



Meeting Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board Meeting
February 25, 2021, 1 p.m., Teleconference using Zoom

Board Members in Attendance

Dakota County Commissioner Mike Slavik, Chair
Scott County Commissioner, Tom Wolf, Vice-Chair
Dakota County Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland, Secretary/ Treasurer

Others in Attendance

Mark Zabel, Dakota County, Watershed Administrator
Melissa Bokman Ermer, Scott County, Watershed Co-administrator
Travis Thiel, Dakota County, Senior Watershed Specialist
Mark Ryan, Dakota County, VRWJPO Watershed Engineer
Paula Liepold, Dakota County, Public Outreach and Communications
Helen Brosnahan, Dakota County, Assistant County Attorney
Steve Mielke, Dakota County Physical Development Division Director
Georg Fischer, Dakota County Environmental Resources Department Director
Bruce Johnson, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor
Brian Watson, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager
Curt Coudron, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District Project Management Supervisor
John Stelzner, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District Resource Conservationist
Troy Kuphal, Scott County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager
Jessica Schaum, City of Apple Valley Natural Resources Coordinator
Samantha Berger, City of Apple Valley Water Resource Specialist

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Commissioners Slavik, Hamann-Roland, and Wolf were in attendance.

3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

There were no comments from the audience.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Agenda
- b. Approval of Minutes from the January 28, 2021, meeting

- c. Acceptance of Treasurer's Report
- d. Schedule a Public Hearing for Modifications to the VRWJPO Permit Program Fee and Security Schedule

Res. No. VRW 21-04: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, Second by Commissioner Wolf, and passed on a 3-0 roll call vote to approve the consent agenda.

5. Approval of Expenses

Mark Zabel presented the current expenses for approval as shown on item 5.

Res. No. VRW 21-05: Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Hamann-Roland and passed on a 3-0 roll call vote to approve the expenses totaling \$171,241.26 incurred between January 20, 2021, and February 16, 2021.

Business Items

6a. Adoption of an Amendment to the Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan Implementation Section

Mark Zabel introduced the item noting that the item was described last month for purposes of the public hearing. Nothing has changed on this item in the interim. Three comment letters were received addressing the amendment. Two from state agencies and one from Metropolitan Council. There were no negative comments or comments to the content. The comment from MPCA requested they be provided the opportunity for review if there was any further review on the project itself. Otherwise there were no comments to the project or the amendment.

Res. No. VRW 21-06: Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Hamann-Roland and passed on a 3-0 roll call vote to approve the amendment to the Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan Implementation Section.

6b. Progress Update on Wetland Restoration in Castle Rock Township

Zabel introduced the item. John Stelzner presented a similar update for the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission at their February 10, 2021, meeting. This wetland bank development has been a major financial undertaking for Dakota County, the Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources, and the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO). Upon meeting performance standards wetland bank credits will be available to the VRWJPO which will be put up for public sale. VRWJPO wetland bank policy requires that wetland impacts occurring within the watershed be replaced within the watershed and that wetland bank credits within the watershed be used if available. The policy also provides for determining the price of credits it offers for sale. Recovered funds from the sale of wetland bank credits by the VRWJPO will be held in a special fund for future wetland restorations for wetland banking resulting in a revolving fund for continued wetland restoration.

John Stelzner noted that work continues the project currently. The project is in the South Branch Vermillion River subwatershed just off Blaine Avenue. The project occurs in five phases. The first phase is restoration, construction, and seeding. The second phase is hydrologic monitoring. The third, fourth and fifth phases are vegetation establishment and performance. Each phase results in credit releases. A total of up to 105 wetland acre credits will be released at project completion if it meets all standards. Following a discussion about the work involved in each phase, Commissioner Wolf inquired about the type of herbicide used. Commissioner Hamann-Roland inquired about the optimal timeframe for seeding. Commissioner Slavik inquired about protections provided to neighboring properties.

6c. Presentation on Current Cost-Share Programs of the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District

Mark Zabel introduced the item. Curt Coudron presented the item. This item was also presented to the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission at their February meeting.

