Meeting Minutes
Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board Meeting
May 23, 2019, 1 p.m.
Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, Conference Room A, Farmington, MN

Board Members in Attendance
Dakota County Commissioner Mike Slavik, Chair
Dakota County Commissioner Mary Liz Holberg, Vice Chair
Scott County Commissioner Tom Wolf, Secretary/Treasurer

Others in Attendance
Mark Zabel, Watershed Administrator
Melissa Bokman Ermer, Watershed Co-administrator
Helen Brosnahan, Assistant County Attorney
Travis Thiel, VRWJPO Watershed Specialist
Paula Liepold, VRWJPO Outreach and Communications
Mark Ryan, VRWJPO Watershed Engineer
Jen Dullum, VRWJPO Public Outreach and Communications
Bruce Johnson, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor
Brian Watson, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager
Georg Fischer, Dakota County Environmental Resource Director
Mary Jackson, Dakota County Senior Planner

1. Call to Order
Meeting was called to order by Commissioner Slavik at 1:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call
All Board members were in attendance.

3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda
There were no comments from the audience.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

Res. No. VRW 19-21: Motion by Commissioner Holberg, Second by Commissioner Wolf, and passed on a unanimous vote to approve the consent agenda.

5. Approval of Expenses
Mark Zabel presented the current invoices as shown on item 5.

**Res. No. VRW 19-22:** Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Holberg, and passed on a 3-0 roll call vote to approve the expenses totaling $55,555.59 incurred between April 20, 2019, and May 15, 2019, as submitted on May 23, 2019.

6. Business Items


Mark Zabel began the strategic planning session by introducing Mary Jackson as facilitator. Mary Jackson began her presentation (see attached) by asking the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (JPB) for their expectations for the strategic planning session. Commissioner Holberg’s goals for the session included increasing staff’s confidence in the direction of the Watershed and reducing the JPB’s reactive nature on items brought before them at JPB meetings. Commissioner Slavik noted that more projects have been done since the last strategic planning session and there has been clear prioritization on those projects. He would like to know what projects are next and the reasoning for the prioritization. Commissioner Wolf would like to know if what the VRWJPO is doing is what is needed for the Vermillion River Watershed.

Commissioner Holberg asked for staff’s expectations for the strategic planning session. Travis Thiel would like to know if the JPB priorities align with the watershed implementation plan and how to structure a more open dialogue between staff and the JPB. Paula Liepold would like to know whether staff is meeting the JPB’s expectations in executing the Watershed Plan. Mark Ryan questioned whether the JPB would like to see more structure when it comes to project prioritization. Jen Dullum echoed the comments from other staff. Mark Zabel would like to know whether gaps exist, and if so, what is staff missing and how does staff fulfill those needs. Melissa Bokman Ermer would like to know if there are any identified projects or opportunities that can be addressed from the previous studies the VRWJPO has commissioned.

Commissioner Slavik brought up strategic community engagement and how staff educates the public. He would like to see better results in this area. Georg Fischer explained that when evaluating the VRWJPO, the watershed is performing exceptionally well. Mark Zabel distributed the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) review (attached). Staff completed an unofficial review of performance standards using the PRAP. Only one reading scored low; on-going Board training, which the VRWJPO does not complete since the JPB is made up of Dakota and Scott County Commissioners.

Mary Jackson continued her presentation and covered the 2016 strategic plan comments and the Watershed Plan’s seven essential functions. Mark Zabel addressed the CIP implementation spreadsheet (attached) detailing funding by sub-watershed from 2016 projected to 2020. Mark Zabel also distributed the Dakota and Scott County 2019-2020 project list (attached).

Next, Mark Zabel distributed the 2020-2023 WRAPS Strategies planning sheet (attached). Commissioner Slavik asked whether BWSR has determined funding for the next biennium. Brian Watson noted that the Vermillion River Watershed is unique because it is self-contained. He believes that for the seven county metro there will be a $5.9 million allocation and that the Vermillion River Watershed should expect approximately $500,000 every two years in non-competitive funding. Commissioner Slavik asked whether other grants will be available for funding opportunities, noting the JPO’s prior success with
competitive grant awards. Brian Watson responded there will continue to be other grant funding sources available.

Mary Jackson then asked the JPB what their priorities are for the organization across all functions and service areas. Commissioner Holberg asked staff to elaborate on the communication issues that were noted at the beginning of the meeting. Travis Thiel described the layers of hierarchy needed to work through to communicate with JPB. Georg Fischer explained the structure for Dakota County staff to communicate with commissioners. Commissioner Holberg asked for solutions to eliminate this impediment for staff assigned to the VRWJPO. Georg Fisher noted that because the VRWJPO is not a Dakota County department, different rules could possibly be implemented. He will discuss this with administration. Commissioner Holberg would like to see communication streamlined.

Commissioner Slavik noted the benefit of the having open communication with staff in a condensed strategic planning session. Commissioner Slavik said looking more than one year out for Capital Improvement Project (CIP) would be a valuable tool for planning purposes. He would like to see longer-term CIP planning, especially once BWSR has determined the funding formula. Commissioner Holberg notes this priority might also help cities plan their CIP projects.

Mary Jackson next asked whether there are areas that need either more or less focus. Commissioner Holberg noted that communication with staff and the general public would be one area for more focus. Paula Liepold noted that the watershed tour is beneficial for internal and external communication. She noted the tentative date for the watershed tour is Thursday, September 19, 2019. Commissioner Wolf suggested meeting at project sites at the start of JPB meetings which would be one way to view the projects and involve the public that might attend meetings. Commissioner Holberg noted that in the fall project updates could be given in to each city that the VRWJPO has worked with on projects that year. She also suggested an educational insert into a county tax statement or city water bill.

Mary Jackson then led the JPB in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) exercise. The Commissioners noted that the watershed’s strengths lie in leveraging outside monies, good working relationships with outside groups, public satisfaction with the projects that the VRWJPB completes, nitrate reduction, the improved relationship with Eureka Township, permitting has been streamlined, and the standards update work with the Townships was deemed successful.

The JPB identified being disconnected from the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission as a weakness. The JPB would like to strengthen its relationship with the WPC; perhaps the chair or a designee can attend annual JPB strategic planning meetings. Commissioner Holberg would like more background information on projects before they are presented to the JPB in meetings.

The JPB see an opportunity for continued improvement and accountability in our relationships with the townships.

The JPB views development, the economy, and the budget as threats. Due to time limits, the 2019 budget discussion was deferred to the June 27, 2019 meeting.

6b. Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (JPB) Delegation of Grant Management Authority to Staff
Mark Zabel noted a potential issue for invoicing grants. The authorized representative for a grant should be the same individual signing grant reports and agreements. Staff is asking the JPB to delegate grant
management to staff to streamline the submission requests for reimbursement, reports, or both, under a grant.

Res. No. VRW 19-23: Motion by Commissioner Holberg, Second by Commissioner Wolf, and passed on a unanimous vote to authorize delegation of grant management authority to staff.

7. Staff Reports
Paula Liepold will email the Commissioners with potential times and dates for the Watershed Tour.
Adjourn
Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Holberg, and passed on a unanimous voice vote to adjourn the meeting at 3:09 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: June 27, 2019 – Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, Room A at 1 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Jen Dullum
Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Mark Zabel
Administrator for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Attest

[Signature]
Commissioner Tom Wolf
Secretary/ Treasurer

[Signature] 6/27/19
Date