

MINUTES OF MEETING
RED RIVER RETENTION AUTHORITY
ALERUS CENTER
GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA
DECEMBER 12, 2019

The Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) met on December 12, 2019, at 1:00 p.m. at the Alerus Center, Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Present were John Finney, Gary Thompson, Ben Varnson, Greg Holmvik and Roger Mischel, Board members; Pat Fridgen (by phone) and Ted Preister, non-voting members; Keith Weston, Executive Director; Carol Harbeke Lewis, Secretary-Treasurer; Debra Walchuk and Christi Fisher, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Randy Gjestvang, North Dakota State Water Commission (NDSWC); Rob Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) Executive Director; Zach Hermann, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Pat Downs, Moore Engineering, Inc.; and Tracy Halstensgard, Roseau River Watershed District. Board member Rodger Olson was absent.

John Finney called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

Keith Weston informed those present that Theresa Ebbenga will be the new Minnesota Governor's appointment to the RRRA.

Agenda

It was moved by Gary Thompson, seconded by Roger Mischel and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda, as amended.

Minutes

It was moved by Greg Holmvik, seconded by Ben Varnson and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2019, meeting.

Financial Report

It was moved by Roger Mischel, seconded by John Finney and unanimously carried to approve the Financial Report, as presented.

Bills

It was moved by Ben Varnson and seconded by Gary Thompson to approve the payment of Checks #1575 through #1585 and the electronic funds transfers, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Amend 2019 budget

It was moved by Ben Varnson and seconded by Greg Holmvik to authorize the Secretary-Treasurer to amend the RRRA 2019 budget. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

2020 meeting dates

It was moved by Roger Mischel, seconded by Ben Varnson and unanimously carried to set the following as the regular meetings dates, times and places for the RRRA in 2020:

- March 18 at 9:30 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department in West Fargo, North Dakota;
- June 17 at 9:00 a.m. at the RRWMB office in Ada, Minnesota;
- September 9 at 10:00 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department in West Fargo, North Dakota; and
- December 16 at 2:00 p.m. at a location to be determined.

NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Outreach Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-16-512

NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Outreach *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-16-512* ended at the end of the one-year extension on September 30, 2019. Mr. Weston will explore options for additional outreach funding and present information for the Board's consideration at the March 18, 2020, meeting.

RCPP - Forest River Watershed

Zach Herrmann provided the history on the Forest River Watershed Planning effort. Consideration is being given to how to proceed due to significant opposition by some property owners. They discussed the pros and cons, completing the economics relating to the project and obtaining access to conduct field surveys. It was decided to proceed with the concept design without doing field work at this time. Discussion at a meeting scheduled in February 2020 will help determine if they want to cease planning or take the next step to complete a Plan. Mr. Weston encouraged them to finish the Plan, especially if it has a positive benefit to cost ratio. Christi Fisher agreed that they should complete the final work on the benefit to cost ratio to get an authorized Plan on the shelf. Mr. Weston said with additional education, the property owners may want to pursue a project at some point. A representative of the RRRA will plan to attend the meeting in February.

Roseau River Watershed District – Whitney Lake RCPP Watershed Project

Tracy Halstensgard updated the Board on the Whitney Lake RCPP Watershed Project. The Agreement for the one-year time extension expires September 30, 2020. Ms. Halstensgard requested transferring \$42,000 between watersheds to cover the cost of the cultural resources work needed.

It was moved by Ben Varnson and seconded by Greg Holmvik to support the transfer of funds necessary from Beltrami Island State Forest Watershed Project RCPP Cooperative Agreement 68-6322-16-512 for Roseau River Watershed District to complete the

Plan for Whitney Lake Watershed Project RCPP Cooperative Agreement 68-6322-16-515, subject to receipt of a budget from the consultant working on the project. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

NRCS Agreement 14-C-ND-669 Memorandum of Understanding – request to extend and amend

Mr. Weston will complete a request next week to extend and amend *NRCS Agreement 14-C-ND-669 Memorandum of Understanding*.

