



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District

Wednesday, January 14, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

A regular meeting of the Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District was held at the Mille Lacs County Historic Courthouse, Conference Rm D (lower level).

Members Present

Jake Janski, District 3 – Chair
Dan Campbell, District 1 – Vice Chair
Andre LaSalle, District 4 – Treasurer
Tim Braun, District 3 - Secretary
Robert Hoefert, District 5

Staff Present

Susan Shaw – District Administrator

Members Absent

none

Others Present

Jay Munson – MLC Commissioner

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Janski called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

Policy 2025-01: A conflict of interest whether actual or perceived occurs when someone in a position of trust has competing professional or personal interests and these competing interests make it difficult to fulfill professional duties impartially.

Members were requested to identify any potential conflicts of interest they may have regarding the business of the meeting. The conflict-of-interest declaration form was provided to each for signature. No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by LaSalle: To approve the agenda as presented.

Seconded by Hoefert.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. **Opposed:** none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

4. OPEN PUBLIC FORUM

Policy 2025-02: Board policy limits public forum time for board meeting topics not scheduled within the agenda to 2 minutes per person but allows time extension by board vote.

No public comment.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS

Consent Agenda

Motion by Braun to approve the items included in the consent agenda packet. Items included:

Biennial Election of Officers: (2025-2026)

Biennial Committee Assignments: (2025-2026)

Approve December 10, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

Supervisor 4th quarter compensation report

Set supervisor compensation set compensation rates

Annual statement of the cost to the district for benefits liability (vacation, sick, comp time etc)

Sick leave liability payout to Shaw per personnel policy \$2,389.40

Financial institutions (First National Bank of Milaca)

Signatures for accounts

Fee schedule

Annual professional association dues

SWCD state aide payment resolution (done annually)

Know and Understand SWCD Election Options

SWCD Election filing period is May-19 June 2, 2026: nomination districts 3 & 5 are up for re-election

Seconded by Campbell.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Operational Business

Approve February 2026 through January 2027 Board Meeting Dates

Proposal made to move the meeting start to 5PM.

Motion by Campbell to approve meeting the 2nd Wednesday monthly with a start time of 5pm, with the exception of the November meeting which will be held November 12, 2026.

Seconded by Hoefert.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Strategic Plan Guiding Documents

Civic Governance Policy Agenda and Framework (how we do our work)

Janski reminded the board that this policy issue was on the agenda last month, but we were not ready to act at that meeting without a full board. The question before the Board is whether to move forward as a full Midwest Active Citizenship Initiative (MACI) pilot. MACI is experimenting with the civic governance framework across different groups. MLSWCD is a test for this in a government organization. It's been part of the district conversation and work for a long time. The district has been exploring this to see if it's good for this kind of organization. If the district moves forward as a full-fledged pilot for 3 years, it will look the same but means Shaw will continue to work with staff

and the board on this policy. The board can sunset it at any time, but still take the good learned and continue.

LaSalle reported that the personnel committee has met a couple of times to discuss it and got mixed feedback from staff. The committee is not making a recommendation but instead is asking if it would be beneficial for the board to meet with staff for more robust feedback before acting.

Shaw added that a pilot would provide a 3-year opportunity for just the staff and board members who are interested, to take a leadership role in testing this.

Discussion followed.

Motion by Hoefert to postpone a decision until more input can be provided by staff.

Seconded by LaSalle.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Decision to hold a special meeting for this purpose to be posted for 9AM Monday, February 9th in conference room D.

Internal Operational Committees

Personnel Committee (Janski/LaSalle)

One on One meetings with the Administrator

Braun met with Shaw December 30th to discuss the civic governance approach.

General Supervisor updates

Hoefert announced that he will finish out his term but is not filing for re-election.

Finance Committee (LaSalle/Hoefert)

LaSalle reported that he and Hoefert met at 4:30 before this meeting. The budget is tentatively good, based on the info Shaw has. The board can consider approving this budget tonight and review again in February once grant balances as of Dec 31, 2025, have been confirmed. There are a few items included that would be at the Administrator discretion if the budget can handle it. District cell phones are less discretionary, and we should act on that if possible. Hoefert felt the budget looked better than in past years.

Motion by Hoefert to approve as currently written and amend as better data is available.

Seconded by Campbell.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Reconciliation of Bank Statements (Treasurer)

LaSalle reconciled the December bank statements and reported everything looked good.

Fiscal Capacity

Motion by Hoefert to approve the treasurer's report and monthly transactions report which include electronic transfer's #E25-301 through E25-331, credit card fees and checks written #8253-8260, totaling \$225,674.27 and subject to audit.

