



Meeting Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board Meeting

March 23, 2023, 1 p.m., In-person and Teleconference using Microsoft Teams

Board Members in Attendance

Dakota County Commissioner Bill Droste

Dakota County Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland

Scott County Commissioner Tom Wolf

Others in Attendance

Bruce Johnson, Dakota County SWCD, Supervisor

Brian Watson, Dakota County SWCD, Manager

Nikki Stewart, Dakota County, Environmental Resources Department Director (virtual)

Valerie Neppel, Dakota County, Groundwater Protection Supervisor

Paul Beaumaster, Assistant Dakota County Attorney, VRWJPO Counsel

Emily, Dakota County Attorney's Office, Legal Assistant

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

Travis Thiel, Dakota County, VRWJPO Senior Watershed Specialist

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

Paula Liepold, Dakota County, Water Resources Education Specialist (virtual)

Mark Zabel, Dakota County, VRWJPO Administrator

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 1 p.m.

2. Roll Call

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

3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

There were no audience comments.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Agenda
- b. Approval of Minutes from the January 26, 2023, Meeting
- c. Acceptance of Treasurer's Report

- d. Delegation of a Limited Authority for Contracts and Purchase Agreements to the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Administrator and Co-administrator

Res. No. VRW 23-05: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, Second by Commissioner Droste and passed on a 3-0 vote to approve the consent agenda, excepting Commissioner Droste abstained on approval of minutes.

5. Approval of Expenses

Mark Zabel presented the current expenses for approval as shown on item 5.

Res. No. VRW 23-06: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, Second by Commissioner Droste and passed on a 3-0 vote to approve the expenses totaling \$199,783.29 incurred between January 1, 2023, and March 14, 2023.

Business Items

6a. Candidate Consideration and Appointment to the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission

Mark Zabel informed the Board members that Brad Blackett had applied to serve on the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission (WPC). Mr. Blackett is an Apple Valley resident in the watershed living near Alimagnet Lake. Mr. Blackett is also a Minnesota Water Steward. Zabel also noted that Mr. Blackett's application was reviewed by the WPC with a recommendation for appointment. Commissioner Hamann-Roland noted that Mr. Blackett is known to her and is an informed and engaged citizen of Apple Valley and she recommended his appointment.

Res. No. VRW 23-07: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, Second by Commissioner Droste and passed on a 3-0 vote to appoint Brad Blackett to the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission with his first appointed term fulfilling the current vacant term ending December 31, 2025.

6b. Authorization to Begin Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan Update

Mark Zabel described the process set out in the Request for Board Action with the timeline beginning with the authorization from the Board with a target end date of February 2026. The process described is lengthy mirroring that which was applied for the 2016-2025 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan update. The first step after authorization is to send notice to review agencies and stakeholders requesting their input on issues and priorities for the Vermillion River Watershed for the next ten years. The contacts are allowed sixty days to respond. After the sixty-day response period the VRWJPO will hold an initial planning meeting to kickoff the planning process. Staff are requesting authorization to begin the Plan update process.

Res. No. VRW 23-08: Motion by Commissioner Droste, Second by Commissioner Hamann-Roland and passed on a 3-0 vote to authorize staff to begin the planning process for the update for the 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan.

6c. Presentation on Groundwater Levels in Dakota County

Valerie Nepl provided a presentation about groundwater levels in Dakota County. This presentation was recently provided to the Dakota County SWCD Board to provide information of interest regarding water levels in the area. Valerie described 15 wells which were recently (2021-2022) installed for the purposes of measuring changes in shallow groundwater (water table) and sampling for water quality. Dakota County has developed a public facing dashboard that will convey well and sampling information to the public. Most of these new wells sampled since their installation have shown water levels falling during last year's drought. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture installed 13 wells within the Hastings Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) and Dakota County staff are working to get the data from those wells posted to the dashboard. Commissioner Hamann-Roland asked if this is the extent of information available or is there data that can provide information on trends especially regarding drought. Valerie stated that the information presented so far was about shallow wells and groundwater there is also a cooperative network of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) observation wells that collect groundwater level information. Valerie selected a few wells from that network in the area that have a longer record. Commissioner Droste asked if Dakota County is collecting local weather data. Valerie commented that the weather information available has not been included on the dashboard but that is something that could possibly be added in the future. There are weather stations collecting data in Dakota County that is linked with the Groundwater Site but it is not currently linked with the dashboard data and noted that the dashboard data only reflects one year. Valerie then provided graphics describing water levels in each selected well over time. Overall wells in the metro area are rising, especially shown in wells in the eastern parts of Dakota County. These trends correlate with precipitation trends and higher amounts of rainfall in recent years. The water levels in wells also signal reductions as a result of droughts. Commissioner Wolf asked how long it takes for groundwater to recharge. Valerie responded that the answer to that question is dependent on local conditions, depth of aquifer, and where recharge occurs. Commissioner Hamann-Roland asked about trends. Zabel noted that the State Climatologist has identified that climatic changes being experienced in Minnesota are warmer winters, especially warmer overnight temperatures, and wetter with more rainfall overall, but rainfall is coming in more intense storm events. Valerie shared that the Metropolitan Council is doing some scenario modeling of groundwater for different possible climatic conditions. Commissioner Droste commented that it would be interesting to track city groundwater use over time as the area develops so as to track the multiple factors associated with groundwater.

