

MINUTES OF VIRTUAL / CONFERENCE CALL MEETING  
RED RIVER RETENTION AUTHORITY  
SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

The Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) held a virtual / conference call meeting on September 9, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.

Participating were John Finney, Ben Varnson, Greg Holmvik, Rodger Olson, Roger Mischel and Dan Jacobson (alternate for Gary Thompson), Board members; Pat Fridgen, Theresa Ebbenga and Ted Preister, non-voting members; Keith Weston, Executive Director; Carol Harbeke Lewis, Secretary-Treasurer; Christi Fisher, Debra Walchuk and Dave Jones, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Randy Gjestvang and Aaron Carranza, North Dakota State Water Commission (NDSWC); Rob Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) Zach Hermann, Mike Opat and Tony Nordby Houston Engineering, Inc.; Pat Downs, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Morrie Lanning, Barr Engineering Co.; Chuck Fritz, International Water Institute; and Larry Luick, North Dakota State Senator.

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

**Agenda**

It was moved by Ben Varnson, seconded by Dan Jacobson and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**Minutes**

It was moved by Rodger Olson, seconded by Greg Holmvik and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the June 17 and July 15, 2020, meetings. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**Financial Report**

It was moved by Ben Varnson and seconded by Rodger Olson to approve the Financial Report, as presented.

**Bills**

It was moved by Rodger Olson and seconded by Dan Jacobson to approve the wire transfers, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**Proposal from KFGO-AM Midwest Radio of Fargo-Moorhead for RRRA public service ads and announcements**

Keith Weston reviewed a proposal from KFGO for additional public service ads and announcements for the RRRA. They would begin next week and run through mid-December 2020. It was moved by Roger Mischel and seconded by Rodger Olson to

approve the proposal from KFGO-AM Midwest Radio of Fargo-Moorhead for RRRRA public service ads and announcements, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

### **Update on evaluating benefits for flood damage reduction projects**

Mr. Weston worked with Randy Gjestvang and Rob Sip on evaluating and compiling benefits for flood damage reduction projects. He shared a PowerPoint presentation on the matter. John Finney suggested all water districts research documents to put in a database for everyone to access.

It was moved by Ben Varnson and seconded by Roger Mischel to authorize Keith Weston to gather information and update the RRRRA at the December 2020 meeting regarding the evaluation and compilation of flood damage reduction project information. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

### **NRCS Agreement 14-C-ND-669 – Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Memorandum of Understanding**

Debra Walchuk updated the Board on *NRCS Agreement 14-C-ND-669 – Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Memorandum of Understanding*. Recently the NRCS offered one year no-cost extensions to agreements. Five watershed districts requested an extension, five did not and 1 was not eligible.

### **NRCS report**

Ms. Walchuk reported on planning, progress, and the status of RCPP Watershed Plans. Over \$4 million has been expended in Minnesota. There are 6 ongoing agreements, 2 are expiring and 4 have been closed out.

Christi Fisher reported the Rush River Watershed Plan was submitted to the National Watershed Management Center in June for consideration and an agreement is in place to cover final design costs. The North Branch Park River Watershed was submitted to the National Watershed Management Center in September for consideration and a request for additional funding for final design was also submitted. Ms. Fisher updated the Board on extension requests and the revised delivery schedules on approved extensions.

Mr. Finney asked about the availability of unused funds. Ms. Fisher said those funds will be used for design work and will not be applied to any other planning efforts.

### **2021 draft Red River Basin Retention Project Prioritization list**

Mr. Weston reviewed the draft Red River Basin Retention Project Prioritization list. The process to score, rank and prioritize projects was discussed. Mr. Weston requested guidance on the matter from the Board.

Mr. Finney asked about including flood damage reduction projects in addition to retention projects. Mr. Weston suggested developing a list with accompanying maps for projects in Minnesota and North Dakota, with enough information for elected officials to see what has been worked on. Mr. Finney asked about reviewing the mission of the RRRRA. Ben

Varnson asked if flood damage reduction can be injected into the RRRRA mission. Mr. Weston said to do so, the By-Laws would need to be amended. Information from upcoming RRJWRD and RRWMB meetings can be brought back for discussion at the next RRRRA meeting.

Greg Holmvik was now in attendance.

### **Strategic planning efforts**

Work continues with Randy Gjestvang and Rob Sip on strategic planning efforts for the RRRRA. The document incorporates portions of the RRWMB new strategic plan and the RRJWRD strategy plan. Input will be gathered on the matter for discussion at the December 2020 meeting. The need to hire a facilitator will also be determined.

It was moved by Rodger Olson and seconded by Greg Holmvik to move forward with strategic planning efforts for the RRRRA. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

### **Electronic Watershed Plan Library**

Development of an Electronic Watershed Plan Library was discussed. Mr. Weston suggested entering into an MOU with the NRCS to partner with the RRRRA on the project. Plans for projects not sponsored by the NRCS could also be included in the library. The RRRRA could contribute financial assistance and the Executive Director's time on the project. Mr. Finney believes the library is an excellent idea and that it would be a nice way to preserve the plans.

It was moved by Ben Varnson and seconded by Roger Mischel to authorize Keith Weston to contact the North Dakota and Minnesota NRCS State Conservationists to request partnering with the RRRRA on the development of an Electronic Watershed Plan Library. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

### **Outreach**

Mr. Weston reported on outreach for the RRRRA. He looked to the Board for input on participation in various upcoming virtual conferences. It was moved by Roger Mischel and seconded by Dan Jacobson to authorize the RRRRA Executive Director to pay up to \$250 for participation in upcoming virtual conferences. Upon roll all vote, the motion carried unanimously.

### **Agency and partner reports**

Ted Preister reported there were over 90 participants in the recent Red River Basin Commission (RRBC) Ex-officio virtual meeting. The meeting went well, so they will take that forward to the RRBC annual conference planning committee.

Mr. Preister expects to see information next week on the downstream of Halstad, Minnesota, modeling effort.

A response is expected this month on the RCPP grant application for the Proposed Comprehensive Subwatershed Pilot Program.

Theresa Ebbenga reported that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) continues to address 50 contingencies to the permit for the Metro Flood Diversion Project.

The DNR is also submitting comments on the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. The Minnesota Public Service permit has come out for the project and she believes it follows their basic water quality standards.

The Flood Damage Reduction Workgroup has drafted an addendum to the mission principles and practices document and are working through the agency review process. They hope to have the document in place by the end of the year.

Pat Fridgen reported on the dramatic decline in revenue from the oil extraction tax in North Dakota. It is currently approximately \$60 million under the amount projected for this biennium. The State Water Commission (SWC) has deferred cost-share requests since May 2020. It has been an adjustment for the SWC, as well as the project sponsors, and has had a huge impact.

Agenda items on the SWC meeting tomorrow include the ongoing strategic governance study, Red River Valley Water Supply and SB 2020. Mr. Fridgen thanked all of the Water Resource Districts for submitting information for the *2021 Water Development Plan*, which they hope to have completed before the legislative session starts.

Chuck Fritz reported on the PTMApp Project. Most Minnesota watersheds are included and all but Devils lake in North Dakota are included. There are 19 watersheds available in the portal.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to be considered by the Board, it was moved by John Finney, seconded by Roger Mischel and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

APPROVED:

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Gary Thompson  
Co-Chair

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John Finney  
Co-Chair

ATTEST:

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Carol Harbeke Lewis  
Secretary-Treasurer