynch moved, Wittner seconded to approve the MN Paid Family Medical Leave policy as discussed, and to add this as an SWCD organizational meeting discussion item starting January 2027. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

- f. Mike reported that the SWCD will be receiving a 0% increase for its 2026 Budget. In order to balance the budget of increasing expenses, Mike has proposed to increase the hourly ditch rate we are currently charging Carver County. Dave Frischmon is responsible for the drainage ditch assessments, and the redetermination of benefits, but Mike has been spending lots of time with landowners and attending meetings over the past couple of years. Mike also reported that our currently hourly rate to charge the RPBCWD for technical assistance is \$55 per hour. The contract will renew in 2026, and that hourly rate will also be increased. He also reported that Carver County has built in a 7% increase for staffing for 2026, which is what has been built into the SWCD's 2026 budget. Chair Zable stated that budgets for 2027 will most likely be very low again. He also inquired about pollinator program funding, since the District Capacity funding will end on 12/31/2026. Mike has discussed the program with Paul Moline, and if needed they could possibly provide the cost-share funding for the pollinator program to continue as part of their landowner cost-share program.

Resolution 062-2025: Sons moved, Lynch seconded, to approve the 2026 budget as presented. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

7. SWCD Board Committee & SWCD Staff Monthly Reports

- a. Personnel Committee (Zabel, Zbinden) – The Personnel Committee will meet in December prior to the Board meeting. The December Board meeting will start at 4:00 PM on December 18.

- b. Metro Conservation District's (MCD) Committee (Zbinden; Lynch alt.) – Zbinden and Lynch were unable to attend the meeting. Mike reported that the programs were discussed for the next three years as part of the workplan and budget. Dues were also discussed, and they are expected to stay at a low rate, in order to get MCD's fund balance closer to their \$30,000 target. Chisago SWCD discussed using ETA funds to purchase a drone for even more accurate survey elevation shots. The issue they are running into is that MCIT will not ensure the drone, since it is technically state-owned equipment. Chisago SWCD is working on an agreement to try and remedy the situation.
- c. Education & Outreach Committee (Sons, Lynch) – The fall newsletter has been sent out, and tree orders have been coming in steadily. The online store is working well, and any issues are quickly fixed by Brettworks Tech, if needed.
- d. Budget Committee (Sons, Zbinden) – nothing more to report
- e. WMO Advisory Committee (Zbinden; Sons alt.) – Lynch reported that Tim Sundby gave a similar presentation at the WMO meeting as he did today. Kristin Larson also discussed the boundary adjustments that will be made for watersheds. As parcels are split or sold, the boundary adjustments need to be reviewed so taxed parcels are going to the correct watershed. The November and December meetings have been canceled, the next meeting will be January of 2026.
- f. South Fork Crow River 1W1P (Zabel; Lynch alt.) – the next meeting will be in 2026.
- g. The SWCD staff monthly progress report was presented and discussed. Mike has been receiving a lot of calls about the ditch assessment invoices that have recently been sent out.

8. Board of Supervisors Announcements

- a. Upcoming meetings/events:
 - November 27-28 – Thanksgiving Holiday observed (SWCD office closed)
 - December 2-3 – MASWCD Convention
 - December 18 – SWCD Board Meeting, time has been changed to **4:00 PM**
 - December 24-25 – Christmas Holiday observed (SWCD office closed)

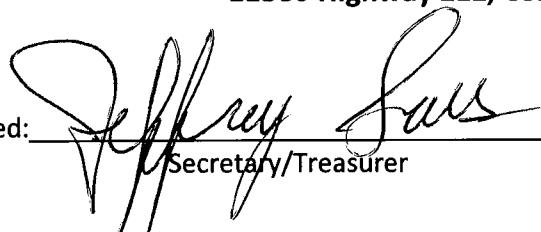
9. Adjourn

Resolution 063-2025: Lynch moved, Sons seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:56 AM. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

Next Board Meeting: **Thursday, December 18, 2025, at 4:00 PM**

Location: **Public Works Headquarters, Conference Room 1**
11360 Highway 212, Cologne, MN 55322

Approved:



Secretary/Treasurer

Date signed: December 18, 2025