

Whitewater Joint Powers Board Minutes
April 18, 2024
Whitewater State Park Visitor's Center

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5 **1. Call to Order:** Chair Josh Elsing called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

6 Board Members Present: Josh Elsing, Ross Greden, Brian Mueller, James Rentz, Bob Walkes and
7 Lynn Zabel

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9 Board Members Absent: None

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11 Others Present: Sheila Harmes, Coordinator Whitewater Watershed; Dale Hadler, Public Observer

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13 **2. Public Comments**

14 No comments

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16 **3. Approve Minutes of February 15, 2024, Meeting**

17 A motion was made by Ross Greden and seconded by James Rentz to approve the minutes.

18 Vote: Yes – All.

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20 **4. Approve Agenda**

21 On motion by Lynn Zabel and seconded by Ross Greden, the WWJPB voted to approve the agenda.

22 Vote: Yes – All.

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24 **5. Approve Consent Items**

25 Sheila Harmes explained the bills payable, and that Winona County is working on ensuring the allocation
26 percentage of Sheila's time is calculated accurately. A motion was made by Bob Walkes and seconded
27 by Ross Greden to approve the consent items. Vote: Yes – All.

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29 **6. Board Reports**

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31 Brian Mueller – Olmsted County District 6 Commissioner Sheila Kiscaden is stepping down from the
32 position at the end of 2024.

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34 James Rentz – Still working on cost share projects, to include well sealings, and streamline the process.
35 Andy Hart is now the representative of the Root River One Watershed One Plan Policy
36 Committee.

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38 Lynn Zabel – Wabasha SWCD has a lot of projects going on and they will be moving to a different office
39 space within the same building in the next few months as they need more space.

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41 Ross Greden – At the last Winona County SWCD meeting, a video was shared showing photos of the
42 inside of the well (Altura's old municipal well) before it was sealed. The well was 700 feet
43 down and showed water flow across aquifer boundaries within the well. Sheila Harmes
44 added that the well had to be sealed as it was drawing from multiple aquifers, allowing
45 potential for cross contamination. The WWJPB discussed the importance of properly
46 sealing a well. Winona County Family Night on the Farm will be August 8, 2024, at Clear
47 Crest Farm.

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49 Josh Elsing – He attended a meeting in Utica for landowners within the local DWSMA, to receive
50 information regarding Minnesota's Ag Water Quality Certification Program. Similar meetings
51 took place in Altura and Elgin. The Winona County Board established protocol and a draft
52 landowner letter for EPA inspections. This was done to ensure that feedlot producers know
53 their rights, the Winona County employee knows their role and there is an explanation of
54 process. Discussions regarding the Law Enforcement Center continue.

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56 Bob Walkes – Director of Taxpayer Services is moving to Scott County, so they'll be hiring for that
57 position soon. Wabasha County has some union concerns going on right now. Road
58 projects should be starting up soon.

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7. Board Discussion and Action Items

a. Financial Update – Sheila Harmes

Sheila Harmes gave an update on the checking and money market accounts.

2025 Proposed Budget

Sheila Harmes was notified by Winona County that a budget needs to be submitted for 2025. She shared a proposed 2025 budget with the WWJPB, with allocations from each County. Sheila Harmes' allocation of time would be at 20% in 2025.

On motion by Bob Walkes and seconded by Brian Mueller, the WWJPB voted to submit Sheila Harmes' 2025 budget to Winona County as proposed. Vote: Yes – All.

b. Whitewater Drinking Protection Grant Projects

1) Soil Health Event

Under the Whitewater Drinking Protection Grant, Wabasha SWCD Jenny Rasmussen is spearheading a tri-county soil health event. It is tentatively scheduled to be at the Greden Farm on County Rd 114 around mid to late July. The grant will fund the expenses for the event.

2) Septic System Grant Update

Updates regarding two septic system upgrades initiated in the fall were shared to the committee.

c. Whitewater Well Sealing Grant

Two wells have been sealed by cost-share through this grant, which expires at the end of 2025. Sheila Harmes continues to look for landowners that need wells sealed. Sheila Harmes explained funds utilized to help seal city wells.

d. Local Advisory Team Grant Update

There have been landowner meetings within DWSMAs regarding ag certainty programs.

8. Agency Reports

Sheila Harmes shared that she will be presenting to the Winona County Board on Tuesday April 23rd regarding Nitrates in Groundwater Aquifers in response to the EPA petition.

9. Adjourn; Next meeting June 20, 2024

On motion by Ross Greden and seconded by Brian Mueller, the WWJPB voted to adjourn at 9:35 a.m. Vote: Yes – All.

Respectfully submitted by:
Anne Schwertel, PL&ES Administrative Specialist

Signed: 
WWJPB Secretary/Treasurer