



Meeting Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board Meeting
August 26, 2021, 1 p.m., In-person and 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

Al Full, Farmer Resident in Empire Township
Melissa Bokman-Ermer, Scott County, VRWJPO Co-administrator
Travis Thiel, Dakota County, Senior Watershed Specialist
Mark Ryan, Dakota County, VRWJPO Watershed Engineer
Brita Moore-Kutz, Dakota County, VRWJPO Communications and Outreach Specialist
Paula Liepold, Dakota County, Public Outreach and Communications
Brian Watson, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District, Manager
Jessica Schaum, City of Apple Valley
Bruce Johnson, Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District, Supervisor

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 1:11 p.m.

2. Roll Call

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

3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

Mr. Al Full addressed the Board with comments describing his background. Mr. Full described drainage developments adjacent to and through his farm carrying tile drainage and runoff water to the Vermillion River. Mr. Full also described developments associated with the Empire Wastewater Treatment Plant. Mr. Full requests that the VRWJPO work with the Metropolitan Council and Empire Township to address stormwater management and drainage issues in the area near his farm.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Agenda
 - b. Approval of Minutes from the July 22, 2021, meeting
- Commissioner Hamann-Roland requested a minor correction to item 6a related to discussion about invasive species and their impact on soils.

c. Acceptance of Treasurer's Report

Res. No. VRW 21-19: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, Second by Commissioner Wolf and passed on a 3-0 vote to approve the consent agenda.

5. Approval of Expenses

Travis Thiel presented the current expenses for approval as shown on item 5.

Res. No. VRW 21-20: Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Hamann-Roland and passed on a 3-0 vote to approve the expenses as presented.

Business Items

6a. Public Hearing to Receive Comments on and Adoption of the Draft Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2022 Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

Chair Slavik introduced the item and asked Travis Thiel to provide a summary overview. Travis Thiel commented that revenues and expenses for the draft 2022 budget had not changed from what had been discussed at the July VRWJPB meeting, with revenues of \$1,942,600, expenses of \$1,778,860, and a cash reserve of \$163,740 or 8.4% of the budget total. Tax capacity ratio between the two Counties changed slightly. The overall estimated net tax capacity for the VRWJPO Tax District is 253,898,257. 245,684,638 or 96.75% in Dakota County and 8,251,465 or 3.25% in Scott County. With a proposed levy of \$1,000,000 for the VRWJPO Tax District overall, the distribution between the Counties is \$967,500 in the Dakota County portion and \$32,500 in the Scott County portion. Although the levy in the Dakota County portion of the VRWJPO Tax District rose slightly (0.09%) the tax rate fell (by 0.17% to 0.3444%) as did the impact (to \$10.28, a reduction of 0.19%). The levy in the Scott County portion of the VRWJPO Tax District fell by 2.6%, the rate fell by 7.4% to 0.352%, and the impact by 1.3% to \$12.42. Travis described the comparisons for tax levy, rate, and impact values from 2021 in comparison to those proposed for 2022 for both Dakota and Scott County portions of the VRWJPO Tax District. Travis also presented a graph depicting the levy and rate history for the tax levy and rate for the Dakota County portion and Scott County portion of the VRWJPO Tax District. The graphs show a general decrease in levy and rate over time.

Chair Slavik noted that the adoption of the Draft 2022 VRWJPO Budget and Levy sets the potential levy maximum for the VRWJPO Watershed Management Tax District for 2022. That does allow for some potential changes to the budget between now and December when a final Budget and Levy are adopted, but limits a levy request to be no more than what is adopted at this meeting and by the respective County Boards at their upcoming meetings.

Res. No. VRW 21-21: Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Hamann-Roland and passed on a 3-0 vote to close the Public Hearing on the Draft VRWJPO 2022 Budget and Vermillion River Watershed Management Tax District Levy at 1:32p.m.

Res. No. VRW 21-22: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, Second by Commissioner Wolf and passed on a 3-0 vote to adopt the Draft VRWJPO 2022 Budget and Vermillion River Watershed Management Tax District Levy.

6b. Mid-term Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan Review

Chair Slavik introduced the item. Travis Thiel provided a summary of the process used to categorize actions within the Implementation Section of the Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan and

their prioritization by the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission (WPC). Travis presented the results of prioritization by the WPC in a table that was sorted according to scores provided by the members of the WPC. Travis requested the Board members add any comments regarding their consideration of the priorities shown and any direction for staff going forward to guide applying the outcomes to development of future workplans and budgets for their implementation.

