



Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission Meeting

October 13, 2021 – 4:00 p.m.
In-person and Zoom Videoconference

WPC Members in Attendance

Mark Henry Chuck Clanton
Josh Borton James Kotz
Ken Betzold Carolyn Miller
Andy Riesgraf

Staff in Attendance

Mark Ryan, VRWJPO
Brita Moore-Kutz, VRWJPO
Travis Thiel, VRWJPO
Paula Liepold, Dakota County

Others in Attendance

Curt Coudron, Dakota County SWCD

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Vice-chair Betzold at 4:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

All members present except Tony Wotzka and Stephen Hamrick.

3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

None.

4. Approval of Agenda

Chair Henry asked for approval of the agenda.

Motion by Commissioner Borton, second by Commissioner Betzold, to approve the agenda. The agenda was unanimously approved by a 7-0 vote.

5. Approval of Minutes

Chair Henry requested any adjustments to the minutes as presented. Upon hearing none, Chair Henry called for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2021, meeting of the WPC.

Motion by Commissioner Clanton, second by Commissioner Kotz, to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2021, meeting, as distributed. The minutes were approved by a 5-0 vote. Commissioners Henry and Miller abstained.

6. Business Items

a. VRWJPO Draft CIP Plan Document and Project Information

Mark Ryan described an initiative by the VRWJPO to develop long term planning for Capital Improvements as requested by the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (VRWJPB). The VRWJPB is requesting this to plan for long term expenditures on CIP especially for larger scale projects. Two challenges that are encountered is one, we don't know that we will have budget for all projects, and two, funding for many of our projects comes through grants and we cannot anticipate availability of applicable grant funding. What is being presented is a draft format outlining CIP for a five-year period. Mark presented a table showing the five-year CIP Plan showing projects broken out by subwatershed and showing the expected year of implementation/ expenditure. Some amounts shown are estimates to guide identifying future projects. Mark referred to grant applications for 2022 shown in the table for \$841,500 that are pending from Clean Water Fund (CWF) Competitive Grant funding through the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). Mark described the Watershed Based Implementation Fund Grant through BWSR that is Clean Water Funds allocated to the Vermillion River watershed area every two years through the life of the Legacy Amendment and assumptions for those funds in the CIP Plan. Commissioner Clanton asked if staff are relatively assured of the revenues identified in the Draft CIP Plan. Mark Ryan responded that the projected revenues are not guaranteed and so there is some uncertainty associated with those numbers. Commissioner Clanton suggested color coding to identify the levels of uncertainty. Commissioner Kotz asked if there was a certain time of year when grants are open for application. Mark and Travis Thiel responded that we generally look to apply to two grant opportunities and those generally happen at two different times, CWF Competitive late Summer and Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) which has two application periods, late Summer and Winter. Commissioner Kotz asked if those grants were all related to the Legacy funding. Travis replied that all CWF is Legacy funding through the Clean Water portion and CPL is also Legacy funding through the Outdoor Heritage portion. Travis described the CPL grant application for East Lake for Carp and Goldfish control. Commissioner Clanton asked if the VRWJPO ever applies for Federal Funding such as Section 319 funds through the Federal Clean Water Act. Mark and Travis identified that the VRWJPO has not recently applied for Federal Grant funds in part due to higher match requirements.

Mark then opened a second attachment (B) which outlined project expenditures by subwatershed, the amount of that project funding that came directly from VRWJPO funds, and what was identified for target expenditure in the Vermillion River Watershed Plan Implementation Section. Commissioner Clanton asked what the Watershed Plan column represented for expenditures. Mark commented that the column represents the planned target expenditures for the 10-year duration of the Plan. The Project Costs column reflects the expenditures to date (i.e. the first five years of the Plan). Mark noted that the diminishing amounts in Watershed Plan column reflect the priority applied to those subwatersheds going from upstream to downstream applying the concept that improvements upstream would support improvement going downstream. Mark went on to describe some of the challenges encountered in implementing projects in different areas of the watershed. Commissioner Clanton asked where the watershed was split between the Upper, Middle, and Lower Mainstem. Mark called up a map showing the division. Commissioner Miller asked why more attention isn't being paid to the Upper Mainstem such as stream restorations or other projects. Mark responded that Scott WSCD is pursuing an updated subwatershed assessment through WBIF funding. Mark also identified that some of the challenges in that area are in coordination and cooperation with private landowners in that area as much of the ditches and waterways are privately owned. Commissioner Miller expressed her hope that there will be opportunities for restorations in that area especially providing a

return toward a more naturalized environment. Curt Coudron asked if the plan accounts for grant funding or other dollars for CIP. Mark responded that the Plan does not include grant funding due to its uncertainty. Travis added that the Plan does identify the overall funding need and then identified what is a reasonable target for expenditures. Grant funding allows an acceleration of targeted expenditure. Travis was asking for input from the Watershed Planning Commission members on where priorities should be set for future CIP. Mark also asked for input on how we can overcome barriers that might be impacting getting projects in certain areas. Commissioner Henry asked if there is any interest or planning for reestablishing meanders in the South Branch. This may be possible if working with a willing partner. That type of work would require an easement if done with a CPL grant. Commissioner Kotz asked to review how subwatershed priorities were set. Travis described the consideration for watershed improvement overall based on subwatershed position and the potential impact to downstream areas.

7. Updates

a. Chairperson's Report

Chair Henry reported that he had a conversation with a fisherman from Winona who was fishing near a bridge on the South Branch. Commissioner Henry asked why he might be fishing here. The fisherman told him that he fishes all over southeast Minnesota and the largest trout he has caught has been out of the Vermillion River.

Commissioner Henry is seeing more cover crop applied in the watershed.

b. Staff Updates

Brita Moore-Kutz reported tabling at the Dakota County Fair and at the State Fair with Metro Watershed Partners promoting the Adopt-A-Drain Program. Brita is tabling with Confluence of Stewards in Fridley with Freshwater (Society) and recruiting Stewards for the program in the Vermillion River Watershed. WPC member Kotz and Riesgraf are certified Stewards through the program. Brita will be at the City of Lakeville's "A Day Without Water" at the City's Water Treatment Plant providing information about protecting water. Brita will be speaking with the Farmington Rotary Club about volunteer opportunities in the watershed in general, but particularly in Farmington. Brita will be attending the Minnesota Water Resources Conference along with other VRWJPO staff and several Dakota County staff as well. The Fall VRWJPO Newsletter is out. Brita is developing an RFQ for interpretive signs for select projects. Brita was at Whitetail Woods taking some pictures with there open house. The VRWJPO is beginning to explore the development of their own volunteer program(s).

Commissioner Clanton mentioned an Agricultural Chemical Reduction Effort meeting scheduled for Monday.

Mark Ryan opened a map/ air photo showing Erickson Park where a water quality improvement project is being implemented. A portion of the park is being converted to a wet pond that bounces up to an overflow to a sand filter filtration basin during significant runoff events.

Mark Ryan reported to the WPC on Open Meeting Law requirements under Section M.S. 13D.02. Since the Emergency Declaration on the COVID-19 Pandemic in Minnesota has been lifted, attendance remotely by interactive technology is limited to only qualified participants as identified in the Statute.

8. Adjourn

*Motion by Commissioner Betzold, second by Commissioner Clanton, to adjourn the meeting at 5:11 p.m.
The motion passed on an 7-0 vote.*

DRAFT