

MINUTES OF VIRTUAL / CONFERENCE CALL MEETING  
RED RIVER RETENTION AUTHORITY  
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT  
1201 MAIN AVENUE WEST, WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA  
THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024  
10:00 A.M.

The Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) held a virtual / conference call meeting on March 21, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

Participating were Bill Petersen, Rodger Olson, Greg Holmvik, Don Kemp (alternate for Josh Ihry), Board members; Pat Fridgen, non-voting member; Brian Fuder, Executive Director; Melissa Hinkemeyer, Secretary-Treasurer; Leilei Bao, Accountant; Carolyn Fiechtner, Administrative Assistant; Randy Gjestvang, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Michael Kelsch, ND Senator Kevin Cramer's office; Rita Harmsen-Sveen, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Rob Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB); Alexa Ducioame, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Mike Opat, Houston Engineering; Morrie Lanning, Barr Engineering Co. Board members John Finney and Ben Varnson were absent.

Bill Petersen called the meeting to order, and introductions were made.

**Agenda**

It was moved by Rodger Olson, seconded by Greg Holmvik, and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda, as presented.

**Minutes**

It was moved by Greg Holmvik, seconded by Rodger Olson and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2023, meeting.

**Financial Report**

It was moved by Rodger Olson and seconded by Greg Holmvik to approve the Financial Report, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**Bills**

It was moved by Greg Holmvik and seconded by Rodger Olson to approve the wire transfers, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the following Board members voted in favor: Bill Petersen, Rodger Olson, Greg Holmvik and Don Kemp. The motion passed.

**NRCS report**

Rita Harmsen-Sveen presented on the status of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Tongue River Watershed Plan in Pembina County as well as provided updates on other RCPP plans in the Red River Basin in North Dakota. Discussion was also held on the status of ongoing dam rehabilitation projects in North Dakota.

#### **Outreach – WDAY Weather and Ag in Focus advertising proposal**

Brian Fuder discussed an advertising proposal partnership with WDAY Weather and Ag in Focus. Mr. Fuder described the WDAY Weather and Ag in Focus ‘Here We Grow’ program that follows the planting of a 20-acre crop and the work involved with planting and harvesting the crop. As a sponsor of the program, the RRRRA would be featured in various ways such as featured videos, interviews, commercial airtime, and more throughout the project which runs April – October. The cost of the sponsorship is \$7,000.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Greg Holmvik, seconded by Rodger Olson, and unanimously carried to approve and authorize the Chairmen to sign an Agreement with WDAY regarding sponsorship of the WDAY Weather and Ag in Focus ‘Here we Grow’ program, not to exceed \$7,000.

#### **Outreach – 2024 RRRRA Priority Projects legislative mailing**

Mr. Fuder stated to the Board that in the past a mailing was done to provide information on RRRRA Priority Projects to legislators. Mr. Fuder inquired if the Board is interested in continuing legislative mailings regarding RRRRA priority projects.

The Board directed the Executive Director to send a letter to legislators in the Red River Basin regarding the 2024 RRRRA Priority Projects list.

#### **Outreach – “Retention Advocacy through Education” blog page**

Mr. Fuder reported a blog has been created on the RRRRA website and will be used to educate the public about the RRRRA. Mr. Fuder stated he has been communicating with a consultant to improve the website and develop a plan to attract a readership. Mr. Fuder indicated the cost estimate is not to exceed \$6,000 to contract with the website consultant.

A motion was made by Rodger Olson, seconded by Greg Holmvik and unanimously carried to approve and authorize the Chairmen to sign an *Agreement* with Pamela Morrau for marketing and website improvements, not to exceed \$6,000. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

#### **Executive Director report – federal talking points**

Mr. Fuder said a federal talking points paper was developed in 2022 to assist in discussions with legislators and federal partners regarding the RRRRA. Mr. Fuder inquired if the Board is interested in updating the federal talking points document to continue communicating a consistent message. The Board directed Mr. Fuder to update the RRRRA federal talking points paper for the Board to review at a future meeting.

### **Executive Director report – strategic plan**

Mr. Fuder reported that a strategic plan of the RRRRA is due every five years, the next plan will be due in 2025. The Board discussed potentially forming a subcommittee to build the strategic plan. Further discussion on the matter will continue at a future meeting.

### **Executive Director report – Farm Bill update**

Mr. Fuder noted the current Farm Bill was extended through 2024 and there are no expected changes. A new Farm Bill is not anticipated to be implemented until potentially 2025.

### **North Dakota Ag Coalition**

Mr. Fuder stated he will be presenting on the RRRRA as a new member feature at the North Dakota Ag Coalition meeting in July.

### **Joint RRRRA, RRJWRD, RRWMB meeting**

Discussion was held on potentially having a combined RRRRA, Red River Joint Water Resource District (RRJWRD) and RRWMB meeting. The meeting would allow for a discussion among the Boards to learn about the status of current projects and identify current needs and issues, and what areas the Boards can collaborate on. The Board directed Mr. Fuder, Randy Gjestvang, and Rob Sip to bring a proposed time for a joint RRRRA, RRJWRD and RRWMB meeting to a future meeting for continued discussion.

### **Agency and partner reports**

Randy Gjestvang updated the Board on the NDDWR. The next State Water Commission meeting is scheduled for April 11. The NDDWR is also compiling the 2025-2027 Water Development Plan and conducting a Know Your Aquifer campaign.

Rob Sip updated the Board on the RRWMB. The RRWMB is working with the International Water Institute on updating LiDAR tools in the Red River Basin in Minnesota and related training with Minnesota watershed districts and other interested parties. The RRWMB also continues to work on securing funding for projects in the Red River Basin in Minnesota.

Mr. Gjestvang also updated the Board on recent activities of the RRJWRD including funding of additional NDAWN all-season weather gauges in the Red River Basin in North Dakota as well as provided a status update regarding the pilot study by the International Water Institute to improve crop acreage estimation for the economic analyses of two RCPP projects in the Red River Basin in North Dakota.

### **Meeting schedule**

The next RRRRA meeting is scheduled for June 20, 2024, 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, it was moved by Rodger Olson, seconded by Greg Holmvik and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

APPROVED:

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Josh Ihry  
Co-Chair

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John Finney  
Co-Chair

ATTEST:

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Melissa Hinkemeyer  
Secretary-Treasurer