Chair Slavik asked if members had any comments or questions. Commissioner Hamann-Roland inquired whether addressing extreme weather events is included in the Plan. Travis responded that the Standards, which meet or exceed state and federal requirements, require the implementation of best practices that address impacts of these types of events. A short discussion on this issue occurred. Commissioner Hamann-Roland commented her priority is that policy should address resiliency to changing conditions and that some focus be placed on invasive species. Commissioner Hamann-Roland commended staff for working with schools.

Commissioner Slavik commented on the limited resources to achieve the various goals in the plan and that historically the focus has been to prioritize use of grant funds to do so and that historical process matches the goals to this current Board. A short discussion occurred about implementation of buffer requirements. Commissioner Slavik asked about the cost of Plan action items accomplished and noted the need to match efforts with outcomes. A discussion occurred about coordination of efforts with education and outreach.

6c. Watershed Tour Planning

Chair Slavik introduced the item. Travis commented that staff have sites to showcase on the tour but have questions about the best format for a tour given the current guidance around COVID-19 and the Delta variant. Specifically, should the tour be virtual or in-person with appropriate protocols.

Commissioner Slavik stated that he is not in favor of a virtual tour or holding a tour in September.

Commissioner Slavik suggested that staff plan to show some project sites close to Farmington for the VRWJPB members in conjunction with the next VRWJPB meeting and reserve the regular tour for the Spring of 2022. Commissioners concurred with this proposal.

Staff Reports

Brita Moore-Kutz has been working on an accessible Communications Plan for the VRWJPO. Brita will be involved with two educational opportunities: one is a Pollution Prevention Day speaking to 4th graders at an elementary school in Farmington about pollution prevention, the other is participation in Outdoor Education Days with the Dakota SWCD. The VRWJPO was at the Dakota County Fair and Brita engaged with those who visited our display. Brita also attended the Salt Symposium and learned about salt uses and mitigation.

Mark Ryan presented a summary of implementation projects completed on a subwatershed basis from 2016 through 2020. This was also a request of VRWPC member Carolyn Miller as discussed during our mid-term evaluation process. The summary shows the amounts spent on project implementation as compared to those planned within the 2016-2025 Plan. Commissioner Slavik asked if there are constraints within the Plan about the amounts that can be spent in each subwatershed for implementation. A discussion followed about the flexibility of the Plan to pivot and adjust to opportunities as needed unless state funding is being utilized because of restrictions with State funds. Mark Ryan also noted that he has been working on design elements for a ravine stabilization project in Ravenna Township and an application has been made for BWSR Competitive Clean Water Grant funding to implement that project. The project has a \$495,000 grant request and a \$695,000 total project cost.

Travis Thiel reported that he and Mark Ryan have been working with the Dakota County Transportation Department on preliminary layouts for an interchange on U.S. Hwy 52 and Dakota County Road 66 (200th Street). This is a challenging area due to wetlands and floodplain and proximity to the confluence of South Branch and the Vermillion River, as well as private landowners, state lands, and easements. An open house is being held on September 28th from 4:30PM to 6:30PM at the United Steelworkers Local Union Hall near the City of Vermillion where Transportation Department staff will be receiving comments. Travis also applied for a BWSR Clean Water Fund Competitive Grant for a stormwater management project in Foxborough Park in the City of Lakeville on North Creek. Lastly, Travis attended a soil health demonstration event at the end of July. The site is using Kernza, a perennial wheatgrass, as a cropping practice to eliminate tillage and allow soil structure development. There is some market development for the Kernza grain product, but it is still in its infancy but has promise for growth. Brian Watson added that the field day was co-sponsored by the Clean Rivers Partnership (formerly Cannon River Partnership).

Melissa Bokman-Ermer commented that the amount shown in the table presented on subwatershed implementation showed a smaller amount for the Upper Vermillion subwatershed. There Conservation has been implemented within the Scott County portion over the past five years directed toward the Conservation Reserve Program which is a United States Department of Agriculture program. Melissa displayed lots that have been purchased. The owner inquired whether fill could be used to build in an area that is wetland. Melissa met on-site with the owner and discussed the sequencing and needs of activities in a wetland as regulated under the Wetland Conservation Act. No other action has been taken for this property

Travis reported that the United States Army Corps of Engineers has reported approved the Braun Wetland Bank authorizing the initial release of credits. Mark Zabel will be working with Dakota County to establish procedures for the future sale of wetland credits for replacement mitigations as credits become available. Brian Watson provided some detail for the distribution of allocations among the partners in the wetland bank.

Adjourn


Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, Second by Commissioner Wolf and passed 3-0 vote to adjourn the meeting at 2:18 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, September 23, 2021, at 1 p.m. in Conference Room A at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, 4100 220th Street West, Farmington, MN.

Mark Zabel

Administrator for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Attest



Commissioner Hamann-Roland Secretary/ Treasurer

9/23/21
Date

