

MGWA MINUTES

Minnesota Ground Water Association
Board Meeting Minutes
Regular monthly meeting

Meeting Date: Tuesday, December 19, 2023

Location:

- Meeting was called to order at 11:33 AM. The meeting was held as an online Teams meeting.

Attendance:

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

Agenda:

- Kroening fixed a typo on her name and Hunt noted a few incomplete sentences. Burman makes a motion to adopt the minutes pending the updates. Seconded by Mohr, approved.

Request for MGWA Review of MN Work Plan for SE MN Karst Petition:

- Burman said that the Minnesota Waterwell Owners Association was one of the main petitioners to the EPA related to elevated nitrate levels in the eight county karst area of Minnesota. Burman said that the state has until some time in January to respond back to EPA with a workplan for evaluating this issue. Burman said that the three agencies that are involved with this effort have contacted MGWA through the Education Committee to review the work plan.
- Burman said Bruce Olsen was involved with this effort and that Burman asked Bruce to attend the meeting today but Olsen was unable to attend. Burman said that the Education Committee would draft up a letter and it would be shared by the Board. Burman asked if MGWA should participate in the review and sharing of this response.
- Higgins said that it may be a tight turnaround to get reviews done of the comments by the Education committee over the holiday and if there could be an extension to comment. She asked if there was any precedent about MGWA commenting on issues like this. She said that it would be important to have a singular voice over comments that are provided and that the comments represent the opinions of the entire board.
- Burman said he does not have the situational experience to comment on the precedent and asks for the longer termed members if they could share any information.
- Bunge said that the MGWA Education Committee and MWOO are operating together on the private well testing very closely and asked if the comments could be sent by MNWOO instead of the MGWA. Burman said that MWOO is a newer organization and that MWOO is not necessarily in agreement on everything. He also notes that MWOO is a player in this issue but MGWA is more removed. He notes that he has asked the Education committee about the direct way MGWA was asked to comment.
- Hunt said that this is a charged systemic issue and for things like the white papers there have been significant times and extensive review. Hunt said that we have taken these

MGWA MINUTES

issues one-by-one and take a neutral scientific resource pro stance about what is being discussed.

- Higgins wants to ensure that there is a clear and concise statement about separating the Board and ensuring there is no perceived conflict especially by those members who are state employees. Ginsbach seconds the concerns related to conflict of interest. Leete said that there isn't much time to get this statement ready by the deadline.
- Higgins suggests that any statement would need to stay only to the science. Leete said that previous efforts similar to this have not gone well in the past.
- Hunt suggested that the Education Committee submit the comments themselves. Kroening agrees with the suggestion to have this submitted by the Education Committee.
- Burman reiterated that MGWA was been asked directly by the state agencies to provide review. Burman said that the governor has charged the agencies to respond on his behalf and that the three commissioners of these agencies will respond back to EPA. Burman said that the it is a unique situation that the person managing this for the state agencies asked MGWA directly to review.
- Burman suggested that the Education Committee respond on behalf of MGWA given their involvement in the process and to have Olsen and Stoner sign the letter. Higgins agrees with this process and that it might be good to see how much future involvement might be necessary in this process. Ginsbach asks if the ask and endorsement is for a general policy statement or if it is a comment letter on a direct work plan.
- Burman will reach out to Olsen and Stoner to see the scope of comments on the work plan and to see what the scope of the comments might be.
- Higgins said that it would be acceptable to have the subcommittee send a comment letter and have the Board aware of the comment letter.
- Mohr said that his term is up at the end of the year so he is not sure what his role is on the comment letter. Mohr asks if there is a precedent for the subcommittee to comment on behalf of the MGWA. Leete said that the individuals on the subcommittee have a lot knowledge and basis on this task and that the Board could assign the task to the subcommittee based on their knowledge.
- Hunt said that the board needs to see more about what the ask is from the MGWA. Higgins and Mohr ask if there could be
- Kroening asked if the question came to Burman or to the education committee. Burman said that it came to the education committee and that they were tasked to engage stakeholders. Ginsbach said that this is a second-degree ask and suggests that the board does not proceed until a direct ask is made to the board. Burman said that it would be good to get the request to come in through the proper channels to ensure that the board is clear who the ask is coming from and what the ask is.
- Higgins agrees that it is important to see what the request is before a response is issued.
- Burman will get back to the Education Committee to obtain a formal request to the MGWA board from the requestors that clearly explains what the ask is.

2024 Conference Planning Updates:

- Burman asks if there's anything that needs to be done at this point to make sure that the conferences occur on time. Leete noted that if the meeting is going to be at the heritage center, there is a tentative hold for November 19th. Higgins asked if there are any October dates available and while there are some for the Heritage Center, previous

MGWA MINUTES

Boards have suggested not meeting in October as some members may be still in the field. Leete said that there are numerous open dates in October at the Heritage Center. Leete said that the only potential venue is a nonprofit (The Hennepin) that could fit 200 comfortably. She asks what the Board would like to shoot for.