Seconded by Braun.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Tree sales

Shaw reported that the tree sale has been launched and the first order was received today.

Quarterly Budget to Actual

Info provided in packet.

Annual Budget (Shaw)

Information was discussed and acted upon during the financial committee report earlier.

Joint Powers Entity Partnerships

Rum River Watershed Partnership (RRWP)

Partnership Board - Janski (Braun)/staff

The Rum board met in December and talked about developing a budget for FY27. Staff are working on that. Clyne gave the Rum board a presentation on the type B outreach she is doing. Janski felt the presentation would be valuable to bring back to the MLSWCD Board at the Feb 9th special meeting. It includes the civic governance approach and describes civic engagement.

Snake River Watershed Planning Partnership (SRWPP)

Steering Committee (SC)

Shaw shared info on an ag waste closure project the steering committee is discussing in prep to bring to the SRWPP Board. During closure it was realized that the manure solids had not been removed as previously believed. The contract and cost estimate were based on that assumption and thus were significantly low compared to what the actual cost would be to continue. Shaw's understanding is that the decision was made by the landowner to continue with the closure. The issue being considered is whether to bring the completed project and contract to the SRWPP Board to consider amending the contract to increase the cost share assistance based on the actual cost of the completed project. Shaw will work with staff and partners to determine if policy will allow this and to understand what led to the underestimate of the project cost. Braun is interested in attending the SRWPP Board meeting as a representative when that discussion comes up.

Collaborative Partnerships (voting role)

MN Assn of Conservation Districts (MASWCD) (Janski - ex officio)

Starting budgeting for workloads anticipated as a result of resolutions passed in 2024, some of which came from NE Area 3.

Northeast MASWCD Area 3 Business (Janski-A3 Director ex officio)

Fall meeting (Lake SWCD hosting) – Janski reported meeting with Lake SWCD to pick dates and locations. Likely a two day event in September.

Technical, Financial or Advisory Partnerships (non-voting role)

Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Group – (Janski/LaSalle)

Janski could not attend. Clyne attended and reported the group asked again about the SWCD role in Compass after Gallice retires. Janski suggested a written response to give to the organization may be helpful since there are many members and the question keeps coming up.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Reported provided in the meeting packet.

Mille Lacs County (Cmsr Liaison Munson)

Commissioner Munson reported that the County Administrator is resigning. Commissioner Reynolds is County Board Chair and Commissioner Bjornson is Vice-Chair for 2026. The MLC Board is wrestling

with financial decisions associated with the jail and local option sales tax as a possible way to address the cost.

6. STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION

Groundwater/Drinking Water Safety

County Geologic Atlas

Shaw reported that the MN Geologic Survey has provided Mille Lacs County staff with a letter of engagement and is awaiting response from the county on the local commitment to complete the well inventory started by the SWCD several years ago. The Rum River watershed Comprehensive Plan identifies the geologic atlas as a priority so funding can be requested.

Agriculture/Soil Health

BWSR Soil Health Staffing grant FY24

Staff report provided in the board packet.

MRSCWE FY25 – Nonstructural soil health management

Staff report provided in the board packet. Hoefert left the meeting briefly.

Gaia Land & Sea Farms LLC, Cover Crop contract #MWBIF-C25-0343-NonStructural-1:

Motion by Braun to approve payment in the amount of \$2,700 to Gaia Land & Sea Farms LLC, for 54 acres cover crop planted at \$50/acre for 1 year under contract #MWBIF-C25-0343-NonStructural-1

Seconded by LaSalle.

Approved: Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried.**

BWSR Buffer Law Implementation (Siena Storm – lead)

Staff report provided in the board packet.

Shaw reported FY26 buffer law grant will provide \$10,000 toward staff time to monitor compliance per MLSWCD policy. Work with landowners if found to be non-compliant. Encourage enhancement of buffers (increase width of or improve species) and design alternative practices if appropriate.

FY26 Grant #P26-0132 Administrator authorization to execute requested:

Motion by Braun to authorize the Administrator to execute FY26 Grant #P26-0132.

Seconded by Campbell.

Approved: Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried.**

Soil Health Education grant – scholarship

Staff report provided in the board packet. Hoefert returned to the meeting.

Shaw reported that staff applied for and were awarded a grant in the form of a Quick-Contract from the UofM which did not require Board execution. However, staff are seeking administrative authority to solicit and award small scholarships to landowners interested in soil health training and conferences. This would allow staff to provide funds efficiently given a short timeline. The full grant is \$600 and expires in June 2026.

UofM Quick-Contract for Professional Services \$600:

Motion by Braun to authorize staff to administer funds to applicants in the form of scholarships with staff discretion.

