

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2013**

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING HELD**

**STATE OF MINNESOTA)  
DODGE COUNTY)**

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE  
MANTORVILLE, MN**

**2013-21 C.O.W.**

The Dodge County Commissioners met in Committee of the Whole November 12, 2013, in the Commissioner's Room at the Dodge County Courthouse Annex, Mantorville, MN, at 9:00 a.m. CST. Chair David Erickson opened the meeting at 9:02 a.m. CST.

Meeting Convened

The Chair acknowledged those present:

Those Present

Members present: John Allen District #1  
Rodney Peterson District #3  
David Erickson District #4  
Steven Gray District #5

Members absent: None

Also present: Jim Elmquist County Administrator  
Becky Lubahn Deputy Clerk  
Tom Johnston SWCD Technician  
Bill Thompson SWCD #1 Representative  
Don Hesar SWCD #2 Representative  
Larry Scherger SWCD #3 Representative  
David Livingston SWCD #4 Representative  
Glenn Hahn SWCD #5 Representative  
Roger Toquam Ripley Township Supervisor  
Orlo Toquam County Resident  
Dean Schrandt Water Program Manager  
Mark Gamm Environmental Services Director

Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Supervisors and SWCD Technician Tom Johnston met with the Board to discuss the 2014 county allocation to the SWCD.

Dodge County  
SWCD Discussion

In a memo to the Board Water Program Manager Dean Schrandt reported that agricultural productivity relies upon the sustainable use of our soil and water resources. The quality and quantity of both surface and ground waters is a function of our climate and our land and water management actions. The SWCD is continuing the work of providing financial and technical assistance to landowners for conservation implementation. This is a long-term work operation – it requires experience, expertise, coordination and continuity. The SWCD is also engaged with County Environmental Services staff and others to provide current data so that informed decisions can be made. Mr. Schrandt's memo indicated that the SWCD appreciates the opportunity to meet with the County Board, and wishes to continue and expand their joint communication efforts into the future.

Tom Johnston briefly shared the following information with the Board:

Main Themes:Dodge County  
SWCD Discussion -  
Continued

Importance of agriculture to Dodge County's economy.

Importance of conservation to agriculture.

Importance of staff and program support for ongoing conservation delivery.

County investment in SWCD provides a solid return for local conservation, which improves the quality of life for Dodge County residents and lays the groundwork for the future.

Some Items to Consider:

VISION: The Dodge Soil and Water Conservation District will be a visible leader in the proper management of Dodge County's soil and water resources through its technical team providing education and implementation of the best management practices to ensure a healthy ecosystem.

MISSION: To provide for soil health and clean surface and groundwater, for both today and future generations. The SWCD acts as a liaison to guide landowners in both rural and urban settings to manage and conserve our natural resources.

USDA's presence in county is dependent upon a viable SWCD presence. (Waseca County example). County-USDA partnership would be at risk if SWCD diminished.

Joint programs require SWCD: Ex. RIM (Reinvest in MN) + WRP (Wetland Reserve Program.) = SWCD + USDA partnership.

Administration of flood mitigation grant funds from the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) required a cost share process via SWCD (\$123K).

Using \$150K of feedlot funding also needed the SWCD cost share process. The Feedlot Technician position includes \$277K.

Agriculture, conservation, and soil/water management are complex and interconnected areas that require full time staff working with landowners and many public and private sector groups.

Quick Facts and SWCD Financial Statistics:

Number of farms in Dodge County	1,500
Approximate Number of SWCD/NRCS Contacts Per Year	600
Acres Planted to Crops Per Year in Dodge County (of 278,000 total)	220,000
2013 Prevented Planting Acres in Dodge County	48,000
Federal Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Cost Share Last 3.5 Years	\$1.268 million
RIM/WRP Wetland Easement Program Last 3.5 Years	\$1.459 million
Federal Conservation Stewardship Program Funding Last 3.5 Years	\$495,000
2013 Funding for Cover Crops, Payment to 24 Landowners this Year	\$450,000
SWCD 2014 Funding Request to Dodge County	\$110K
Basic Monthly Operating Budget for SWCD	\$12K/month

Likely Effects of Budget Cut on SWCD and Work Products/Services:

Dodge County  
SWCD Discussion -  
Continued

- Staff reduction with critical retirement transition occurring in March, 2014 – 2.0 FTE to either 1.0 or 1.5 FTE.
- Plans for manager + technician would be impractical.
- Loss of technical expertise results in fewer conservation projects completed.
- Less coordination with other LUG's and State on watershed-scale efforts.
- Focus on income-generating actions vs. mid-longer term conservation investments; inability to invest in watershed-scale plans and future funding.
- Effects to Environmental Services with water plan action changes.
- Reduction in contribution agreement income via USDA.

Additional Details on Local-State-Federal Partnerships:

- 2006-2007 Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), SWCD & Farm Services Agency (FSA) (\$453K of State & Federal dollars);
- 2012-13 Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM)/Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) floodplain, SWCD & Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) (\$733K of State & Federal dollars);
- 2013 RIM/WRP wetland, SWCD & NRCS (\$769K of State & Federal dollars).
- The potential exists for more in the future.

Zumbro Watershed Partnership (ZWP) wants to help Dodge, Goodhue and Olmsted SWCD's apply for a significant Clean Water Fund Project for the county's ZWP 50 critical sites project.

Commissioner Erickson asked for clarification on the reference to Waseca County.

Tom Johnston reported that the Waseca County SWCD is not functioning and Waseca area farmers are going to Steele County for assistance.

Dean Schrandt discussed what is happening with grant opportunities for the Dodge County SWCD.

Mr. Thompson briefly discussed the Zumbro Watershed Partnership with the Board.

The Benefits of funding the Dodge County SWCD were discussed.

The Board thanked those present for attending the meeting.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:31 a.m. CST.

Meeting Adjourned

**ATTEST:**

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**DAVID ERICKSON**  
**CHAIR, COUNTY BOARD**

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**BECKY LUBAHN**  
**DEPUTY CLERK**

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**DATED:**