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Whitewater Joint Powers Board Minutes
October 20, 2022
Whitewater State Park Visitor's Center

1. **Call to Order:** Josh Elsing called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Board Members Present: Josh Elsing, Lynn Zabel, Matt Flynn, Steve Jacob, James Rentz and Bob Walkes

Others Present: Sheila Harmes, Coordinator Whitewater Watershed; Adam Beilke, BWSR

2. **Public Comments**

None

3. **Approve Minutes of August 18, 2022, Meeting**

A motion was made by Matt Flynn and seconded by Bob Walkes to approve the minutes.

Vote: Yes – All.

4. **Approve Agenda**

On motion by Bob Walkes and seconded by James Rentz, the WWJPB voted to approve the agenda.

Vote: Yes – All.

5. **Approve Consent Items**

Sheila Harmes explained the bills payable, as included in the agenda packet. Bills payable total discussed and amended to \$35,905.15.

A motion was made by Matt Flynn and seconded by Bob Walkes to approve the consent items with the amended total. Vote: Yes – All.

6. **Board Reports**

Matt Flynn – Olmsted County started an initiative using the ARP funds for cover crops. 52 producers (49,000 acres) signed up cover crops this fall, hopefully next year will have more.

James Rentz – Added to Matt Flynn's comment – the 52 producers accounted for a substantial number of acres in Olmsted County.

Clarification: Olmsted County cover crop program

- At the end of September 2022 - 52 producers signed up for the cover crop pilot program
- These producers control over 49,000 acres of cropland, of these acres over 6,500 were initially enrolled for the cover crop program
- These 52 producers plan to plant a total of 13,500 acres to covers in 2022-23, essentially doubling their cover crop acres.
- In February 2023, the program is expanding to include additional cover crop, alternative crops/small grains, and the haying and grazing option
- Up to \$1M is available per year for three years to incentivize these agricultural land use options.

Steve Jacob – Winona County is working on the jail project and is in the process of hiring a County Administrator.

Bob Walkes – Nothing new to report for Wabasha County.

55 **Lynn Zabel** – Wabasha County SWCD is sending their District Manager and couple employees to the
56 upcoming BWSR academy. They had to implement a loader fee for the roller crimper but
57 they're hoping it will encourage cover crops more if it can cut the herbicide use.
58

59 **Josh Elsing** – Josh was unable to attend the last Winona County SWCD meeting but they are back to
60 being fully staffed. They're continually reviewing their budget and trying to revamp
61 expenditures and job titles.
62

63 7. Board Discussion and Action Items

64 a. Financial Update – *Sheila Harmes*

65 Sheila Harmes gave an update on the Whitewater Joint Powers Board checking and money market
66 accounts.
67

68 1) 2021 Audit

69 Sheila Harmes shared a copy of the 2021 audit with all the members.
70

71 b. Whitewater Drinking Water Protection Grant update

72 1) Septic System Upgrade Contract

73 Sheila Harmes explained that homeowners with failing septic systems and qualify as low-
74 income could be included in the grant for an upgrade to their system. The parameters are
75 laid out by the USDA low-income standard, i.e., household incomes less than \$65,000. She
76 shared an application and paperwork associated with the septic system upgrade request.
77 The WWJPB discussed requiring multiple bids for applications.
78

79
80 On motion by Matt Flynn and seconded by Steve Jacob, the Whitewater Joint Powers Board
81 approved the septic system upgrade contract. Vote: Yes – All.
82

83 c. 319 Nitrogen Reduction Grant Update

84 The 319 Nitrogen Reduction Grant is officially done, and Sheila Harmes is in process of typing up a
85 final report. A draft report was due by end of last month to finalize payments. She shared compiled
86 feedback from 13 of the 18 cover crop recipients. She shared the answers provided to open-ended
87 questions posed to them regarding the cover crop program. 11 of the 13 farmers she spoke with
88 have plans to continue to use cover crops. One farmer was unable to continue with cover crops as
89 he borrowed a neighbor's equipment to do so but that neighbor has since passed away. Lastly, one
90 farmer said he would not continue cover crops unless being paid to do so. The WWJPB discussed
91 the process of cover crop planting and benefits.
92

93 d. Local Advisory Team (MDA) grant update

94 Local Advisory Committee meetings with Dawn Bernau and Mike Cruse will occur December 13 –
95 19, 2022. The Elgin meeting, to be held at the Fire Hall, will be December 13. The Altura meeting
96 will be December 14 or 15 and the Utica meeting will be December 19. Meetings will be 10:00 am –
97 12:00 pm. There will be a payment for room rental at the December WWJPB meeting. The WWJPB
98 discussed landowner notification of the meetings and the review of data to determine best
99 management practices at the meetings.
100

101 8. Agency Reports

102 Adam Beilke – BWSR Academy will be held the following week. He appreciated the cover crop survey
103 and collecting feedback regarding the program and soil health. The BWSR board will be
104 taking action on the 2nd round of the habitat enhancement landscape program, which
105 focuses on diversifying plantings on easements and conservations lands.
106

107 9. Adjourn; Next meeting December 15, 2022 to be held at 1:00 pm

108 On motion by Bob Walkes and seconded by Matt Flynn, the WWJPB voted to adjourn at 9:35am.
109 Vote: Yes – All.
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Respectfully submitted by:
Anne Schwertel, PL&ES Administrative Specialist

Signed: 
WWJPB Secretary/Treasurer