



11360 Highway 212 STE 6
Cologne, MN 55322

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Carver SWCD Board Meeting Minutes – December 18, 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

Others Present:

Katie Mattila, NRCS District Conservationist

SWCD Staff Present:

Mike Wanous, District Manager
Felicia Brockoff, Administrative & Finance Specialist
Terry Meiller, Resource Conservation Technician
Seth Ristow, Landscape Restoration Technician

1. Call to Order.

Chair Zabel called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

2. Public Comments – None.

3. Agenda Review and Adoption.

Resolution 064-2025: Lynch moved, Sons seconded, to approve the December 18, 2025, Board Meeting Agenda as printed. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

4. Agency Reports

a. Carver County Report – Paul could not make the meeting tonight.

b. NRCS report – Katie reported they are working on practice certifications for EQIP and CSP contracts. The 2026 sign-up has been extended to January 15, 2026 for all states, the previous deadlines were August and September. She reported that Carver County currently has 7 CSP applications and 20 EQIP applications. Katie also reported there is a new USDA Regenerative Pilot Program that has allotted \$700 million nationally. NRCS has not received details how these funds will be allocated, some early reports sound like the new program would combine EQIP and CSP into one new program.

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

5. Consent Agenda Items

Resolution 065-2025: Lynch moved, Wittner seconded to approve the following consent agenda items:

- a. Approval of the November 20, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes
- b. Acceptance of the November 2025 Treasurer's Report

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

6. Regular Agenda Items

- a. Three landowners have requested reimbursement payments for their pollinator cost-share projects that have been completed. Seth has inspected the completed projects, and reviewed the individual projects with the Board at this time. There was a question about the City of Chaska's project, and if landowners have been contacted about their property boundaries. Wittner stated she is on the Park Board for the City of Chaska, and confirmed that all of the affected homeowners have been contacted, they are aware that this project was installed on City property. They have also been instructed not to mow the City property adjacent to their properties.

Resolution 066-2025: Sons moved, Wittner seconded to approve a total of \$4,799.75 in pollinator cost-share reimbursement payments for the following projects:

- 1) Living Rock Church, 80,000 square feet, cost-share payment of \$3,178.66
- 2) Julie Trabant, 8,200 square feet, cost-share payment of \$1,129.84
- 3) City of Chaska, 12,000 square feet, cost-share payment of \$491.25

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

- b. Ron Olson has completed his EQIP project of installing a grade stabilization structure in Dahlgren Township, that will protect upstream cropland and reduce soil discharge to Carver Creek. Terry explained the project details to the Board at this time. Ron is also receiving funding from FY23 District Capacity for this project and has requested the cost-share reimbursement from the SWCD. The total cost to complete the project was \$44,291.20, EQIP will fund \$13,404.68, and the SWCD contract is to reimburse \$19,655.00 which utilizes the remaining FY23 District Capacity funds.

Resolution 067-2025: Lynch moved, Sons seconded to approve a cost-share reimbursement payment of \$19,655 to Ron Olson utilizing the remaining FY23 District Capacity funds. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

- c. Terrain Holdings LLC has recently installed four water and sediment control basins, and a 600 linear foot grassed waterway in Laketown Township. They have also requested their cost-share reimbursement payment through the SWCD. Terry explained the project details to the Board at this time. The total cost of the project was \$39,175, with cost-sharing set at \$35,257.50 (90% of the total cost), and utilizes the remaining FY23-25 state cost-share grant funds.

Resolution 068-2025: Sons moved, Wittner seconded to approve a cost-share reimbursement payment of \$35,257.50 to Terrain Holdings LLC, utilizing FY23-25 cost-share funds. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

- d. Terry reviewed the two Zellman projects that were funded through the South Fork Crow River and completed this fall also. They installed several water and sediment control basins and waterways, that will save over 120 tons of soil, 85 tons of sediment, and 90 pounds of phosphorus annually. The total cost of the projects were \$48,818.50, and they received \$43,936.65 in funding from the South Fork Crow River.
- e. Ed Duane Lind had completed installing a terrace system to address several eroded gullies in Young America Township and has requested his cost-share reimbursement utilizing the Eagle Lake SWA grant funds. The total cost of the project was \$50,831, with cost-sharing set at \$45,747.90 (90% of the project). Terry explained that the contractor was not able to complete the fine detail grading and

seeding of the project, because the frost had already set in. However, the contractor has assured the landowner that he wants to come back in the spring to finish smoothing it out, and get it seeded down. Lynch stated there should be something in writing from the contractor and the landowner, stating they will finish this project in the spring.

