

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
RED RIVER RETENTION AUTHORITY
CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
JUNE 15, 2017

The Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) met June 15, 2017, at 10:00 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department, West Fargo, North Dakota.

Present were Gary Thompson, John Finney, Jerome Deal, Ben Varnson, Greg Holmvik, and Robert Rostad (alternate for Rodger Olson), Board members; Lance Yohe, non-voting member; Keith Weston, RRRA Executive Director; Nina Stone, Accountant; Michelle Anderson, Administrative Assistant; Cathee Pullman and Willis Goll, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Pat McQueary, Corps of Engineers; Randy Gjestvang, North Dakota State Water Commission; Graham Hurlburt, Congressman Cramer's Office; Pat Downs, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Henry VanOffelen, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Mike Bassingthwaite, Interstate Engineering; Zach Herrmann, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Naomi Goral, Red River Watershed Management Board; Chuck Fritz, International Water Institute; William A. Hejl (by phone), Rush River Water Resource District.

Gary Thompson called the meeting to order.

Agenda

It was moved by Jerome Deal, seconded by Ben Varnson and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda.

Minutes

It was moved by John Finney, seconded by Jerome Deal and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the November 22, 2016, January 18, 2017, and February 14, 2017, meetings.

Appointment of Secretary-Treasurer for 2017

It was moved by Greg Holmvik, seconded by Ben Varnson and unanimously carried to appoint Carol Harbeke Lewis as Secretary-Treasurer of the Red River Retention Authority for calendar year 2017.

Designation of depository of Red River Retention Authority public funds

It was moved by John Finney and seconded by Robert Rostad to designate Alerus Financial as the depository of Red River Retention Authority public funds. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Financial Report

It was moved by Jerome Deal and seconded by Ben Varnson to accept the Financial Report, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Bills

It was moved by Ben Varnson and seconded by Jerome Deal to approve the payment of Checks #1448 through #1465 and the electronic funds transfers, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

2016 Audit

It was moved by John Finney and seconded by Jerome Deal to approve the 2016 Audit of the RRRRA. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

2018 Budget

It was moved by Jerome Deal and seconded by Ben Varnson to approve the RRRRA 2018 budget. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

NRCS Agreements

The Board reviewed the responsibilities, accomplishments and deliverables set out in *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-15-512* with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for funding outreach to the watersheds selected for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) funding under the *Memorandum of Understanding*. Discussion was held on the duration of expected accomplishments and deliverables to complete. It was moved by John Finney and seconded by Ben Varnson to authorize the Secretary-Treasurer to send a letter to Mary Podoll at the Natural Resources Conservation Service requesting a one-year extension to complete the terms in *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-16-512* by September 30, 2019. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Keith Weston stated he will coordinate with the NRCS and the Secretary-Treasurer to obtain the extension.

The Board reviewed the *Statement of Work for Contribution Agreement 68-6633-16-517* with the NRCS to fund cooperation and joint coordination of flood damage reduction projects in the Red River of the North Basin. Discussion was held on the budget and office space.

NRCS and RCPP watershed planning update – NRCS

A joint meeting was held at Houston Engineering, Inc. between the RRRRA, NRCS and the RCPP watershed sponsors, staff and consultants to discuss the RCPP watershed planning progress on May 17, 2017. There are 12 agreements in Minnesota and 4 have submitted a Purpose and Needs statement, with 2 of the 4 tentatively accepted. Out of the remaining 8 agreements, 4 have not started the planning process.

Mr. Weston reviewed and summarized the questions and issues raised during the meeting. Christi Fisher provided guidance and clarified the timing requirement for the benefit cost analysis in the watershed planning process. Ted Alme and Ms. Fisher discussed how nutrient loss on cropland due to runoff, percolation loss to tile, deep percolation losses, and denitrification during even minor flood events should be included within the economic analysis of the plan.

Discussion was held at the meeting on the repercussion to the reputation of the RRRRA and its members in terms of their ability to successfully impact conservation initiatives if a large proportion of planning efforts failed to result in a submitted Watershed Plan. Mr. Weston stated, if a watershed district makes the decision to discontinue watershed planning, a technical report can be developed outlining watershed planning efforts, results or lack of results.

Cass County Joint Water Resource District is the watershed planning sponsor for 3 watersheds: Rush River, Swan Creek and the Upper Maple River Watershed. The City of Amenia located in the Rush River Watershed has asked the Cass County Joint Water Resource District to develop a Watershed Plan using RCPP funds. Mr. Weston stated the City of Amenia would need to communicate with members of the Red River Joint Water Resource District and the Cass County Joint Water Resource District because possible alternatives may not include retention sites. The Swan Creek Watershed has expressed interest in terminating the agreement.

Mr. Weston sent formal letters to Sand Hill River and Wild Rice Watershed Districts encouraging them to begin watershed planning. The Wild Rice Watershed District conducted public meetings for both Moccasin Creek and South Branch of the Wild Rice River watersheds on June 12, 2017.

