



## Meeting Minutes

### Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (JPB) Meeting

July 27, 2023, 1 p.m., in-person and virtual via Microsoft Teams

#### Board Members in Attendance

Dakota County Commissioner Mike Slavik  
Dakota County Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland  
Scott County Commissioner Tom Wolf

#### Others in Attendance

Dakota County Commissioner Bill Droste, VRWJPB alternate  
Bruce Johnson, Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District Supervisor  
Nikki Stewart, Dakota County, Environmental Resources Department Director  
Jennifer Wolf, Assistant Dakota County Attorney, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) Counsel  
Travis Thiel, Dakota County, VRWJPO Senior Watershed Specialist  
Brita Moore-Kutz, Dakota County, VRWJPO Communications and Outreach Specialist  
Brian Watson, Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Manager  
Paula Liepold, Dakota County, Water Resources Educator  
Valerie Neppl, Dakota County, Groundwater Protection Unit Supervisor  
Jessica Schaum, City of Apple Valley (Virtual)

#### Agenda

##### 1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 1 p.m.

##### 2. Roll Call

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



### **3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda**

No comments.

### **4. Approval of Consent Agenda**

- a. Approval of Agenda
- b. Approval of Minutes from the June 22, 2023 Meeting
- c. Acceptance of Treasurer's Report
- d. Schedule a Public Hearing to Receive Comments on the Draft Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2024 Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

*Res. No. VRW 23-19: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland to approve the consent agenda, second by Commissioner Wolf. Motion carried on a 3-0 vote.*

### **5. Approval of Expenses**

Valerie Neppl presented expenses from June 13-July 14, 2023, totaling \$119,366.63.

*Res. No. VRW 23-20: Motion by Commissioner Wolf to approve expenses, second by Commissioner Hamann-Roland. Motion carried on a 3-0 vote.*

### **6. A. Authorization to execute a Joint Powers Agreement with the City of Rosemount for the Public Works and Police Campus Infiltration Basins**

Travis Thiel presented the proposed agreement with Rosemount for cost-share assistance on new infiltration basins at the new Public Works and Police Campus. The City designed the basins to be larger and provide more infiltration than is required under the design requirements of the VRWJPO standards. The cost-share is estimated to be \$25,000.

*Res. No. VRW 23-21: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland to authorize the execution of the Joint Powers Agreement, second by Commissioner Wolf. Motion carried on a 3-0 vote.*



## **B. Recommend approval of the Service Agreement for the Administrator of the VRWJPO**

Nikki Stewart introduced the Service Agreement, which was presented as an information item at the June 22, 2023 VRWJPB meeting. Counsel Jennifer Wolf mentioned the change requested by the Board to specifically call out the liaison role with cities and townships in the watershed was made.

*Res. No. VRW 23-22: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland to approve the Service Agreement, second by Commissioner Wolf. Motion carried on a 3-0 vote.*

## **C. Update on 2023 Summer Tour with the Board of Water and Soil Resources and Partners in the Vermillion River Watershed and Scheduling of Special Meeting of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board**

Valerie informed the Board that because there will be a quorum of Commissioners on the collaborative tour with the Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) (Wednesday, August 23, 2023), we are legally required to notice it as a special meeting. Jennifer clarified that this is because the public must have the opportunity to hear any business discussion and suggested that if Commissioners are on the same bus, they not talk about VRWJPO business. The meeting also falls on a non-scheduled regular Board meeting day.

Paula Liepold presented an overview of the tour locations, starting at the GrandStay Hotel in Apple Valley and planning to visit the following:

1. East Lake Habitat Restoration
2. Erickson Park Stormwater Improvements
3. King Park Stormwater Reuse System
4. Rambling River Park Stream Restoration  
Lunch, Glenhaven
5. Groundwater Protection – Chuck Louis farm
6. Braun Wetland Bank Easement
7. Prairie Strips and Climate Resiliency – Kimber Contours
8. South Branch Nitrate Treatment Wetland

Commissioner Wolf asked about coordinating rides if people can't be there the whole time. Travis said staff can work with them on that.



