

# MGWA MINUTES

Minnesota Ground Water Association  
Board Meeting Minutes  
Regular monthly meeting

**Meeting Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2023**

**Location:**

- Meeting was called to order at 11:37 AM. The meeting was held as an online Teams meeting.

**Attendance:**

- Jere Mohr, Past President; Sandeep Burman, President; Rebecca Higgins, President-Elect; Michael Ginsbach, Secretary; Sean Hunt, Management; Sherri Kroening, Newsletter; Jennie Leete, Management

**Agenda:**

- No changes to the agenda or minutes. Higgins motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mohr. All in favor, minutes are approved.

**Final Board Review and Approval of CWC Letter:**

- Burman asked if there were any suggested changes or comments to the draft letter as drafted by Ginsbach. Mohr said he had no changes. No other members had any suggested changes, letter was approved. Burman will sign the letter and a final copy will be stored on the google drive.

**Request from Education Committee:**

- Burman forwarded the request to the Board. Burman asked Hunt if the requested changes to the website by the Education Committee needed approval. Hunt said that it was business as usual and unless it was particularly contentious it would be added.
- The letter requested a formal liaison (the past president) from the Board to be on the Education Committee. Burman asked Mohr if this was something that he was able to do; Mohr confirmed.
- Burman asked Hunt if he could update the website to include Mohr as the board contact. Hunt confirmed.

**Spring Conference Recap/Fall Conference Planning:**

- Burman asked if anyone had any personal observations about the conference.

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- Higgins said that the conference went very smoothly. She noted that she had some slight concerns during the dry run but the actual conference went very well. She also noted that both her and Ginsbach did a good job asking the questions.
- Kroening echoes Higgins's comments. She also notes that Burman did a great job keeping the presenters on time and on schedule. Kroening also said that having the questions in chat worked really well as it allowed the presenters to answer later.
- Mohr also agreed with the rest of the board, Leete also stated that Burman did a great job keeping everyone on schedule. He also says that the Q&A allowed a number of questions to be answered later and kept everything moving.
- Hunt said that there were 290 registrants for the conference and a maximum number of 240-250 attendees at one time.
- Mohr said that there were a number of comments about virtual versus in-person conferences. He said that it seemed like the Board is striking a nice balance in having one conference online and one in-person per year.
- Burman thanks the Board for all of the help and said he was nervous about the technological challenges. He also said that he agrees with the rest of the Board in that it went well. Burman said that there was one attendee who said he was not able to join the presentation. Hunt said that there was one person who had issues joining early on and he hopes that person was the one who filled out the conference evaluation early in the day.
- Hunt said that he was sending out the link to late registrants and others who had problems joining to make sure they could all join the meeting throughout the day.
- Burman agreed that the evaluations were generally very positive. He asked if the Board was still committed to having the meeting in person. He notes that the option is there for a hybrid meeting but that lifts the challenges to a different level and is dependent on the facility. Higgins said that from her experience, the facilities will charge you if you want to have a hybrid meeting and will charge a large amount. Higgins said she loves the balance of having one online and one in-person. Mohr agrees.
- Mohr said he did not do a qualitative analysis but it seemed like the comments in support of in-person or virtual were evenly split. Kroening said that there are pros and cons to both formats - virtual allows presenters to give a talk without having to travel all day to give a presentation.
- Burman asked if there was anything else to talk about with the spring conference. The Board all agreed that there were no additional comments.
- Burman asked if there was a date set for the fall conference. Hunt confirmed that the date is November 14th and it has been confirmed with the facility. Leete said that the contract was mailed to her on May 2nd and are waiting for her to send the information back when she returns to the country.
- Burman asked if the Board would entertain the idea of hybrid speakers. Higgins said that her recommendation is not to do it. She said that she has done it as both a presenter and attendee and said that in her experience 9 out of 10 times there are technology issues. Kroening agrees and said that it would be easier to moderate the questions if the group committees to either an in-person or virtual meeting. Mohr agrees and said that it would be difficult to provide an experience that is as fulfilling for the online attendees as the ones in person.
- Burman said that the fall meeting will be a bit more pointed and in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Safe Drinking Water Act. Burman said that the presentation will be

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similar to a previous conference that was in celebration of the 30th or 40th anniversary of Superfund. Burman said that there were a few talks setting the stage for Superfund and that as the Safe Drinking Water Act is even larger there might be a few talks to set the stage, how it works, and how it impacts groundwater across the nation.

- After setting the stage, Burman suggests the talks move to discuss groundwater that have been evaluated using provisions of the Safe Drinking Water Act. There could also be a talk that incorporates both Safe Drinking Water Act and Superfund sites in Minnesota, such as the TCAAP site. Burman said that there were comments about the spring conference asking for additional information about private drinking water wells. Burman potentially has speakers lined up for these topics.
- Burman asked Mohr if he was remembering correctly about a talk that Mohr had proposed about an environmental justice talk related to drinking water. Burman said that it would be interested for groundwater practitioners to see this other side of drinking water.
- Burman said there is already a core nucleus of talks for the spring conference but it will be rounded off by a number of other talks that are policy based and how it applies to both public supplies and private drinking water supplies. Burman said that is still conceptual in his mind and asked if there are any additional comments about the proposed topics or if there are any additional ideas.
- Higgins said it may be challenging to keep it pertinent and entertaining for a full day conference about regulations. She asks if there are any potential talks about legal applications, either looking forward or backwards. She said this will be very germane to the anniversary. She also said that sometimes large scale projects can lose part of the audience and having scalability in the topics is pertinent - have both big and small scale.
- Burman said that Mindy Erickson has offered to give a broad sweeping talk about all of the issues that face private water supplies in Minnesota. He said that would be interesting and would differentiate between the two worlds as they are very different regulatory regimes.
- Burman asked if there are any other thoughts or comments. He said that if there are any other additional thoughts on presentation topics or speakers to share it.