- Higgins wanted to confirm that the spring conference will be virtual and the fall will be in-person. She notes that the weather has been an issue historically for November and that might not be the issue in October.
- Kroening and Leete asked about the parking situation. The Hennepin is located downtown and they can coordinate parking for events. Ginsbach noted that because this venue is downtown it is likely to be paid parking at a ramp. Higgins said that the central location for this venue could be beneficial and could help with using public transport.
- Leete will reach out to The Hennepin to see what dates are available and what the costs may be.
- Higgins said they would like the MGWA to elevate the A/V experience throughout the year and make sure that the Board is trying not to do “ten things at once” and invest in the costs to support A/V at the conferences. Leete notes that the MGWA pays for A/V at the Heritage Center.
- Leete said that the Board could authorize Higgins to make a decision about the conference venue and timing to make things happen quickly.
- Leete said that there was a comment received from Kate Pound stating that the students do not have anything ready for the fall but they might have something to present in April and suggested swapping the in-person and virtual conference dates. Leete said that the idea of hosting a conference at St Cloud State came up to accommodate students.
- Higgins said that scheduling conferences in-person during the winter can be difficult but said there could be a student-focused portion of a virtual conference. Ginsbach notes that having the students present virtually loses the informal in-person networking opportunities that are a benefit for the students. Burman said that many universities are going back to in-person presentations for students.
- Kroening said that based on her personal experience as a mother of a college student, students might be used to virtual presentations but they seem to enjoy live presentations much more.
- Higgins said that there may be a discussion about how to engage students. She asks Ginsbach if there could be a way to have in-person accommodations in one meeting and present technical talks at another. Ginsbach said that could work and there have been other in-person student-focused networking events at in-person meetings pre-COVID and it would be beneficial to the students to do both but it may be a heavy lift especially given the low number of student attendees in recent years.
- Higgins asked if there was a date for the spring conference. Leete said that there a tentative meeting date for the spring conference could be April 25. Leete said her calendar is open and Burman noted that late April is better for him.
- Leete said that North Central GSA is on 21st to 23rd in Missouri so it does not overlap. Higgins suggested penciling in April 25 for the spring conference and asked the Board to find any contacts that might be interested in presenting with a tentative topic of AI and Machine Learning.

2024 Board Elections/Candidate Recruiting:

MGWA MINUTES

- Higgins said that Jeanie Martin with Stantec has offered to run for president. Higgins asked what the next steps would be for her to run for office aside from a bio. Burman said that a headshot is required as part of the application. Hunt said to forward the ballot to him and he can have it open for two weeks of time.
- Higgins asked what the bio needs to get the ballot posted. Hunt will send the examples to Higgins of previous candidates.
- Burman asked Ginsbach to confirm that he is running again for secretary. Ginsbach confirmed that he is.

Foundation Revenues:

- Burman asks if there are still concerns about the Foundation's finances. Higgins notes that there isn't much time for this and suggests pushing it back to another meeting. Burman said that the topic has been pushed back multiple times.
- Leete said that the Foundation gave out more scholarships than they had liquid assets and had not raised money in that year and that money needed to be taken from the endowment to issue the scholarship. Leete said that the Foundation's finances have not been deeply impacted by a potential recession as feared but the Foundation has not been doing much fundraising.
- Leete said that there could be more fundraising for the Children's Water Festival by the Foundation.
- She said that the Foundation is considering changing their bank to follow their financial advisor or staying at the same bank without their current advisor.
- Burman said that there are still more things to discuss on this topic and that it should be discussed again in January. He suggests dedicating more time to the topic and moving it up higher in the agenda. Leete said that the first board meeting for new board members generally includes an overview of the structure of MGWA and MGWAF.

Reports:

Treasurer: Reported by Eric Bunge in the minutes on 12/19/2023

- Profit and Loss Jan 1 through Dec 18, 2023
 - Gross profit of \$75,996.25
 - Total Expense of \$60,792.98
 - Net income of \$15,203.27
- Balance as of Dec. 18, 2023: Total liabilities & Equity = \$133,533.38
- Open Invoices as of Dec.28, 2023: \$4,615.00
- Outstanding payment to WRI for \$10,956.90 will post soon

Management Team:

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Newsletter:

- Kroening said that the Newsletter Team is getting the materials ready for the December news release.

White Paper Committee:

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MGWA MINUTES

Education Committee:

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Foundation:

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Other

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Meeting Adjourned: 1:00 pm.

Action Items:

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Next Meeting:

- Next meeting will be held on January 16, 2024.