Curt Coudron described the annual Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) between the VRWJPO and Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (DCSWCD) which provides for the DCSWCD to implement conservation practices in partnership with landowners using cost-share provided through the VRWJPO. Cost-share programs are provided to ensure programs are carried out effectively to address targeted needs. Curt gave an overview of the DCSWCD programs from a landowner perspective and highlighted each of the programs. There are five cost-share programs offered through the DCSWCD:

- Landscaping for Clean Water (Cost-share up to \$250 per project)
- Citizen Conservation Stewards (Cost-share up to 75% of project cost, \$5,000 limit)
- Conservation Initiative Funding (Cost-share up to 75% of project cost, \$25,000 limit)
- Community Partners Funding (Cost-share up to 75% of project cost, \$50,000 limit)
- Incentive Payment Practices (Cost-share rates, per-acre incentives, and limits vary)

Curt highlighted Harvestable Covers initiative that was added this year to provide incentive payments for planting cover crops that are harvestable. Curt gave an overview of the DCSWCD programs from a landowner perspective. Curt also showed some examples of completed projects from the past year. Landowners are required to maintain the project through its expected life.

Funding provided from the VRWJPO to the DCSWCD through the JPA are applied to a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for construction of projects and staff time for project oversight. The VRWJPO has budgeted up to \$80,000 for CIP through the DCSWCD for 2021. Funds are used for a portion of the construction costs of a project with the remaining construction costs provided by the landowner. The project is then required to be properly maintained by the landowner through the design life, which is typically 10 years.

Commissioner Slavik asked what the overall countywide budget for cost-share programs is in addition to the VRWJPO cost-share allocation of \$80,000. Curt responded that the VRWJPO funds leverage a lot of other funding to be included in cost-share. The Dakota County CIP provides \$150,000 this coming year towards cost-share funding countywide. DCSWCD also leverages Clean Water Fund grants through the Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources. Total cost-share across Dakota County for 2020 was approximately \$500,000. About \$125,000 to \$150,000 of that was spent in the Vermillion River watershed. Commissioner Hamann-Roland asked what the cost would have been to cleanup impacted waters if we had not pursued the CIP projects implemented through these programs and about the aggregate impact of projects completed. Calculating these costs is difficult because of the varying impacts of prevention and restoration projects occurring simultaneously. The DCSWCD maintains a database of information about completed projects along with estimated pollutant reductions for individual projects.

Staff Reports

Travis Thiel reported staff have been preparing a work plan for the Watershed Based Implementation Funding process to be eligible to receive allocated grant funds from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. Agreements are anticipated to be presented at the March meeting to receive the grant funds and for grant projects with implementing partners. The VRWJPO's application to Conservation Corps of Minnesota for crews, made together with DCSWCD and Dakota County, was successful. The assigned crews will continue snag and debris removal in the reach of the river that was started last year.

Mark Ryan shared pictures of current work on the stream stabilization project on Middle Creek in Lakeville between Highview Avenue and future Hamburg Avenue. Contractors will return after snowmelt when the area dries enough to finish grading and final seeding. Because of favorable bids for project construction, the scope may be expanded to complete all of the original stabilization/ restoration goals this year with the current budget allocations from Lakeville and the VRWJPO.

Paula Liepold reported that the VRWJPO along with other partners is hosting a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency turf grass maintenance training workshop on Wednesday, March 17. The target audience is County employees in parks, facilities, and others that maintain city parks, cemeteries, or other turfed areas. VRWJPO has been partnering in hosting these workshops since 2013 and this is the ninth such workshop we have hosted. This workshop is financially supported through the VRWJPO and Dakota County Facilities Department Paula also reported that the Children's Water Festival (CWF) for 2020 was held virtually and the CWF for 2021 is currently planned to be held virtually as well. Commissioner Slavik inquired about the number of participants funded by the VRWJPO. Paula indicated that the change to a virtual situation did change participation both in numbers and manner of participation (e.g.at-home, in-classroom, depending on pandemic restrictions). The change to virtual also expanded participation to a statewide reach.

Mark Zabel reported that the vacant position is currently with Employee Relations and will be posted within the week as a communications position. Staff are exploring options for the appointments process for the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission Members and plan to provide information to the Board in March.

Commissioner Slavik recommended that we continue with a virtual meeting in March but at that meeting the format for future meetings will be discussed. Commissioner Slavik asked if Commissioners Wolf and Hamann-Roland had any objection to the recommendation and there was none. Staff will include an item for discussion of plans for future meeting format.

Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, and passed 3-0 roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 2:09 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, March 25, 2021, at 1 p.m. Teleconference using Zoom.

Mark Zabel

Administrator for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Attest



Commissioner Hamann-Roland Secretary/ Treasurer

3/20/21
Date