

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
RED RIVER RETENTION AUTHORITY
CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
AUGUST 31, 2017

The Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) met August 31, 2017, at 9:00 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department, West Fargo, North Dakota.

Present were John Finney, Gary Thompson, Jerome Deal, Rodger Olson (by phone) Greg Holmvik and Dan Jacobson (alternate for Ben Varnson), Board members; Kent Lokkesmoe and Pat Fridgen (by phone), non-voting members; Keith Weston, RRRA Executive Director; Carol Harbeke Lewis, Secretary-Treasurer; Willis Goll and David Jones, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Pat McQueary, Corps of Engineers; Lisa Gibbens, Congressman Cramer's Office; William A. Hejl, Rush River Water Resource District (by phone); Bruce Anderson, Barnes County Water Resource District; Kevin Ruud, Wild Rice River Watershed District Administrator; Naomi Goral, Red River Watershed Management Board Administrator; Chad Engels and Pat Downs, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Jerry Bents, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Mike Bassingthwaite, Interstate Engineering; Chuck Fritz, International Water Institute; and Leah Ehvedt, Red River Basin Commission.

John Finney called the meeting to order.

Agenda

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

Minutes

It was moved by Jerome Deal, seconded by Greg Holmvik and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the June 15, 2017, meeting.

Financial Report

It was moved by Gary Thompson and seconded by Jerome Deal to approve the Financial Report, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Bills

It was moved by Gary Thompson and seconded by Jerome Deal to approve the payment of Checks #1466 through #1476, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Budget increase for outreach

It was moved by Greg Holmvik and seconded by Jerome Deal to increase the budget line item for outreach to \$5,000 for display units and promotional items, as outlined by the Executive Director. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

NRCS Agreements

Keith Weston presented a status report relating to the *Memorandum of Understanding* between the NRCS and the RRRRA for the Red River Regional Conservation Partnership Plan (RCPP). The report set out obligations and actual expenditures made in support of the work being done. Mr. Weston has contacted existing partners regarding activities relating to their respective watershed planning process.

Willis Goll said funds not utilized for completion of plans should be considered for funding final design work / construction of NRCS approved Watershed Plans in 2019-2020. The RCPP project end date is May 21, 2020, with the possibility of an extension to May 21, 2021. Most planning efforts are scheduled to be completed in 2018-2019.

NRCS and RCPP watershed planning update

A North Dakota and Minnesota RCPP status update report was distributed. Watershed Plans in North Dakota that have progressed to the point of evaluating site specific alternatives include the Upper Maple River, North Branch Park River and Shortfoot Creek. It is anticipated that draft Watershed Plans will be submitted for final NRCS review in mid-2018. These Watershed Plans appear to be the most likely to be on a timeline that would allow use of RCPP funds for design / construction.

Frustration with the lack of progress on other Watershed Plans was expressed. Mr. Weston said 4 years is the optimum amount of time if watersheds have willing landowners. There is sometimes an issue with jumping over development of the purpose and need to alternatives and solutions and then the ideas do not match up.

Naomi Goral said a committee meeting in Thief River Falls on September 12, 2017, might be a good opportunity for further discussion and to encourage further efforts to complete Watershed Plans. Mr. Deal said a path has been provided to move forward.

Mr. Weston said for those that get through the planning process, additional funding may be available through the NRCS for design and construction. He encouraged partners to continue efforts with state and local funding partners.

Executive Director report

Mr. Weston discussed the importance of outreach. A postcard is being developed for a mass mailing with information about the agreement between the RRRRA and NRCS, watershed planning and the importance of water management.

The importance of water quality was discussed and will continue to be considered in the development of future projects.

The group was asked for input as to what topics they would like addressed at upcoming conferences and conventions or displayed on the banner in the RRRRA booth.

The Red River Basin Technical Subcommittee is suggesting to schedule a meeting with the NRCS next spring to review any changes in the Farm Bill conservation programs, as well as 2018 application data to request to the State Conservationists for FY2019 sign-ups.

Mr. Weston will focus on attending Watershed Planning Team meetings.

Agency reports and information

Kent Lokkesmoe reported on the Minnesota 2017 bonding bill.

Leah Ehvedt distributed the itinerary for the tour on September 6 and the agenda for the Red River Basin Commission meeting on September 7, 2017.

Pat McQueary concurred with the importance of outreach and need for mitigation.

Pat Fridgen reported on the 7 new State Water Commission members recently appointed by Governor Burgum.

Chuck Fritz said the International Water Institute will try to involve the RRRRA in the Red River mapping project.

Rodger Olson reported on the Metro Flood Diversion Project. He reminded the group there is \$25 million available for retention projects that would benefit the metro area.

Meeting schedule

The next RRRRA meeting will be on December 14, 2017, at 1:00 p.m. at the Cass County Highway Department.

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