

MINUTES OF MEETING
RED RIVER RETENTION AUTHORITY
COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT
MOORHEAD, MINNESOTA
MARCH 22, 2018

The Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) met March 22, 2018, at 2:00 p.m. at the Courtyard by Marriott, Moorhead Minnesota.

Present were John Finney, Gary Thompson, Jerome Deal, Rodger Olson, Greg Holmvik and Ben Varnson, Board members; Kent Lokkesmoe and Pat Fridgen, non-voting members; Keith Weston, RRRA Executive Director; Melissa Maertens and Nina Stone on behalf of Carol Harbeke Lewis, Secretary-Treasurer; Pat McQuery, United States Army Corps of Engineers; Debra Walchuk, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Cody Morsching, Congressman Cramer's Office; Allison Myhre, Congressman Peterson's Office; Andrew Martin, Senator Klobuchar's Office; Rob Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board; Lance Yohe, Red River Joint Water Resource District; Curt Johannsen, Red River Basin Commission (RRBC); Robert Rostad, Richland County Water Resource District; Randy Gjestvang, North Dakota State Water Commission (NDSWC); Jerry Bents, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Pat Downs, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Joel Benske, Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District.

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

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 Greg Holmvik, seconded by Rodger Olson and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2017, meeting.

Appointment of Secretary-Treasurer for 2018

It was moved by Rodger Olson, seconded by Jerome Deal and unanimously carried to appoint Carol Harbeke Lewis as Secretary-Treasurer of the Red River Retention Authority for calendar year 2018.

Designation of depository of Red River Retention Authority public funds

It was moved by Lance Yohe, seconded by Gary Thompson and unanimously carried to designate Alerus Financial as the depository of Red River Retention Authority public funds.

Approve participation in Alerus Financial Pledge Pool Agreement

It was moved by Greg Holmvik, seconded by Rodger Olson and unanimously carried to approve participation in the Alerus Financial *Pledge Pool Agreement for Safekeeping of Pledged Securities*.

Financial Report

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

Bills

It was moved by Rodger Olson, seconded by Jerome Deal and unanimously carried to approve the payment of Checks #1495 through #1509, as presented.

NRCS Agreements

Keith Weston reviewed *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-15-512* with the NRCS for funding outreach to the watersheds selected for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) under the *Memorandum of Understanding*. Mr. Weston drafted an extension request letter to be approved and sent to the NRCS. The request is to extend *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-15-512* one year to September 30, 2019.

It was moved by Lance Yohe, seconded by Jerome Deal and unanimously carried to approve sending a letter to the NRCS to request an extension of *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-15-512*.

Mr. Weston also reviewed *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-16-517* with the NRCS to fund cooperation and joint coordination of flood damage reduction projects relating to the RCPP. Mr. Weston hopes to extend *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-16-517* one year to September 30, 2019. However, there is a new grant process in place, so an extension to the agreement may not be possible. Debra Walchuk encouraged RRRRA to apply for a new grant instead of attempting to extend the original agreement. Mr. Weston indicated that in order to apply for a new grant, he would need to send a proposal and application under the Technical Assistance category to both Minnesota and North Dakota NRCS offices. Mr. Weston will continue conversation with the NRCS in regard to the extension or replacement of *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-16-517*.

Ben Varnson was now in attendance at the meeting.

NRCS Report

Debra Walchuk introduced herself as the new NRCS Red River Basin Coordinator. Ms. Walchuk recently met with State Conservationists in St. Paul, Minnesota, placing an emphasis on RCPP projects in Minnesota and North Dakota.

Accrual accounting for RCPP projects is up-to-date; however, pay requests are behind schedule and are not yet processed. Ms. Walchuk has communicated with her supervisors and hopes to get assistance from an engineer as soon as possible in order to keep pay requests current.

Ms. Walchuk announced that she will now be generating quarterly financial reports. She apologized for not having the current report available at the meeting, but she will send out the current report to the Board as soon as it is complete.

Ms. Walchuk announced the creation of the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center by the United States Department of Agriculture. The creation of FPAC may change the structure of NRCS in the future.

Executive Director report

Keith Weston reported on sending a letter to the NDSWC regarding proposed projects for the State Water Plan for the 2019-2021 biennium. The letter stated that there are 7 ongoing RCPP projects on the North Dakota side in 6 different water resource districts. Mr. Weston indicated that the sponsoring water resource districts should have submitted a letter individually to the NDSWC for the RCPP project(s) they are sponsoring. There are 19 ongoing RCPP projects throughout the Red River basin. The Swan Creek RCPP effort has officially ceased.

Mr. Weston provided updates on outreach and education efforts. Copies of a brochure on Profiles of Soil Health and an educational postcard focusing on conservation practices to reduce runoff on cropland were handed out. The soil health brochures will be distributed at outreach events and the educational postcards will be mailed in April.

Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District Outreach and Education Project

Joel Benske presented an outreach and education project within the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District. The project includes kiosks with informational panels that will be placed throughout the District at various impoundment sites. On behalf of the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District and the Red Lake Watershed District, Benske requested \$7,000 in funding to complete the project.

The Chairman opened discussion and suggested this project might fit within the outreach and education portion of RRRRA's mission. There was discussion on creating more kiosks to be placed at North Dakota impoundment sites. Rodger Olson voiced dissent for funding the project. No action was taken on the matter.

Rodger Olson left the meeting at this time.

Agency and partner reports

Kent Lokkesmoe reported on participation in the technical group formed as a result of the Governors' Task Force regarding the Metro Flood Diversion Project. Mr. Lokkesmoe stated the Diversion Authority submitted a new permit application to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) on March 16, 2018. The major changes to the Metro Flood Diversion Project in the new plan, Plan B, is a change to the alignment of the southern embankment, as well as allowing 37 feet of water to go through the cities of Fargo and Moorhead. These changes help to decrease upstream impacts, while keeping downstream impacts similar to the original plan. Mr. Lokkesmoe stated that a decision from the MDNR regarding the permit application will take time.

Mr. Lokkesmoe also updated the group on the upcoming Minnesota bonding session.

Pat Fridgen reported on the NDSWC State Water Plan effort for the 2019-2021 biennium. The deadline to submit projects to the NDSWC to be included in the plan is March 23, 2018. Mr. Fridgen stated that projects included in the State Water Plan have a much higher chance of being funded.

The annual RRBC retreat and board meeting held in March was well attended. The RRBC is working on closing out projects and completing final reports. Representatives from the RRBC recently lobbied in St. Paul to secure funding for the 2018 calendar year. RRBC also assisted the Red River Watershed Management Board in hosting a conference held earlier this week.

Meeting schedule

The next meeting will be held on June 29, 2018, at 10:00 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