Seconded by LaSalle.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried.**

County Public Ditch System inspection (Siena Storm – lead)

Motion by Braun to authorize taking on the delegated role of public ditch system inspection for Mille Lacs County.

Seconded by LaSalle.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried.**

Forests (Molly Clyne – lead)

LCCMR Tree Planting Grant (ID 2022-260)

Staff report provided in the board packet.

Reimbursement for contracts P23-2942-WSP-16 and P23-2942-WSP-20:

Motion by LaSalle to authorize reimbursement payments to Melvin Hardy under contract P23-2942-WSP-16, and to Scott Liestman under contract P23-2942-WSP-20 at flat rate of \$300 respectively for Woodland Stewardship Plans written, based on not to exceed rates of \$300 for an eligible plan.

Seconded by Braun

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried.**

Contract P23-2942-WSP-15:

The SWCD created a contract with Moscho Family Properties LLC August 13, 2025. Upon completion of the woodland stewardship plan the board authorized payment November 12, 2025 to the contract holder, and staff issued payment to Moscho Family Properties LLC. Upon receipt of the payment, Mary Jo Moscho returned to the SWCD and requested the payment be made to her as an individual, stating that the LLC did not have a bank account set up. While staff were investigating options with legal counsel, the SWCD board authorized reissuance of the payment to Mary Jo Moscho on December 10, 2025, pending documentation that would show she was legally authorized by the LLC to receive payment. Legal counsel confirmed the contract was solid and we did not have documentation needed to reissue payment other than to Moscho Family Properties LLC.

Motion by LaSalle to cancel payment previously authorized to Mary Jo Moscho, which was authorized pending documentation that would show she was an authorized recipient for the LLC. And to reauthorize payment made out to the contract holder Moscho Family Properties LLC at flat rate of \$300 for a Woodland Stewardship Plan written, based on a not to exceed rate of \$300 for an eligible plan.

Seconded by Hoefert.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried.**

7. APPROVED SWCD MEETINGS & EVENTS

Internal Operational Committees

Meeting	Members	Attendance approved	Meeting date
Finance	Hoefert and LaSalle	Hoefert and LaSalle	January 14
Statement reconciliation	LaSalle	LaSalle	monthly
Personnel	Janski and LaSalle	Janski and LaSalle	January 6
Equipment Liaison	Braun	Braun	as needed
Government Relations	Janski and Braun		as needed

Meeting	Members	Attendance approved	Meeting date
One on one meetings with the Administrator	All board supervisors		as needed

Joint Powers Entity Partnerships (voting role)

Meeting	Members	Attendance approved	Meeting date
Implementation Planning Committee (IPC)	Janski (liaison role)	Janski	January 13 at 12:30
Mississippi River-St. Cloud Watershed Entity	Campbell and Braun	Braun	February 5 at 11AM
Technical Service Area 3	LaSalle and Hoefert	LaSalle	January 28 at 10AM

Motion by Hoefert to approve supervisor attendance and reimbursement for meetings listed.

Seconded by Braun.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle. Opposed: none. **Motion carried.**

Save the Dates

Meeting	Location	Save the Date
Rum River Watershed Partnership Board (RRWP)		March 26 at 4:30pm
Snake River Watershed Partnership Board		February 23 at 9:30
MASWCD Legislative Day at the Capital		March 17-18
NE MASWCD Area 3 Envirothon	Cloquet Forestry Center	May 4
State Envirothon	Elk River	May 8
NE Area 3 Summer Meeting	Cloquet Forestry Center	June 5
NE Area 3 Fall Meeting	Lake SWCD hosts	September
Midwest Active Citizenship Initiative (MACI)		November 19
Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Group - Healthy Land, Healthy Lake event	Tulibee Tavern in Wahkon	May 2

8. EVALUATE THE MEETING

Cadence and structure:

Janski informed the board that the agenda's layout and sequence were intentional and requested feedback.

Did the content of the meeting advance our strategic goals:

Janski asked if after discussing programs by priority area, do we have a clear sense of where progress is being made?

Members responded positively, noting that it was well-organized.

9. NEXT REGULAR MEETING

February 11, 5PM at the Mille Lacs County Historic Courthouse, Conference Rm D.

10. ADJOURN

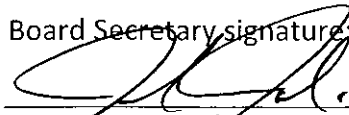
Chair Janski adjourned the meeting at 7:23 PM.

Submitted by: Susan Shaw, District Administrator

Reviewed by: Tim Braun, Board Secretary

Approved by the board on: February 11, 2026

Board Secretary signature:



Date: 2/11/26