Executive Director report

Mr. Weston, Naomi Goral, and Chuck Fritz helped John Finney develop Congressional testimony for the Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry. John Finney provided testimony and answered questions regarding *Small Watershed Infrastructure: Continuing the Mission, Building upon Success* in Washington, D.C. on June 13, 2017. Mr. Finney thanked Mr. Weston for his help and the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. to testify. Congressman Collin Peterson and the Deputy Chief of the NRCS were very interested in the presentation.

Mr. Weston reported on meetings attended, project area visits and the status of the RCPP watershed planning efforts. Many watersheds are challenged by the significance of the watershed's "purpose and need" statement and the benefit cost analysis. Mr. Weston

stated Dave Jones, NRCS Area Engineer, has received additional clarification on the timing to complete the benefit cost analysis for watershed plans. Brief discussion was held and the Board directed Mr. Weston to send letters to the remaining watersheds for updates and to encourage watershed planning efforts.

A Facebook account has been established for the RRRRA and updates will be posted to the site.

A joint meeting and tour of the Forest River Watershed, Middle-Snake-Tamarac Watershed and Red Lake Watershed has been scheduled for July 19, 2017. The joint meeting will be held at 9:30 a.m. at the Canad Inn, Grand Forks, North Dakota, and the bus tour will depart from the Canad Inn at 11:00 a.m. following the joint meeting. Mr. Weston presented a draft agenda and tour itinerary.

Cathee Pullman introduced Willis Goll, NRCS Agricultural Engineer, and stated Mr. Goll will be serving as Acting Red River Basin Coordinator and the technical point of contact. Mr. Goll reviewed the *RCPP – Status Update Report*.

Mr. Weston presented and provided a brief review of the *RRRA 6 Month Progress Report* to the NRCS for the RCPP. Mr. Weston thanked Randy Gjestvang for his thoroughness and hard work in putting the report together. The report will be sent to NRCS on June 19, 2017.

Brief discussion was held on old NRCS high hazard dams. It was moved by Ben Varnson and seconded by Jerome Deal to authorize the Executive Director to send communication to the congressional delegation informing them of the importance to appropriate funding for the rehabilitation of high hazard dams in Minnesota. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Weston stated the RRRRA received a request for comments on the natural gas pipeline facilitated by WBI Energy Transmission, Inc. The Board directed Mr. Weston to provide comments.

The Board authorized Keith Weston to purchase computer software for editing documents. Brief discussion was held on scheduling quarterly meetings.

Agency reports and information

Keith Weston stated Kent Lokkesmoe reported the 2017 Minnesota legislature provided \$11,555,000 for flood hazard mitigation projects, with \$7.3 million for program priorities. Mr. Lokkesmoe stated allocation of the \$7.3 million will present challenges because there are many more priorities than funds available.

Pasty Crooke, Project Manager with the Corps of Engineers North Dakota Regulatory Office in Bismarck, is retiring on June 30, 2017. Patricia McQueary will attend in her place until a permanent representative is named.

Chuck Fritz, International Water Institute, provided an update on the Red River Basin Decision Information Network website and the Prioritize, Target and Measure Application (PTMApp). The goal of PTMApp is to develop and publicly deliver a seamless highly accurate digital elevation map of the entire Red River Basin. Phase I data implementation has begun, which includes Park River, Maple River and Wild Rice River. Phase I will be complete by fall of 2017. Discussion was held on updates to the 2009 LiDAR data collection.

Lance Yohe stated the Red River Basin Commission is putting together the 2018 Water Quality Strategic Plan for the Red River Basin progress report. Manitoba, Canada, is supportive and hopeful of implementation along the Red River in North Dakota and Minnesota.

Randy Gjestvang reported on the State Water Commission (SWC) budget from the last North Dakota legislative session. The SWC requires an economic analysis for retention and drainage projects needing more than \$1 million. Mr. Gjestvang stated Pat Fridgen plans to hire a consultant to help with the process. The language does not require a benefit cost ratio of greater than 1 at this time. Mr. Gjestvang stated the SWC put \$136 million into different budget pools and all the significant flood control, flood damage reduction and drainage projects were specifically written into the budget. The general fund has less than \$16 million for rural flood control in the form of detention and drainage projects, and there are language restrictions. The SWC held follow-up meetings with legislators and the NRCS to get their view point on the cost-share requirements.

The Red River Watershed Management Board project priorities include Roseau Lake Rehabilitation, the Redpath Project and the Black River Impoundment area. Brief discussion was held on funding and allocation of the project acceleration funding for specific projects. Many Minnesota watersheds are meeting and beginning the RCPP flood damage reduction planning process.

Jerome Deal updated the Committee on the North Ottawa Impoundment Project Tour in the Bois de Sioux Watershed District on June 1, 2017. Mr. Deal said the tour was very informative. Congressman Collin Peterson was present. A landowner previously in opposition to the project was a recent guest on the Joel Heitkamp radio program and stated he now believes the project was the best thing that ever happened.

Adjournment

There being no further business to be considered by the Board, the meeting adjourned.

APPROVED:

Gary Thompson
Co-Chair

John Finney
Co-Chair

ATTEST:

Carol Harbeke Lewis
Secretary-Treasurer