

PRELIMINARY MINUTES SUBJECT TO THE MANAGERS APPROVAL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Managers

Turtle Creek Watershed District

July 19th, 2022

The Turtle Creek Watershed Board of Managers met at the Government Center in Hollandale, Minnesota. Present were Jeff Ravenhorst, Jon Erichson, Peter VanErkel, Steve Penkava, James Fett and Att’y Kurt Deter. Michelle O’Connor and Dave Vanderploeg were absent.

Also attending the meeting were Jeanine Vorland and Shelley Gorham, Assistant Area Wildlife Manager with MN DNR Owatonna Area Wildlife office.

Peter VanErkel chaired the meeting in the absence of Michelle and Dave.

The Minutes from June 21st, 2022 were approved as presented with a motion from Jeff seconded by Jon and carried.

The Treasurers report showed \$ 213,608.13 in checking and \$72,192.36. Jeff made a motion to accept this report subject to audit seconded by Jon and carried.

Jon distributed the Bank Reconciliation and Financial reports ending June 30th 2022. Jon and James met with US Bank officials regarding a fee for set up and monthly charge for “sweeping” after stating these fees would be waived. US Bank has apologized and will refund the fees. Jon went on to explain how and why the “sweeping process” works.

After discussion Jeff made a motion to have the Treasurer open a new savings account in a bank different than US Bank in order to ensure the accounts are covered by FDIC insurance. The account should be opened by transferring the current US Bank savings account balance and adding an additional \$80,000.00 from the existing checking account at US Bank. Jon seconded the motion and motion carried.

A bill was submitted by Jones, Haugh, Smith for Routine Maintenance in the amount of \$1,481.70. Jeff made a motion to approve and forward this bill to Pat Martinson seconded by Jon and carried.

The following bills were submitted for payment by the District:

Accurant Hill Larson Walth	\$ 158.00
Nancy Finley	\$ 54.44 (Verizon reimbursement)
Rinke Noonan	\$ 950.00

Jon made a motion to pay the bills seconded by Jeff and carried.

Jon presented the proposed 2023 Administration Levy as follows:

1. Attorney Fees (Rinke Noonan)	\$11,800.00
2. Recording Secretary /Expenses	\$ 7000.00
3. Managers	\$ 8000.00
4. Administrative Services (Mower SWCD)	\$17,500.00
5. Audit and Monthly Financial Services	\$ 6500.00
6. Viewers Association and MAWD Dues	\$ 3500.00
7. Insurance	\$ 2200.00
8. Advertising and Postage	\$ 1000.00
9. Rent	\$ 750.00
10. Water Monitoring and Water Plan	\$ 6000.00
11. Incentives, Cost Sharing, Conservation	\$22,250.00
12. Tree Removal	\$15,000.00
13. Beaver Tails	\$ 2500.00
14. Clean Water Legacy	\$ 10,000.00
Total	\$ 114,000.00

Hearing no discussion Jeff made a motion to set the Administration Levy hearing date for August 16th, 2022 at 5:15 PM at the Government Center in Hollandale, Minnesota seconded by Jon and carried. Nancy will publish the notices in the Austin Daily Herald—Mower County and the Albert Lea Tribune—Freeborn County.

Jon gave an update on the Hickory Lake project stating area landowners have not been contacted to be involved.

New canoe-kayak access unveiled on Turtle Creek. The following article was copied from a news release: Jul. 20—Outdoor enthusiasts have one more access to Austin's waterways.

Officials on Tuesday afternoon unveiled a new access to the Turtle Creek for kayakers and canoers, located just off of 12th Street SW, behind Sacred Heart Care Center.

The project, which began two years ago, is the result of a multi-agency partnership to develop a walk-in access to the Turtle, that will allow people to connect downstream with the Cedar River or paddle upstream to enjoy the wooded hillsides on the city's west side.

"We are constantly looking at ways to enhance the local waterways and connect the public to them, and this is a great, collaborative project toward those goals," said Tim Ruzek, Cedar River Watershed District's water plan and outreach coordinator.