Resolution 069-2025: Lynch moved, Sons seconded to approve a cost-share reimbursement payment of \$45,747.90 to Ed Duane Lind, utilizing the remaining Eagle Lake SWA grant, and to obtain a signed agreement from Ed Duane Lind stating the final seeding will be completed in the spring. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

- f. The current JPA with Carver County for the SWCD to participate in their group health insurance plan needs to be renewed. The only change is that the dental insurance is a self-funded plan, so any SWCD staff expenses not covered by the premiums, would be invoiced in early 2027.

Resolution 070-2025: Sons moved, Lynch seconded, to approve the JPA between Carver County and the SWCD to participate in their group health insurance plan. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

- g. Mike has completed the annual personnel reviews with the staff. The Personnel committee met with Mike on December 10, to conduct Mike's annual review and go over the staff reviews. There were two employees that have exceeded expectations and are recommended to receive a larger incentive increase for 2026. The remaining 5 employees are meeting expectations and are recommended to also receive wage increases.

Mike reported that Carver County has moved back to a straight pass or fail for their salary increases, and have gone away from the merit system. Mike also reminded the Board that the SWCD is 1-year behind Carver County with our salary schedule (for 2025 salaries, the SWCD is using the 2024 Carver County non-bargaining schedule). The Personnel Committee recommendation was for each employee to receive a 4% cost of living allowance (COLA). The consensus of the SWCD Board was they liked the current merit-bases system, which should keep employees striving for a better salary each year, based on performance. Zabel wants it communicated to the SWCD staff, that the larger salary increases for 2026 will most likely not happen in 2027, since a much tighter budget is expected. The Personnel committee also recommended looking at the SWCD's salary structure mid-year in 2026 so any adjustments are needed, they can be done before December of 2026.

Resolution 071-2025: Sons moved, Lynch seconded, to approve the 2026 compensation schedule (current Carver County 2025 non-bargaining schedule); and approved the proposed merit increases presented for each employee, for a total of \$654,535. 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) – Felicia's 32-year SWCD anniversary with the SWCD is on December 28.
- b. Metro Conservation District's (MCD) Committee (Zbinden; Lynch alt.) – nothing to report.
- c. Education & Outreach Committee (Sons, Lynch) – nothing to report.
- d. Budget Committee (Sons, Zbinden) – nothing to report.

- e. WMO Advisory Committee (Zbinden; Sons alt.) – nothing to report.
- 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 reported there has been an overwhelming amount of ditch requests and questions in 2025. Zable reported that any violations to RIM easements will now be surveyed by a licensed surveyor. All violations will also be renamed an “alteration” instead of a violation. Any areas of RIM easements that have been violated, will also need to be replaced double the amount of the area that has been disturbed/violated.

8. Board of Supervisors Announcements

- a. Supervisors’ compensation forms are due to Felicia today.
- b. Upcoming meetings/events:
 - December 24-25 – Christmas Holiday observed (SWCD office closed)
 - January 1 – New Years Day (SWCD office closed)
 - January 15 – SWCD Organizational Meeting, 8:00 AM
 - January 19 – Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday observed (SWCD office closed)

9. Adjourn

Resolution 072-2025: Sons moved, Lynch seconded to adjourn the meeting at 5:00 PM. Roll call vote: Lynch-aye; Sons-aye; Wittner-aye; Zabel-aye; Zbinden-absent. Motion carried.

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 8:00 AM
Location: Public Works Headquarters, Conference Room 1
11360 Highway 212, Cologne, MN 55322

Approved: 
Secretary/Treasurer

Date signed: January 15, 2026