Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2018
MASWCD Office, 255 Kellogg Blvd. East, #101, St. Paul, MN 55101 (651) 690-9028

Present: President Kurt Beckstrom, Vice President and Metro Area 4 Director Roland Cleveland, Secretary Treasurer and Northwest Area 1 Director Paul Krabbenhoft, Northeast Area 3 Director Bob Hoefert, Southwest Area 5 Director Clark Lingbeek, South Central Area 6 Director Mark Schnobrich, Southeast Area 7 Director Bill Thompson, North Central Area 8 Director Ken Laporte, MASWCD staff LeAnn Buck and Sheila Vanney; Acting NRCS State Conservationist Curtis Elke, BWSR Assistant Director Doug Thomas, Governor Dayton Water Policy Director Anna Henderson.
Absent: West Central Area 2 Director Mike Jorgenson.

President Beckstrom called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and led the board in the pledge of allegiance. Motion by Cleveland and seconded to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda. Motion by Krabbenhoft and seconded to approve the consent agenda consisting of: meeting minutes from January 24, 2018. Motion carried.

President’s Report. Beckstrom took a moment to expressed sadness over the passing of Bob Albrecht, North Central Area 8 Director and Crow Wing Supervisor. Beckstrom attended the services for Albrecht, along with many other SWCD representatives. Beckstrom introduced and welcomed new North Central Area 8 Director Ken Laporte, Cass SWCD Supervisor. Beckstrom presented a revised mission statement for the board’s consideration. The mission statement was worked on during the board retreat in January. Motion by Krabbenhoft and seconded to adopt the revised mission statement which reads as follows: MASWCD is a nonprofit organization which exists to provide leadership, educational opportunities, and a common voice for Minnesota’s soil and water conservation districts. Motion carried. Beckstrom led discussion on adoption of 2018 MASWCD Focus Areas. This was also an item that was worked on during the board retreat. Motion by Cleveland and seconded to adopt the 2018 focus areas as presented. Motion carried. Beckstrom stated the executive committee, consisting of MASWCD President (Beckstrom), Vice President (Cleveland), and Secretary/Treasurer (Krabbenhoft), met to conduct a performance review of the Executive Director, LeAnn Buck. Beckstrom stated that Buck continues to exceed expectations and received a superior performance rating. Motion by Cleveland and seconded to approve the performance review of the executive director and adopt the budgeted staff salary amounts. Motion carried. Discussion was held related to professional salary levels. Krabbenhoft stated the Executive Committee will be studying comparable staff salaries to make sure MASWCD staff salaries are appropriate.

Beckstrom reported on the NACD Annual Meeting and the MASWCD Resolution #2017-19 that was acted on there. The resolution passed as amended. Other issues discussed at the national meeting included NRCS staffing is decreasing nationwide and there are concerns about field office staffing and staff morale.

Finance Report. Krabbenhoft presented the monthly financials for board consideration and action. Motion by Krabbenhoft and seconded to approve the monthly financials subject to annual review. Motion carried. Krabbenhoft shared with the board an update on dues payments to date.

“25 by 2025” State Water Quality Goal – Anna Henderson shared with the board a summary of the water quality town halls held over the summer. She had a conversation with the board about some of the take aways from the events, which were held at locations based on MASWCD Area boundaries. A press conference on the report will take place tomorrow at 1:30 pm in the Governor’s reception room.

USDA NRCS’s Multi State Conservation Collaboration Grants. Buck provided an update to the board on a grant development. NRCS is announcing a new multi-state grant and agreements process for leveraging NRCS resources, addressing local natural resource issues, encouraging collaboration and developing state and community level conservation leadership. The proposal will be accepted for projects located in Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Buck has been working with NRCS and BWSR and will communicate opportunities for the SWCD as they become known.
NRCS Update. Acting NRCS State Conservationist for Minnesota, Curtis Elke, provided information for the board. He noted that Cathee Pullman will not be coming back to the position of Minnesota State Conservationist after medical leave. She will be returning to the state of Maine. Elke also noted he is on an NRCS national committee for inefficiencies in programs and practices and welcomes input on ways NRCS programs and practices may be more effective.

2018 Legislative Session. Vanney provided information and updates for the board on activities related to the legislative session that begins today.

Executive Director’s Report. Buck provided information on the Minnesota Local Government Water Roundtable and Fund the Plan Working Group. MASWCD, AMC and MAWD continue to meet and address one watershed one plan policies, clean water funding and support for local conservation implementation activities. Buck stated that Ramsey Conservation District has provided a resolution to BWSR and Ramsey County for dissolution of the district. She updated the board on discussions MASWCD has had with SWCD representatives, County board members, and BWSR staff. Board members discussed and considered next steps. Buck provided information on the Minnesota Office for Soil Health Leadership Team. The University of Minnesota Water Resources Center and BWSR have entered into a new collaborative initiative to support increasing awareness of the benefits of soil health and conservation through research and outreach that expand the tools and skills of Minnesota’s conservation delivery professionals. Buck provided information on a G-16 Workgroup she’s been participating in that has been facilitated by Freshwater Society. Fourteen years ago, a diverse group of organizations and agencies (agriculture, environment, conservation, local government and state government, including MASWCD), developed the Minnesota Clean Water Legacy Act. Buck, on behalf of MASWCD, is participating in workgroup discussions including an assessment of current policies, activities and potential future strategies. Buck presented for board consideration moving forward with a contract renewal with Goff Public on communication services. Motion by Krabbenhoft and seconded to approve the communication contract renewal with Goff Public. Motion carried. Buck provided an informational update on the MASWCD Leadership Institute.

Conservation Title and USDA Reorganization. Buck updated the board on her involvement in Senator Tina Smith’s Agricultural Advisory Working Group. The Senator’s Working Group policy items include: farm policy and how it impacts our state’s producers, businesses, and communities; crop insurance, research, conservation, and energy. Buck noted that MASWCD will be sending a delegation to the NACD Fly-in on March 19-20 in Washington DC.

Runoff and Sediment Delivery Option (RSDO) for Ditch System Repair Cost Apportionment. Thompson provided information for the board on this issue. He is MASWCD’s representative on the Drainage Work Group, facilitated by BWSR.

The next board meeting will take place March 12 at the Embassy Suites in St. Paul. Meeting adjourned at 3:04 pm.