Work and financing for the project came from various areas. The Turtle Creek Watershed District funded \$2,750 for the access with the Austin Area Foundation awarding a \$2,000 grant to the Cedar River Watershed District.

The City of Austin designed the access and delivered rock materials, while the Department of Natural Resources built the access on July 13.

"This opens up some options," Ruzek said during a press conference at the new access. "You don't have to just go down the Cedar River."

From the city's perspective, this is a way to highlight some hidden gems within the community.

"Austin isn't known for water recreation," said Mayor Steve King. "Now we are."

The access is on a floodplain in Austin, which included residential property acquired by the City of Austin through its flood mitigation program. In total a home and two garages were removed from the 1.5 acre piece, which sits next to another half-acre of wooded property owned by the city.

For many this is another effort to further get people out and using Austin's waterways, which many believe is underutilized by a public who may not realize just how secluded a paddle down the rivers can be.

You don't feel like you're in Mower County," said Jon Erichson, Turtle Creek Watershed District board member and avid user of the waterways. "You feel like you're somewhere else."

Erichson also said that establishing this access point could attract people from further north of Austin that can put in near Moscow or even Geneva.

"There were people looking for an outlet," Erichson said. "Now people in Western Freeborn and northern Mower can come this direction."

The access point is a slope of rock and gravel to the Turtle, and is expected to be easily maintained, even in the event of a flood event.

Future work surrounding the project will come in the form of signage that will direct people to the access from the busy thoroughfare of 12th Street SW.

"Anytime we can add more accessibility to our waterways should be celebrated, and the Austin Area Foundation is proud to have helped add this access for the community," said AAF' Board of Directors Chair Taggart Medgaarden.

A similar project five years ago opened up a rock-surfaced access behind Marcusen Park on the Cedar River Water Trail through Lafayette Park.

James reported on the trees in Turtle Creek, Mower SWCD has summer interns who plan on kayaking the Austin portion of Turtle Creek to inventory any trees that have fallen into the Creek. James will keep in communication with Jon as he has supervised the tree removal in the past.

James notified the Managers of the annual MAWD summer tour which will be Red River Partners summer tour this year on August 23-25,2022 in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Anyone available to attend can let James know for assistance in registration.

Steve Penkava presented the 2022 brush control proposal from B & W Control Specialists. This year they are treating a total of 35.5 miles of ditch primarily in the Northeast portion of the watershed. The not to exceed cost is \$45,000 or \$1267 per mile and the work will be billed on a time and material basis up to the not to exceed amount. After Steve's report Jeff made a motion to authorize Steve to monitor and approve the brush control as in the past seconded by Jon and carried.

Jeanine Vorland attended the meeting and gave the following report: Geneva Report: A lake survey was completed by the MN DNR Shallow Lakes Program last week. Lake levels are near normal with stop logs set at the full-service level. There was some flow over the dam. The lake's habitat and water quality have deteriorated some from last year. The average Secchi depth was only about 9 inches due to suspended algae. The good news is that submersed plants are wide spread and diverse with good stands of wild celery (a particularly valuable food and cover plant). However, emergent vegetation has continued to decline with no regeneration from the drawdown in 2019 & 2020. The survey crew did not note any carp, but black bullheads were common. We think the poorer lake conditions are the result of poor growing conditions for aquatic plants early in the season (lots of wind, cold weather and rain), overall loss of emergent vegetation such as rushes and cattails and an imbalance in the fish community with high numbers of fish such as bullheads at the bottom of the food chain and few top predators (i.e., northern pike). All these factors can contribute to increased nutrient levels in the water column and favor algae growth over rooted plants. I recommend we lower the lake in winter to try to induce a winterkill of the less desirable fishes and consider further lowering of the lake levels to regenerate rushes and cattails in the summer of 2023.

Att'y Deter shared with the Managers his decision to retire at the end of this year after over 44 years of practice. He thanked the Board for the opportunity of being his client, but, more importantly the friendships he has enjoyed. He will continue on existing matter as needed, and only accept new matters on a limited basis. Thank you, Kurt, for all your years of service to the District and your friendship. We as a Board wish you the very best in retirement!!!!!!

Jeff made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Jon and carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy K. Finley
Recording secretary