Ms. Fisher reviewed the RCPP Budget Summary.

RCPP - Rush River Watershed

The Rush River Watershed Plan will be submitted in the next couple of months. The project consists of flood damage reduction, but no retention.

It was moved by Ben Varnson and seconded by Gary Thompson to approve funding 100% of the design for the Rush River RCPP Watershed using existing funds. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Fisher pointed out that the NRCS will fund 100% of the design cost on authorized plans for PL-566 projects. Land rights have to be obtained by the sponsor.

NRCS Report

Debra Walchuk pointed out that cultural resource investigations have to be done before Plans are approved. The Corps of Engineers defers to the NRCS when it comes to cultural resources. If a Plan is authorized, the Corps of Engineers will accept it at CP #4.

Ms. Walchuk updated the Board on the status of Minnesota RCPP Watershed Planning Agreements.

North Dakota RCPP Watershed Planning update

Ms. Fisher updated the Board on the status of North Dakota RCPP Watershed Planning Agreements.

Executive Director Report

Mr. Weston outlined discussion at a meeting on October 22, 2019, regarding the need for a Basin Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee (BTSAC) to address completing a benefit cost analysis for environmental values relating to wetlands (creation and restoration) and water quality in watershed projects. Continuing obstacles and challenges in getting Watershed Plans completed in a timely manner were addressed.

Mr. Weston outlined points to consider for future planning regarding the RRRRA. He said he would welcome insight and recommendations from the Board.

Information and consideration was also presented regarding RRRRA basin-wide strategic planning. John Finney expressed the importance of focusing on RRRRA's goal to move

projects forward. Prioritization of projects at a regional basin level is important and difficult as certain parts of the basin have many more problems. Rob Sip added that there are numerous reports completed and there is value in taking a look at all the data and monitoring information on the current projects.

Mr. Weston discussed the value of the RRRA partnering with Watershed Management Boards and Water Resource Districts to provide technical assistance. He said it makes sense to assist with outreach.

Mr. Weston reported on doing quarterly radio spots on KFGO at a cost of \$600 for 30 minutes. Utilizing social media is also being considered.

Agency and partner reports

Pat Fridgen reported the NDSWC approved a change to its cost-share policy at the meeting last Friday. Effective immediately, the threshold for a required economic analysis on water control and water conveyance projects was reduced from \$1 million to \$200,000. Gary Thompson questioned the reduction and whether they had the authority to do so when it was originally set by the state legislature. Mr. Fridgen said the main concern was that projects would be phased and that it was acceptable to reduce the threshold figure.

Mr. Fridgen said budgeting and planning for the 2020-2021 legislative session will begin in January. Water Resource Districts will be notified about submitting project information, timing and costs for inclusion in the NDSWC 2021 Water Development Plan.

Ted Preister reported that work continues on the Halstad, Minnesota, downstream modeling project with the Corps of Engineers. The NDSWC approved funding for the project and an amendment to the agreement with the Corps of Engineers is being pursued.

Randy Gjestvang said the Red River Joint Water Resource District will likely update its Watershed Management Strategy Report this year as information is submitted for the NDSWC 2021 Water Development Plan.

Rob Sip reported on setting legislative priorities. A drainage seminar is scheduled on January 27, 2020, with local officials. The annual RRWMB conference will be held on March 10, 2020, in Moorhead, Minnesota. The RRWMB will wrap up its strategic plan within the next month.

Meeting schedule

The next meeting will be held on March 18, 2020, at 9:30 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department in West Fargo, North Dakota.

Adjournment

There being no further business to be considered by the Board, the meeting adjourned without objection.

APPROVED:

Gary Thompson
Co-Chair

John Finney
Co-Chair

ATTEST:

Carol Harbeke Lewis
Secretary-Treasurer