



Meeting Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board Meeting

January 28, 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

Brian Watson, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager

Troy Kuphal, Scott County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 1 p.m.

2. Election of Joint Powers Board Officers

Mark Zabel opened nominations for Chair. Commissioner Hamann-Roland nominated Commissioner Slavik as Chair. After three calls for other nominations, there were none made. Zabel asked if there was any objection to the election of Commissioner Slavik to the Chair by acclamation. There was no objection. Zabel declared Commissioner Slavik elected Chair of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board by acclamation.

Commissioner Slavik assumed control of the meeting.

Commissioner Slavik asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Commissioner Wolf was nominated for, and a unanimous vote was taken electing Commissioner Wolf as Vice Chair. Nominations were then called for Secretary/Treasurer. Commissioner Hamann-Roland was nominated for and a unanimous vote was taken electing Commissioner Hamann-Roland as Secretary/Treasurer.

Commissioners Slavik and Wolf welcomed Commissioner Hamann-Roland to service on the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board.

3. Roll Call

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

4. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

There were no comments from the audience.

5. Approval of Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Agenda
- b. Approval of Minutes from the December 3, 2020, meeting
- c. Acceptance of Treasurer's Report
- d. Execute a Joint Powers Agreement with Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District for Services in 2021
- e. Execute a Joint Powers Agreement with Scott Soil and Water Conservation District for Services in 2021
- f. Authorization to Amend a Joint Powers Agreement with City of Hastings for the 21st St. Stormwater Treatment Projects

Res. No. VRW 21-01: Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, and passed on a 3-0 roll call vote to approve the consent agenda.

6. Approval of Expenses

Mark Zabel presented the last two months of expenses as shown on item number 6

Res. No. VRW 21-02: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, Second by Commissioner Wolf and passed on a 3-0 roll call vote to approve the expenses totaling \$163,866.59 incurred between November 21, 2020, and December 16, 2020, and, \$144,602.44 incurred between December 17, 2020, and January 19, 2021.

Business Items

7a. Public Hearing to Receive Comments on an Amendment to the Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan Implementation Section

Troy Kuphal described the Bemis Wetland and a potential project to replace the outlet structure and reconstruct the berm, or a portion of the berm, in order to prevent the imminent failure of the outlet and sudden draining of the wetland. This project is proposed to be added to the Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan via an amendment to its Implementation Section. Adding the project to the Plan will make it eligible for various funding sources.

Commissioner Slavik opened the public hearing to receive comments on the proposed amendment to the Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan.

After inquiry, no individuals on the remote meeting provided comments to the amendment. No written comments to the amendment were received by the VRWJPO to date.

Commissioner Slavik also clarified that today's item was solely for the purpose of receiving public comment. Zabel affirmed only action was to hold the public hearing.

With no comments or further discussion, Commissioner Wolf moved to close the public hearing. Commissioner Hamann-Roland seconded. Roll call, all yes.

7b. Hastings High School Field Biology Class Presentation on Monitoring Macroinvertebrates at a Site in the Vermillion River

Commissioner Slavik Introduced the item. Following introduction of individuals present and their role with the VRWJPO, Joe Beattie described his high school field biology class and their sampling of macroinvertebrates at a site on the Vermillion River in Hastings. Mr. Beattie's classes have been doing this work since 1997. He introduced Ella Kelly who provided a slide presentation of the sampling and the macroinvertebrates collected in 2020 as well as slides comparing results of sampling over time. Overall, the river at this site is showing water quality improvement based on diversity and types of macroinvertebrates sampled.

Commissioners commented positively on the professional presentation provided by Ms. Kelly.

7c. Consideration of Candidates and Appointments to the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission

Mark Zabel indicated there are currently two open positions on the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission (WPC). The VRWJPO received three eligible applications for the two open seats; Pamela Rubash from the City of Apple Valley, Andrew Riesgraf from the City of Apple Valley, and James Kotz from the City of Rosemount. The applications were presented to the WPC at their January meeting and, upon review of the applications, the WPC recommended Andrew Riesgraf and James Kotz be appointed to the two open seats based on the information provided in their applications. The Board can follow the recommendation of the WPC or refer the applications to a review panel made up of the Chair of the VRWJPB, the Chair of the VRWPC, and the Administrator for further consideration, or take other action it deems appropriate. The Board approved the appointment of Mr. Riesgraf and Mr. Kotz. There was discussion about formalizing the appointment process into a policy.

