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Minnesota Ground Water Association
Board Meeting Minutes
Regular monthly meeting

Meeting Date: Friday, March 31, 2023

Location:

- Meeting was called to order at 11:32 AM. The meeting was held as an online Teams meeting.

Attendance:

- Jeré Mohr, Past-President; Sandeep Burman, President; Rebecca Higgins, President-Elect; Michael Ginsbach, Secretary; Eric Bunge, Treasurer; Sherri Kroening, Newsletter; Sean Hunt, Management; Jennie Leete, Management; Brue Olsen, Minnesota Water Well Association

Agenda:

- Burman gave a brief introduction to the MGWA-MWWA discussion that will occur during today's meeting at noon.
- No additions or changes to the agenda.
- Minor typos were noted by Hunt, Ginsbach will fix the typos. Higgins motioned to approve pending fixing the typos, Mohr seconded. Motion approved.

Spring Conference Planning:

- Burman showed the agenda for the spring meeting. He noted that all of the speakers are now final. Burman also said that the timing of the talks should be final as well, as he was able to accommodate speaker timing preferences for their presentations.
- Burman structured the timing of the agenda based on previous conferences. Burman said that he included a full hour for lunch even though this is a virtual meeting and those tend to be shorter.
- Burman asked if 15 minutes was enough time for the MGWA business presentation. Kroening said that the Newsletter Committee did not have much to say aside from introducing the new members of the Newsletter Committee. Higgins said that there would be an update from the White Paper Committee.
- Higgins suggested that if we used an additional 15 minutes for the MGWA business updates that we use at least 10 minutes of that time to try and provide some recruiting efforts. Hunt agreed that it would be good to spend some time on this effort. Kroening agreed.
- Hunt said explaining some of the processes that will happen in the future, such as introducing a new

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- Kroening asked if the scholarship winners have been picked yet. Leete and Hunt said that Julia Steenberg has given them information of the recipients and that the money has been sent to the winners.
- Higgins asked if the group has ever done a “Where are they now?” for former winners of the scholarship. Leete said that this has not happened but would be a neat idea. Kroening agreed and suggested we look at the invitee list to see if any previous winners were attending. Mohr agreed and suggested trying to see if any previous winners attending would be willing to speak.
- Mohr and Kroening suggested to increase the time to half an hour to accommodate these new additions to the business updates. Burman will increase the MGWA business updates from 15 minutes to half an hour and will reduce the lunch time to 45 minutes.
- Burman asked who amongst the Board would be willing to reach out to the groups. Mohr will ask the Foundation members, Bunge will reach out to the Education Committee, Kroening will put something together introducing the new members of the Newsletter Committee, and Higgins will get an update from the White Paper Committee.
- Burman asked if there were any additional comments or suggested changes to the agenda. Mohr said that he did not and thought the list of talks looked very interesting.
- Burman said that the two conferences this year are in honor of the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, with the spring conference focusing on public water supplies and the fall conference focused more on private wells. Burman noted that the theme of this conference is on showing what goes into operating public water supplies and lets the Board members know that if members are concerned about the lack of private well talks this spring, it will be coming in the fall.
- Burman asked if speakers who are not MGWA members needed to pay to register or if they had to drop off from the meeting after their talks. Hunt said no and described the process for the speakers to join as presenters. Hunt said all speakers should use the presenter link even if they will be attending the entire meeting.
- Hunt said that the dividing line is if a speaker is using this as a professional development credit they will need to pay.
- Burman said that he has confirmed the conference will be hosted with the MGS’s Zoom link and that Julia Steenberg will help with the dry run. Burman asks if the schedule is ready to be put on the web. Hunt said that the draft version was already uploaded and that he will update the website with the final version. Burman said that there was a lot of interest in presenting and had to leave a few out. He also noted that at least one of them will be presented in the.
- Burman asked about how the dry run will be organized and wanted to know if we need to have speakers present for it. Burman also asked if the speaker could advance the slides themselves. Mohr confirmed that was the case and that it seemed to work well. Hunt said that the first conference used some pre-recorded talks but the team is comfortable enough with the technology now to have each presenter present live.
- Hunt also noted that there are some connection details for the presenters and for Burman as the host that would be beneficial to go over with Steenberg. Hunt suggested that Mohr may have some insight on this. Mohr said he did and that he sent directions to the presenters at the previous conference that included step-by-step instructions for presenters on how to join and present. Mohr thought the instructions should be the same but said that it would be good to test this during the dry run.

