

MINUTES OF MEETING
RED RIVER RETENTION AUTHORITY
CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
SEPTEMBER 5, 2018

The Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) met September 5, 2018, at 10:00 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 Lance Yohe (alternate for Ben Varnson), Board members; Pat Fridgen, Kent Lokkesmoe and Ted Preister, non-voting members; Keith Weston, RRRA Executive Director; Nina Stone, Accountant; Melissa Maertens, Administrative Assistant; Mary Podoll (by phone) and Christi Fisher, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Cody Morsching, Congressman Cramer's Office; Allison Stock, Congressman Peterson's Office; Rob Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board; Randy Gjestvang, North Dakota State Water Commission (NDSWC); Robert Rostad, Richland County Water Resource District; Dan Jacobson, Cass County Joint Water Resource District; William A. Hejl, Rush River Water Resource District (by phone); Zach Herrmann, Houston Engineering, Inc.; and Chad Engels, Moore Engineering, Inc. Board member Ben Varnson was absent.

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 Jerome Deal, seconded by Greg Holmvik and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the June 29, 2018, meeting.

Bills

It was moved by Jerome Deal and seconded by Lance Yohe to approve the payment of Checks #1520 through #1532, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

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*. The NRCS has granted a one-year extension of time to the agreement, expiring September 30, 2019. Through this

agreement, RRRRA is working in conjunction with the Grand Forks Soil Conservation District and the Polk County Soil Conservation District to sponsor a soil health workshop in March 2019. Mr. Weston also discussed sponsoring an Agriculture BMP workshop in April 2019 at University of Minnesota – Crookston. Any additional funds from *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-15-512* may be put towards educational postcards or other drainage water management activities.

Mr. Weston 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. The current agreement ends September 30, 2018, and the proposal for a replacement agreement was denied by the NRCS. Mr. Weston is in discussion with the NRCS regarding a possible replacement agreement for *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-16-517*.

Mr. Weston discussed the *Memorandum of Understanding - NRCS Agreement 14-C-ND-669*. Mary Podoll stated that she appreciates the partnership between RRRRA and the NRCS throughout the years, and feels the RCPP program has been very positive for both North Dakota and Minnesota.

NRCS Report

Mr. Weston presented a report from Debra Walchuk, NRCS Red River Basin Coordinator. Ms. Walchuk is currently completing third quarter pay requests. Mr. Weston briefly discussed the status of Minnesota RCPP projects, as described in the handout dated August 31, 2018. Troy Daniell has been selected as the new Minnesota State Conservationist and will be invited to the December meeting.

Christi Fisher discussed the planning status of North Dakota RCPP projects. Some projects have expended or nearly expended all available NRCS funds. She also reviewed expected project timelines and agreement expiration dates.

Upper Sand Hill River RCPP Watershed Project Status / Eligibility

At the last meeting, John Finney reported that the Sand Hill River Watershed District has given written notice that they will withdraw from the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) effective October 1, 2018. Sand Hill River Watershed District currently has an agreement with the NRCS regarding the Upper Sand Hill River RCPP Watershed Project. The NRCS has given RRRRA the authorization to determine if Sand Hill Watershed District can remain eligible for RCPP cost-share funds through the NRCS if they are not a member of the RRWMB. The Board discussed the matter and agreed that if Sand Hill River Watershed District is not a member of the RRWMB, they are not eligible for RCPP funding.

Rodger Olson moved and Jerome Deal seconded to authorize the Executive Director to send a letter to the NRCS stating that the Sand Hill Watershed District is not eligible for RCPP cost-share funds through the NRCS because they are no longer a member of the RRWMB. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Executive Director report

Mr. Weston reported that a letter was sent to local Senators and Congressmen to inform them of RCPP projects in the Red River Basin and the need for continued funding for watershed planning and project implementation.

Mr. Weston informed the Board about the proposed Probable Maximum Precipitation Study for North Dakota, which is scheduled for discussion at the upcoming NDSWC meeting in October 2018. It was moved by Gary Thompson, seconded by Jerome Deal and unanimously carried to authorize the Executive Director to send a letter of support to the State Engineer regarding the proposed Probable Maximum Precipitation Study for North Dakota.

Mr. Weston indicated that Roseau River Watershed District requested a letter of support from the RRRRA to the RRWMB regarding the Roseau River Watershed District RCPP projects. The Board directed the Executive Director to send the letter, as outlined.

Red Lake Watershed District RCPP Project

Mr. Weston discussed the status of the Pine Lake Watershed Project. The Pine Lake project has completed Review Point 4 of the 6-step NRCS review process, but has expended all of the available NRCS funding. Mr. Weston indicated that RRRRA received a written request from Red Lake Watershed District for \$200,000 of additional funding to complete planning. The Red Lake Watershed District is prepared to match 30% of the \$200,000. Mr. Weston indicated Red Lake Watershed District would need to pursue an amendment to their agreement from the NRCS and, in the interim, would need to use their own funds for the project. Mr. Weston also stated there might be a possibility to obligate some funds from the Swan Creek Watershed Project, which has been terminated, to the Pine Lake Watershed Project. The Board discussed the expected project timeline and achievability, and questioned why Red Lake Watershed District representatives were not present at the meeting. Rodger Olson questioned why alternatives that are rarely permitted in Minnesota are being considered for the Pine Lake Watershed Project. Mr. Weston indicated the plan may include a combination of alternatives. The Board discussed the likelihood other projects will need additional funding to complete planning, and that it would be unfair to give additional funds to some projects and not others. Jerome Deal stated that the sponsoring watersheds should have anticipated that the planning process may require more funding than the cost-share provided by the NRCS and should have taken that into consideration before signing the contract with the NRCS. The Board directed the Executive Director to convey to Red Lake Watershed District that additional funding for RCPP project planning is not available at this time; however, there may be funding assistance for project design and construction.

Agency and partner reports

Kent Lokkesmoe gave a brief report stating that there will be a new Minnesota governor and commissioner elected in November 2018, which could change the financial commitment for flood hazard mitigation projects within the state.

Meeting schedule

The next meeting will be held on December 13, 2018, at 2:00 p.m. at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks, 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