Res. No. VRW 21-03: Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, and passed on a 3-0 roll call vote to appoint Andrew Riesgraf and James Kotz to the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission.

Staff Reports

Paula Liepold provided information on her position with the County and collaborating with the VRWJPO outreach staff. She informed commissioners that she will assist the VRWJPO with various outreach activities until the position is filled.

Travis Thiel provide information about a property owner in Hastings that has on on-going issue with water backing up into his basement.

Travis also described a potential project he has been working on with Ravenna Township where a neighborhood area is experiencing flooding during storm runoff and snowmelt conditions Ravenna Township is looking into potential solutions for this neighborhood Resizing culverts could improve the situation but not completely solve it. The VRWJPO has been working with the Water Resources Unit at Dakota County to determine whether stormwater storage upstream of 200th Street could provide water quality improvements and stormwater management that could aid in solving the flooding issues.

Travis then gave a brief update on the Watershed Based Implementation Funding which is provided through a Clean Water Fund Grant administered by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources which provides funds to projects identified within the watershed. The VRWJPO will receive funding from the grant for a subset of the projects identified for funding within the watershed. The VRWJPO will receive funding for several projects. The VRWJPO will receive approximately \$490,000 for the grant projects.

Mark Ryan is planning to attend the Ravenna Township meeting on February 11th to give a final project update on the Records Trail project. He is also obtaining input from the Township related to ravine drainage issues that leave sediment on County Road 54 adjacent to the Vermillion River after storm events.

Mark then discussed comments received about high water/flooding around a wetland area west of the City of Vermillion off of County Road 62. Staff are coordinating with the Dakota SWCD and other partners about the potential issues and solutions for the area, such as culvert cleaning and sediment removal. Staff are considering creating a map of the area of interest and starting a discussion with local landowners about the issues and the various components of the problem (ground water, surface water, conveyance, storage).

Brian Watson of the Dakota SWCD reported on results of groundwater monitoring data and surface water monitoring data for an area east of the City of Vermillion near Goodwin Avenue which showed the total flow in the Vermillion River at Goodwin Avenue was twice what it had been compared to in a normal year. He also noted that a nearby open water wetland has grown significantly in area over the last few years. The SWCD received many calls about high water in these areas.

Brian also reported that we are about in the middle of the Wetland Restoration in Castle Rock Township.

Melissa Bokman Ermer provide an update on the Webster Wetland Restoration in the City of Elko-New Market which is funded in-part through the Watershed Based Implementation Fund grant through the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. The project is now complete, and all documentation has been submitted. Melissa will be compiling the information and submitting an invoice to the VRWJPO for reimbursement of the grant funding.

Mark Zabel noted that Jen Dullum left employment with Dakota County as of January 8, 2021. Jen's position with the VRWJPO through Dakota County was primarily a public communications and outreach position which supported social media, website maintenance, as well as partnering with cities and other local units of government for outreach and civic engagement. Mark is hoping to fill the vacant position quickly. The VRWJPO needs an individual with technical capability and communications skills. The VRWJPO has been active in Watershed Partners and participating in Water Stewards which is a volunteer driven activity and this position would support those volunteer efforts.

Mark also discussed the Vermillion Stewards contract that is an annual contract with the Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) for carrying out several volunteer events each year. This contract originally was managed like a grant. the contract was restructured and is now performance based tied to deliverables specific to the VRWJPO. This program is something that is coordinated through the public communications and outreach position. The contract will be revisited once the open position is filled.

Troy Kuphal of the Scott SWCD mentioned that they will be doing a subwatershed assessment in the headwaters area that will be funded through the Watershed Based Implementation Funding program of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. Completing a subwatershed assessment will identify potential conservation projects that can then be prioritized and implemented in the future.

A discussion was then had about the open position. Commissioners would like position to be more communications and outreach focused to be able to manage those activities internally rather than through outside consultants.

Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, and passed 3-0 roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 2:43 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: February 25, 2021, at 1 p.m. Location to be determined.

Mark Zabel

Administrator for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Attest



Commissioner Hamann-Roland Secretary/ Treasurer



Date