



Meeting Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board Meeting

December 2, 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 via teleconference

Others in Attendance

Al Full, Citizen

Bruce Johnson, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District, Supervisor

Mark Zabel, Dakota County, VRWJPO Administrator

Melissa Bokman-Ermer, Scott County, Watershed Co-administrator

Travis Thiel, Dakota County, VRWJPO Senior Watershed Specialist

Mark Ryan, Dakota County, VRWJPO Watershed Engineer

Brita Moore-Kutz, Dakota County, VRWJPO Communications and Outreach Specialist

Paula Liepold, Dakota County, Water Resources Education Specialist

Helen Brosnahan, Dakota County, Assistant County Attorney

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Commissioners Slavik and Wolf were in attendance. Commissioner Hamann-Roland witnessed the meeting via teleconference due to unforeseen circumstances she was unable to provide the required notice of appearance by interactive technology and therefore, appeared in a non-voting capacity.

3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

Al Full appeared and addressed the Board about his concern with drainage in the area around Biscayne Avenue and 190th Street and inquired if anything is being considered to address the concerns he had raised with various government entities. Mr. Full was informed that the VRWJPO has no new or additional information related to this issue. Mark Ryan stated that he had contacted the Engineer for the Township and hadn't received any new information but the township is seeking additional outside funds to support a project. There was discussion about the potential design considerations and funding. Mark Ryan offered that he could follow up with the Township Engineer to explore what the shortfall for the project might be.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Agenda
- b. Approval of Minutes from the October 28, 2021, meeting
- c. Acceptance of Treasurer's Report
- d. Approval of dates for 2022 Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (VRWJPB) meetings

Res. No. VRW 21-22: Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Slavik and passed on a 2-0 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 21-23: Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Slavik and passed on a 2-0 roll call vote to approve the expenses totaling \$480,845.31 incurred between September 13, 2021 and October 12, 2021.

Business Items

6b. Adoption of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2022 Final Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

Mark Zabel described minor changes to the final budget as compared to the draft presented in August. The changes reflect a reduction in expenses of \$25,700 and an increase in cash reserve by that same amount.

Res. No. VRW 21-24: Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Slavik and passed on a 2-0 roll call vote to adopt the VRWJPO 2022 Final Budget totaling \$1,942,600 and recommend a Vermillion River Watershed Management Tax District Levy of \$1,000,000 (\$32,500 in the Scott County portion of the watershed and \$967,500 in the Dakota County portion of the watershed).

6c. Authorize Execution of Joint Powers Agreement with Dakota County for the Wetland Health Evaluation Program

Mark Zabel described the VRWJPO's past payments for the Wetland Health Evaluation Program (WHEP) managed through the Dakota County Environmental Resources Department and the basis for no longer providing support. The request is for the Board to authorize the VRWJPO to participate in the WHEP. The JPA allows the VRWJPO to identify wetlands of interest and recruit volunteers for teams to evaluate wetlands. If the VRWJPO participates it will be responsible for supporting a team or teams and allocate funds annually when teams participate in the program. This is a five-year agreement.

Res. No. VRW 21-24: Motion by Commissioner Wolf, Second by Commissioner Slavik and passed on a 2-0 roll call vote to authorize the chair to execute a Joint Powers Agreement with Dakota County for participation in the Wetland Health Evaluation Program; subject to approval by the Dakota County Attorney's Office as to form.

6a. Presentation of Riparian landowner Survey Report

Amit Pradhananga from the University of Minnesota, Center for Changing Landscapes who does research on social and policy aspects of natural resource issues with a particular focus on water management presented on recent research completed for the VRWJPO on landowner perspectives

about water resources protection in the Vermillion River Watershed. The objective of the research is to understand landowner beliefs, norms, and behaviors associated with conservation practices and measures addressing water resources. The survey attempted to answer two questions:

- 1) What are landowner values and attitudes associated with water resources management?
- 2) What are differences in perceptions between the 2011 and 2021 surveys?

University of Minnesota project staff sent a self-administered survey to 1,000 randomly selected riparian landowners in the watershed. The surveys were sent from February to May 2021 and received a 25% response rate. The major topics surveyed were: beliefs about water resource protection and management, perspectives about conservation practices, and current and future conservation actions. Amit provided a summary of responses and an analysis of the survey and compared the current responses with those from 2011.

Analysis of the surveys established that landowners value water. Specifically, they value clean water, are concerned about water pollution, and believe it is a personal responsibility and obligation to protect water. Landowners also perceive the value of conservation positively with benefits to the community. Landowners trust local individuals and Soil and Water Conservation Districts for information about conservation practices but do not have as much trust in other governmental entities.

Commissioners inquired about how to effectively use the information developed from the survey in messaging about and delivering, conservation, protection, and management of water resources. Mr. Pradhananga stated a graduate student on the project team will conduct additional analysis of this project in thesis work and once completed, that information can be shared with the VRWJPO. Mark Zabel added that Brita Moore-Kutz has reviewed that report and incorporated recommendations from the survey into the VRWJPO Communications Plan.

6d. Model Ordinance Update for Implementation of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Standards

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

Staff Reports

Melissa Bokman-Ermer

Melissa reported an extension was not sought for the \$25,000 in Watershed Based Funding Implementation Grant for projects in the Scott County portion of the watershed and those funds will be released back to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

Paula Liepold

Paula mentioned Dakota County will host the traveling “We Are Water” exhibit from October 13 through December 5 at the Pleasant Hills Library in Hastings and an outdoor exhibit at Lebanon Hills Regional Park. Paula and Brita, as well as other county staff, are enhancing relationships with organizations to explore mutually beneficial participation in the exhibit and related events. Interviews will be conducted to tell water stories, with a focus on inclusion of stories that have been missed or ‘absent narratives’. Profiles of local farmers will also be included.

Travis Thiel

Travis reported he and Mark Ryan proposed two projects for Clean Water Funding through the competitive grant funding process: Ravenna ravines on the Sontag property and Foxborough Park in Lakeville. Both have been recommended for funding pending Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources Board approval.

Mark Ryan

Mark reported he and Travis had met with City of Farmington staff to review progress on the Direct Drainage Study in Farmington. A “heat map” was generated by the consultant identifying potential sites for practices addressing direct stormwater discharges to the river. There are challenges and constraints within the City addressing these issues due to historic development and shallow groundwater.

Brita Moore-Kutz

Brita highlighted her involvement in the “We Are Water” team and its development. This project touches on many of the principles in the VRWJPO communication plan in furthering coordination, collaboration, and consistent messaging. Brita is meeting with staff at the City of Farmington about potential volunteer and outreach opportunities.

Mark Zabel

Mark covered the end of terms for members of the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission (WPC). Ken Betzold has served out his full eligibility as a member and will be leaving the Commission. Carolyn Miller and Tony Wotzka have completed their three-year terms and have chosen not to request reappointment. The short-term challenge is the WPC has only six current members. The WPC needs at least five members for a quorum. Commissioner Slavik asked if there is a virtual option for WPC members to attend meetings. Mark Zabel indicated that the VRWJPO is following direction from Dakota County for attendance via teleconference. Helen Brosnahan verified the WPC is subject to the Open Meeting Law.

Adjourn


Chair Slavik adjourned the meeting at 2:34 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, January 27, 2022, 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 Secretary/ Treasurer

1/27/22
Date