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- Higgins asked if it would be possible to set a date for the dry run and suggested the Monday of the week of the conference. Burman said that he should have all of the presentations in by that date.
- Hunt would like to have the registration link to send to people about two weeks before the conference. Hunt said this allows the attendees to pre-register which will give them a day-of link to join the event. Hunt usually emails this out in batches. Burman will reach out to Steenberg to see when this can be shared. He will also get the emails for the speakers soon as well.
- Burman asked if there were any other logistical things necessary for the spring meeting and asked about the people who will be presenting updates on the committees. Hunt said that we should check to see who is registered and then invite the rest.
- Higgins suggested it may be worth adding a moment of remembrance for Fletcher Driscoll. Burman asked if any of the Board members knew him personally and would be willing to give a quick note about his passing. Kroening suggested Paul Putzier and Burman suggested it is included in the Business portion of the meeting. Higgins asked if there was ever an annual “in memoriam” and suggested this might be a nice banner at the bottom of the website.
- Burman will discuss some of the improvement ideas after the spring conference is finished.

MGWA-MWWA Partnership:

- Burman asked everyone to introduce themselves to Brue Olsen and then gave a quick introduction to Olsen’s current work.
- Burman informed Olsen that he has sent the draft letter to all of the Board members and has talked to the programs at MDH that are referenced in the letter. Burman notes that the managers of these programs are interested in meeting with Olsen to do some quick wordsmithing of the letter. Burman asked Olsen to provide some context of the letter and the benefits that the letter from MGWA will serve.
- Olsen said that MGWA and MWWA have been working together for the past few years to improve the education of private well owners. He notes that the most visible process has been hosting private well testing clinics. Olsen said that MDH has been involved in this.
- Olsen said that there is history between MGWA and MWAA, including some potential animosity at MWAA about historical events. Olsen said there was a spirited conversation about six weeks ago with MWWA to identify issues that had occurred in the past and to try and get more of an even keel with MWWA.
- Olsen said that by talking with other drillers in the state that there is interest in more cooperative efforts. Olsen asks if there are any questions from anyone on the board that can be answered today. Burman said that he has not received any questions yet but thought it would be a good time to discuss now. Burman noted that there are challenges in navigating the relationships between groups to ensure there is a good partnership that will not cause any issues or give the perception that there may be some issues between the groups. Higgins said that she applauds the methods to mend these fences and there is an opportunity to move into a new or refreshed relationship.
- Higgins said that there was a way to change the tone of one of the sentences to make it more positive and to highlight this as being an opportunity. Olsen said that any comments should be sent to him or Sandeep. Olsen said he will include them into a draft.

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- Olsen said that a lot of the language represents the comments that they were receiving from MWWA as well. He would appreciate any comments or questions. He said that there may be a need for a team to look at the whole issue of water well testing, which is the biggest of two issues. Olsen said that there are probably another half dozen issues to work on but it would be good to start with these.
- Burman said that the Board members should send him an email with suggested changes and he will compile the suggested changes to send to Olsen.
- Kroening commented that having the well drillers at the testing clinics is a great perspective and is good to have in case there are any questions that come up about fixing a well or other issues related to the physical well.
- Olsen said we there would be an effort to utilize their expertise to ensure that someone becomes a responsible well owner and echos Kroening's comment that there are a lot of opportunities.
- Burman said that any general comments can be included with the suggested changes or comments in the letter itself. Olsen said that Dave Kill, who is a member of both MGWA and MWWA, had asked if Olsen could attend the annual MWWA meeting on April 27th to go over what has been discussed thus far. Olsen said that if the letter could be sent by the end of April it could be shared with the MWWA management prior to their meeting.
- Burman will email dates to meet with MDH managers to get their comments on the letter. He notes that what he has received from them to date is mostly wordsmithing that might allow for the screening testing to not conflict with well testing standards.
- Olsen said that he wants to make sure MDH is comfortable with the language but making sure that there is a line between this letter being between MGWA and MWWA. Burman said that said that MGWA would like to make sure that the private well programs are not fundamentally opposed to something in the letter before sending. and it would be good to keep those programs connected and be able to count on them for participation down the road.
- Hunt said that there might be another level entity: County health departments and county environmental health groups. Hunt said that this could be a resource in some counties that may have programs for private well owners that might be the first point of contact for well owners. Hunt asked if there is county level representation that is coming to these seminars. Olsen said that the water quality screening clinics have had a wide range and notes that it is a resource issue for local groups to attend sometimes. Olsen said that last September the Soil Water Conservation District and the Health Department in St Louis County and neither could spare the resources to join. Olsen also notes that some counties, like Olmstead and Dakota, haare the complete opposite and are very involved to date. He notes that they have been learning a lot but have not completely put all of their thoughts together yet.
- Hunt does not recall an invite to participate that was declined between MGWA and MWWA. Hunt noted that there is a rotating cast of bMGWA Board members and that the MGWA leadership at that time may not have been able to participate. Hunt said that there was interested at the national level of merging MWWA and MGWA and noted that no one was interested in that at the state level. HUnt said that there was also some naming conventions that were similar between MGWA and well owners organizations in other states and that might be one of the issues that occurred in the past. Olsen said that the MWWA member who recalls this cannot remember the specific details. Olsen said that their executive director of MWWA should should move forward.