6d. Discussion of Elko-New Market Water Appropriations

Mark Zabel briefly described the proposal by Niagara Bottling for their water bottling facility and the current request by the City of Elko-New Market amend their groundwater appropriations permit to increase from 135 million gallons per year to 365 million gallons per year, in part to accommodate the Niagara Bottling proposal. Staff are asking for Board direction and input regarding the potential to comment on the permit amendment request as the DNR has opened a thirty-day comment period for this. Zabel also provided examples of estimating city delivery of water on a per capita basis and recent agricultural groundwater appropriation

permit requests for comparison. Brian Watson noted that appropriation permits levels are set as a “not to exceed” amount and agricultural irrigators may not reach their allocated maximum, it depends on their water needs for that year. Commissioners discussed the potential to comment, what has been the VRWJPO’s past practice of commenting on these permits, and who has authority in this area. Zabel suggested some topic areas of possible comment, pumping test, conservation measures, or addressing uses, or the VRWJPO could choose not to comment. Commissioner Hamann-Roland suggested that comments could be generalized regarding policies of the VRWJPO. Commissioners discussed cities serving growth of residences and businesses in general and that water is provided to these users. Commissioners decided that ultimately the decision associated with an amendment to an appropriations permit is with the DNR and commenting is unlikely to affect that decision. No action was taken; staff will not provide comment.

6e. Presentation of Proposed Amendments to VRWJPO 2023 Budget

Mark Zabel described the need for budget amendments that normally occurs early in the fiscal (calendar) year after the VRWJPO receives information on the status of finances in the end-of-year financial report. This year, due to the transition of Dakota County Finance, which is the fiscal agent for the VRWJPO, to a new data base management system, the end-of-year financial report is delayed. The VRWJPO is using the best information currently available which is that provided through our final Treasurer’s Report for 2022 to make proposed amendments to the VRWJPO 2023 Budget. The presentation provided here is information only and intended to give the Board an opportunity to review and provide input to this process. There will be a request for Board action brought to the April 2023 VRWJPB meeting for approval of proposed amendments presented at that meeting. Zabel then presented the changes in line items where an increase or decrease in expenses is proposed. Zabel also presented changes in revenues. Overall, the proposed amendments to the 2023 budget result in total revised budgeted expenditures of \$3,750,680 with revenues of \$3,966,750, leaving a budgeted fund balance/cash reserve of \$216,070.

6f. Watershed Tour Planning for 2023

Mark Zabel noted that the VRWJPO has been providing a watershed tour for invited officials highlighting completed projects on odd numbered years. Thus, this year is a tour year and staff have discussed planning for this year’s tour. Paula Liepold has led the planning and coordination for our past tours and will lead our discussion today for potential options for this year’s tour. Paula led discussion about specific logistics regarding time-of-day and potential dates. Commissioners suggested the tour be held September 28th, perhaps scheduling the VRWJPB meeting for 11 a.m. and holding the tour in the afternoon. Invitees usually include County Board Members from Dakota and Scott Counties, SWCD Board Members from Scott and Dakota County SWCDs, City and Township officials, SWCD managers, and some state agency staff interested in specific projects. Commissioner Hamann-Roland suggested getting a date set so we have a target and consider adjustments if needed as we get closer to the event. Paula confirmed that we would schedule a tentative date and work on the arrangements such as contracting for the bus later. Commissioners agreed with going forward with that plan. Paula then suggested that staff have discussed a potential western tour or eastern tour. Paula

covered the potential site stops for the western tour and site stops for an eastern tour. Commissioners were in favor of a western tour. Paula thanked the Commissioners for their input and confirmed that staff would begin exploration and development for a western tour.

Staff Reports

Paul Beaumaster

Paul reported that he is working on amendments to some Joint Powers Agreements that should be coming before the Board at future meetings.

Travis Thiel

Travis mentioned the project at Foxborough Park in Lakeville and that the contractor bid came in under the engineer estimate so that project will go forward with construction anticipated this coming Summer.

Valerie Neppi

Valerie reported that private well testing is being offered by Dakota County in Eureka Township and Inver Grove Heights (outside the VRWJPO) this year. Valerie mentioned working with Metropolitan Council and MnDNR on planning for potential drought response.

Brita Moore-Kutz

Brita mentioned that the VRWJPO switched the email platform to try to improve open rate of email newsletters. That includes an increase in frequency of release of newsletters to quarterly. Commissioner Hamann-Roland asked about addressing emails and how that is processed. Brita mentioned she is also planning a special (non-cycle) earth month newsletter to include promotion of local earth day activities. Brita mentioned that she will be tabling at the City of Lakeville's Earth Day event. The 2022 VRWJPO Annual Report is being compiled and will be presented at next month's VRWJPB meeting. The VRWJPO is completing six interpretive signs which are currently in fabrication. The signs will be placed this Spring at selected sites that have public access. Commissioner Hamann-Roland noted that the Water Resources Engineer position had been posted with the Apple Valley Eco-advocates and that she also posted it on her Dakota County site.

Mark Zabel

Mark reported on his and Valerie Neppi's attendance at a meeting coordinated by Metropolitan Council staff for Subregional Water Supply Planning held 3/15/23. The meeting was held as part of Metropolitan Council's efforts for updating the Water Section of their 2050 planning. Attendees were grouped at tables representing their subregions and were tasked with identifying issues, priorities, and management needs for their specific subregions.

Commissioner Droste commented that he is excited to be participating on the VRWJPB.

Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, Second by Commissioner Droste and passed on a 3-0 vote to adjourn the meeting at 2:41 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, April 27, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. in Conference Room A at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, 4100 220th Street West, Farmington, MN.

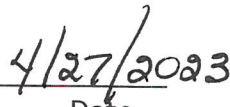
Respectfully submitted by

Mark Zabel
Administrator for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Attest



Commissioner Secretary/ Treasurer



Date