



# Minutes

## Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission Meeting

January 8, 2020 - 3:30 p.m.

Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, Room A, Farmington, MN

### WPC Members in Attendance

Josh Borton    Chuck Clanton  
Mark Henry    Carolyn Miller  
Bruce Rydeen    Tony Wotzka

### Staff in Attendance

Mark Zabel, VRWJPO  
Mark Ryan, VRWJPO  
Jen Dullum, VRWJPO

### Others in Attendance

Curt Coudron, Dakota County SWCD

### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mark Zabel at 3:32 p.m. and opened with the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 2. Election of 2020 Watershed Planning Commission Officers

Mark Zabel called for nominations for Watershed Planning Commission (WPC) chair.

Commissioner Clanton nominated Commissioner Miller. Commissioner Miller nominated Commissioner Henry.

Mark Zabel called for any other nominations three times. There were none.

*Mark Zabel asked for a vote. Commissioner Miller received two votes. Commissioner Henry received three votes. Commissioner was elected chair by popular vote. There was no objection.*

Commissioner Henry assumed control of the meeting and asked for nominations for WPC vice chair.

Commissioner Clanton nominated Commissioner Miller.

Commissioner Henry called for any other nominations three times. There were none.

*Commissioner Miller was declared vice chair for 2020, by acclamation.*

### 3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

None

#### **4. Approval of Agenda**

*Motion by Commissioner Borton, second by Commissioner Rydeen, to approve the agenda. The agenda was unanimously approved.*

#### **5. Approval of Minutes**

*Motion by Commissioner Clanton, second by Commissioner Borton, to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2019. The minutes were unanimously approved.*

#### **6. Business Items**

##### **6a. Recommendation to Execute a Joint Powers Agreement with Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District for Services in 2020**

Mark Zabel introduced this item, noting that each year, joint powers agreements are presented for both Dakota County and Scott Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) for services to be provided in the upcoming year. Curt Coudron with the Dakota County SWCD was present to explain the proposed 2020 services and budget, which, he noted, are identical to 2019. Curt described the various components of the work being funded under the agreement including monitoring and capital improvement cost-share amounts.

Commissioner Henry noted the changes he has seen in the South Branch Vermillion River and pondered the reason for the open water and high-water table. Both Mark Zabel and Mark Ryan stated that it has been a record-setting wet year for the Watershed. Also, the South Branch area typically has a high-water table that keeps open-water areas warmer.

Curt mentioned that registration for the Landscaping for Clean Water (LCW) workshops is currently open. Commissioner Clanton asked if LCW projects were recorded on property titles; they are not, primarily due to the cost and process of officially recording the project.

Commissioner Clanton asked if there was a lot of overlap with other agencies with various programs. Curt replied that there is coordination between agencies to remove redundancies. Commissioner Clanton asked if a document could be developed describing who pays for, and administers, what programs and how much is spent overall. Mark Ryan and Mark Zabel indicated that staff could put something together on coordination if desired.

Commissioner Clanton had questions about the Dakota County SWCD cover crop program and funding. Curt Coudron explained that local dollars and match funding cover the cost of the program which asks for volunteers to use cover crops on land that has not been previously used for cover crops for a three-year period.

*Motion by Commissioner Miller, second by Commissioner Rydeen, to recommendation to executing a Joint Powers Agreement with Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District for Services in 2020.*

##### **6b. Recommendation to Execute a Joint Powers Agreement with Scott Soil and Water Conservation District for Services in 2020**

Mark Zabel presented this item, noting the similar services to the Dakota County SWCD except located in the Scott County portion of the watershed. Mark went over the draft 2020 services and budget,

which, he noted, are identical to 2019. Mark also stated that each SWCD is presented as a line-item in the 2020 Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) budget.

*Motion by Commissioner Rydeen, second by Commissioner Borton, to recommendation to executing a Joint Powers Agreement with Scott Soil and Water Conservation District for Services in 2020.*

#### **6c. Presentation on Public Comment and Public Hearing Scheduled for Proposed Amendments to the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Rules**

Mark Ryan informed the WPC that the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (JPB) set a public hearing date at their December board meeting. The public hearing on February 27 will end the public comment period on the proposed amendments to the Rules. The Rules have been updated to reflect changes adopted in the Standards. Townships permitted through the VRWJPO follow the Rules when applying for permits and in times of penalties. Each section in the proposed amendments to the Rules references the Standards. If and/or when the Standards are modified in the future, the Rules will automatically be updated.

Commissioner Clanton asked if the townships and local building officials agreed with the Standards. Mark Zabel replied that several township officials were present at the meeting when the Standards were adopted and had no additional comments to what was brought up during the public comment period. The townships will have to educate their staff and building inspectors on the new requirements.

### **7. Updates**

#### **7a. Chairperson's Report**

Commissioner Henry asked each commissioner what their motivation is for being on the WPC. Below is a summary of each commissioner's response.

- Commissioner Rydeen has an interest in land preservation and wanted a way to give back.
- Commissioner Borton is raising his family within the watershed, wants clean water, is a sportsman, and feels responsible to take care of the land and be a steward to water.
- Commissioner Clanton wants to be in touch with real issues and be a liaison for modern agriculture.
- Commissioner Miller saw the effects of development in her neighborhood, is concerned about quality of life and is interested in local action/activism after working in local politics
- Commissioner Henry grew up in the watershed and has seen many changes. He feels the need to educate.
- Commissioner Wotzka wants to be more involved in the community and wants to make changes locally.

Commissioner Clanton mused that land without housing developments on it should not necessarily be called "undeveloped land". There are many ways to "develop" land (i.e. conservation practices) that could be in reference too.

Commissioner Miller asked if the WPC should serve in more of an advocacy role and be more present before the JPB. Mark Zabel mentioned the JPB's desire for more interaction with the WPC. Commissioner Henry requested email reminders before each JPB meeting.

Commissioner Rydeen questioned why the VRWJPO has unspent funds from 2019, specifically regarding Capital Improvement Projects and SWCD Capital Improvement dollars. Mark Zabel replied that enough

funds are allocated for full coverage of all potential projects. There are also weather-related instances that may delay projects. Invoices also can come in during the duration of the project, which might straddle fiscal years.

Commissioner Clanton asked the SWCD if there was interest from the agricultural community for best management practices, but a lack of participation persists due to the cost the landowner would have to incur. Curt Coudron noted that there could have been up to two-dozen farmers that would have liked to participate in new conservation efforts in about the last year but that they might be waiting for financially more difficult times to pass. There may be others on top of who comes into the office. He noted that this is the challenge with voluntary conservation.

#### **7b. Staff Updates**

Mark Ryan gave an update on the East Lake carp project. In 2019, a fish tracking device was placed at the outlet to North Creek and additional fish tagging was completed. Carp were traveling to and from North Creek in 2019 but were not found going into upstream development ponds to the northeast. Staff is working with the City of Lakeville and having early discussions on a fish barrier to eliminate the connection to North Creek.

Commissioner Miller asked if the lake had viable fish population, other than carp and goldfish. Mark Ryan replied that it does and that the MN Department of Natural Resources has been debating options to have East Lake as part of their Fishing in the Neighborhood (FIN) program, which would introduce predatory fish, likely Northern Pike.

Mark Zabel asked the commissioners about recommending the removal of Commissioner Fortman from the WPC. Commissioner Fortman did not RSVP or attend any meetings in 2019.

#### **8. Adjourn**

*Motion by Commissioner Miller, second by Commission Clanton, to adjourn the meeting at 4:47 p.m. The motion was unanimously approved.*