### **Newsletter Advertising Question:**

- Burman said that this topic had come about because a past advertiser had contacted Kroening and Burman noting that there did not seem to be an opportunity to advertise. Burman wanted to make sure this issue is put to rest and that if there is an opportunity to bring in additional funding for more scholarships to pursue that but also to evaluate the cost benefits of advertising in a digital world.
- Burman asked if anyone has any comments on this but wants to make sure that this issue doesn't fall by the wayside.
- Kroening said that this hasn't often come up at Board meetings but when the Newsletter made the transition to the web blog instead of a PDF document this was discussed. She notes that there were different levels that advertisers could sign up for and when the Newsletter moved to the web that pricing section did not fit. She notes that the Newsletter team would have to change that structure if advertisements were to come back. Kroening said the Newsletter team was discussing if this would be on individual posts, a banner, or something on the side.

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- Kroening said that after speaking with Hunt and Leete it was not a large portion of income. If this topic is revisited, it would need to be determined what form the advertising would take.
- Hunt said there used to be corporate memberships that included advertising along with memberships. Hunt said there was a spot on the side of the webpage that linked off to the corporate sponsors. Kroening said that the volunteer that coordinated that effort left and Hunt said that this never really worked. Hunt said it was a lot of work to manage advertisers. Hunt said with the change in the Newsletter format there was enough work to do that adding advertisement on top of that was a lot of work. He stated that it would likely cost as much as it would bring in to manage the pieces and that it is not in his opinion worth it
- Leete agrees and said that unless there's a volunteer it will not pay for itself.
- Kroening asked if there's a place on the website template. Leete said that there was a rotating place. She also notes that that back in the day when there were volunteers to manage the advertisements in the paper format it did bring in money but not digitally. Leete said that the cost was \$60 for the corporate logos and it would show up for an entire year for that price. Leete said that if there is income from the advertisement there is additional tax forms. She notes that the MGWA does not exist to advertise companies but exists to advocate for groundwater so the advertisements are "unrelated business activity" and it is taxed separately.
- Kroening asked if it is different if they are called a sponsor versus an advertiser to the IRS. Leete said she has not evaluated it but suggests that the IRS would ask questions and it would likely end up the same.
- Burman appreciates the discussion and acknowledges that we are probably in the right place about not advertising in the newsletter.
- Kroening said this is the first time in the several years since the online format was developed that someone had asked about the advertisement. Mohr said that he did have someone reach out about being an exhibitor at the in-person conference. Leete said there is reception space at the Heritage Center and there can be posters and exhibitors.

### Reports:

#### Treasurer:

- Ginsbach said the gross profit was \$31,685.31, total expenses were \$9693.31, net income was \$21,992.00, and total assets were \$132,589.80.

#### Management (WRI):

- Hunt shared an updated membership report. There are 345 members, which is close to last year but is on a downward trend. Hunt said that other activities are mostly conference related. He said that he is about three quarters of the way done processing the video and will continue that work. Hunt shared the conference evaluation with the Board.
- Hunt said the other big thing he is working on is the non-profit tax filing using the 990-EZ form. Hunt said that Leete was working on the numbers and that the IRS requires you to file online. Hunt said that there is a website that allows small non-profits to file online for free. Hunt ran through the items on the 990-EZ form, which included income, expenses, Board members, conference information, and a number of other items. Hunt said that if there are any additional questions to ask we should ask Leete.

#### Newsletter:

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- Kroening said the Newsletter team met last week and the team is working on assembling the documents for the June newsletter. She reminded Burman that she will be asking Burman for the president's letter soon. She notes that the team usually aims for the middle of June but that may be pushed back. There are also a number of articles staged in Word Press already.

### **White Paper Committee:**

- Higgins said that there Mark Ferrey and Tim Cowdery are joining the White Paper Committee. She said that she, David Crisman, and Jared Trost are finishing their term on the Committee..
- Ginsbach said that the data white paper is continuing to refine the survey that will be used as the basis of the white paper. The team met last Friday and will meet later this afternoon. The survey has been challenging to develop but good process is being made.
- Kroening asked if the data white paper committee could put together a quick newsletter article to remind folks to take the survey. Hunt also likes the idea of multiple contact points so people can see it if they miss an email.
- Hunt said that MGWA subscribes to Survey Monkey and this survey would be good for this type of survey. Ginsbach said he will bring this up to the white paper committee. Hunt said there is a nice function to email out each person an individual survey link.

### **Education Committee:**

- No Education Committee representatives were present at this meeting.

### **Foundation:**

- Mohr reported the Foundation has not met since the last board meeting. He notes that the scholarship recipients were selected and announced at the spring conference. He said that the next Foundation meeting will be in June.

### **Meeting Adjourned: 12:42 pm.**

### **Action Items:**

- Burman will work on developing the agenda for the next meeting and may try to organize an in-person meeting for the June meeting.

### **Next Meeting:**

- The next meeting will be held on June 20th at 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. The meeting may be on Teams or in-person.