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- Burman said that it is good time to focus on this given the recent attention and new rules about water supplies in the state and nature. He notes that this highlights the vacuum that exists at the private well area. Burman said that discussions at the legislature this year have had multiple questions about how public water supplies benefits the private well owners. He notes that there isn't much aside from state well code and the rudimentary testing that is required at well construction. Burman said there is likely significant interest from private well owners based on the renewed focus on private wells.
- Burman reiterated that as a resident of Dakota County he has personally observed the overarching interest and actions by Dakota County.
- Burman will compile the questions from MGWA board meetings, will get meetings set up with concerned managers at MDH to talk with BBurrman and Olsen to talk about the letter, and asks that the final draft of the letter be sent back to the Board members for their review. Burman said that this could be done via email.
- Olsen said to send him any questions. He also said that the board of steering team for MWAA meets every Friday morning. Olsen said that the Education Committee has two representatives on the steering committee: him and Jeff Stoner. Olsen said that he tries to keep the meetings down to an hour and tries to keep the health department and extension join and it generally takes about an hour and a half.
- Burman said to let him know if there are any broad questions on the letter or if there are specific comments on the letter. Higgins said it was a good opportunity to work together with the groups and to ensure cooperation moving forward.

Reports:

Treasurer:

- Bunge said for 2022 the gross profit was \$15,305.16, total expenses were \$1443.82, net income was \$13,861.34, and total assets were \$123,425.26.

Management (WRI):

- Hunt said that the conference and membership renewals were the focus. There were 307 new members. Hunt said that the webpage was set up and there are 90 conference registrations in so far. These registrations are posted on the Google Drive. Hunt said that brochure for the conference has been sent out along with membership renewals for about 300 people in the last week and sent out just the brochure for members who had already renewed.

Newsletter:

- Kroening said the newsletter went out on Monday. Almost 68% of the recipients opened the letter and 13% clicked on the links. Kroening said that in April the Newsletter team will start getting ready for the next news release in June.
- Burman asked if there were enough articles or if the Team had to work hard to get enough articles. Kroening said that there are generally enough but they do have to ask sometimes. Kroening also noticed that there are some articles that are in the same newsletter (new Board members in March), some are waiting in the wings, and some are sent unsolicited.

White Paper Committee:

- Higgins was not able to attend the last meeting for the White Paper Committee and will have an update in the next meeting. Higgins said David Crisman and Jared Trost will talk

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about see about the timeframe for the commitment to the commit. She notes that it is a four year commitment, which is longer than any board member position.

- Ginsbach said that the groundwater data white paper group is continuing to meet with a smaller group doing some final checks on a survey. He said that the team is still on track to have a version of the
- Burman asked if there is a designated lead for the White Paper and Hunt said that it is likely Dave Crisman and Jared Trost.

Education Committee:

- None at this time.
- Burman asked if there is a designated lead for the Education Committee. Hunt said it is Cathy Udem.

Foundation:

- Mohr said the first board meeting of 2023 occurred in early March. He notes that the main topic of discussion was on the scholarships. The FOundation agreed to award four scholarships this year, which is more than had been done historically (usually 2 or 4). He said that the Foundation talked about the applications that were received, with eight undergraduate and four graduate students applying. He notes that the odds of getting a scholarship are good and might be worth promoting.
- Mohr said there was a general financial discussion around the investment funds and acknowledging the financial performance, following the market, was not great in 2022 but is looking better in 2023. Mohr said even with this financial news, the Foundation was still willing to increase the number of scholarships and there were no concerns about funding at this time.
- Mohr said that the Foundation has expressed openness in working with the Board in the effort to increasing MGWA membership.
- Hunt said that the wildcard is hydrogeology field camp award, which is the other scholarship program. He said that Scott Alexander was not at the meeting so Stu Grubb was going to contact him to see if it would be on this year. Hunt said that Julia Steenberg had an idea to combine the process planning and selection into one group instead of two groups.
- Hunt said the next Foundation meeting is in June.

Meeting Adjourned: 1:00 pm.

Action Items:

- Burman will get an email sent out with the follow up required for each Board member in preparation for the spring conference.

Next Meeting:

- The next meeting will be held on April 18, 2023 at 11:30 am to 1:00 pm on Teams.