Commissioners lauded staff for their hard work on the tour. All three Board members plan to attend, as well as Dakota County Alternate Bill Droste. Commissioner Slavik remarked that he'd like to contact local elected officials to encourage them to attend.

Brian shared some of the high-level policymakers who've RSVP'd to the tour, including the directors of Minnesota's divisions of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency.

Paula said that the tour will be cost-shared with BWSR. The VRWJPO has money set aside in the budget to cover that cost. She also shared a few more people who've responded that were of interest to the Board.

Brita Moore-Kutz explained that she'd emailed city and township clerks about the tour a couple weeks prior. Commissioner Hamann-Roland said she'd also like to contact mayors and city councilors in her area about the tour. Brian indicated that while the Commissioners' efforts are appreciated, space is limited on the buses.

*Res. No. VRW 23-23: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland to approve scheduling of the special meeting, second by Commissioner Wolf. Motion carried on a 3-0 vote.*

#### **D. Update on the Status and Next Steps for Developing the 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan**

Valerie directed Commissioners to view the initial comments from organizations from the kickoff 60-day comment period in the packet. She presented a PowerPoint listing high-level themes from the comments, including recent plans/assessments, climate resiliency, chloride, equity and inclusion, and desire for cross-organizational collaboration.

Next steps in the Plan development are securing a consultant for stakeholder engagement and scheduling an initial public meeting in September 2023. The Board will approve the scheduling of the public meeting at their regular August meeting.

Commissioner Slavik pointed out that there have been scheduling issues in the past due to farmers' planting/harvesting schedules, which could prevent them from being able to engage fully with the planning process. Valerie noted that the rounds of stakeholder engagement are planned during times that shouldn't conflict with agriculture.

Slavik asked if the Board would be approving the contract with the engagement consultant. Valerie said that the budget for the consultant is less than \$50,000, which means Board approval is not required.



Slavik urged elected officials to stay engaged in the Plan process.

*Information only.*

### **E. Presentation and Discussion on Proposed VRWJPO 2024 Draft Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy**

Valerie presented the first draft of the 2024 budget. For the annual Watershed Management Tax District Levy, the VRWJPO expects again to request \$1 million total in property taxes, with \$965,600 coming from Dakota County and \$34,400 from Scott County.

Total expenses and revenue are balanced at \$2,058,300 each.

Commissioner Wolf asked what the typical cash balance is for the VRWJPO throughout the year. Wolf clarified that he wanted to know about what the investment earnings number is based on.

Commissioner Hamann-Roland said she'd like more information about this as well. Staff will report back with this information.

Commissioner Slavik said that he thought the VRWJPO's cash balance was quite healthy, thanks in large part due to Watershed-Based Implementation Funding from BWSR. He commended Mark Zabel's direction to be conservative with budget expenses and revenues, which leaves the VRWJPO with wiggle room.

Valerie shared graphs showing the levy rates over time in both counties, which have decreased over time. The Board will hold a public hearing to adopt the draft budget at the August regular meeting.

*Information only.*

## **7. Staff Reports**

### **Nikki Stewart**

Nikki received 19 applications for the next Watershed Administrator. The Watershed Planning Commission Chair, Jim Kotz, will be participating in the initial short Zoom interviews. Commissioner Hamann-Roland commended Valerie Neppel for her excellent interim leadership.

### **Jennifer Wolf**



Paul Beaumaster will return as the VRWJPO Counsel in September, as his duties with the Criminal Division at the Dakota County Attorney's Office will conclude. Commissioners thanked Counsel Wolf for covering legal support for VRWJPO.

#### **Brian Watson**

Brian reported on a change to SWCD regulations at the Legislature (State Statute 103C), that SWCDs are no longer required to do comprehensive planning. Part of that is because outside the 7-county Metro, watersheds used the One Watershed, One Plan model. The Metro area abides by different regulations. With so many plans used by the County and its watersheds, planning specific to the SWCD is just another exercise. The SWCD doesn't have funding sources built-in for planning, so it relies on grants. They would like to work with other planning processes to further their goals, as Brian indicated in his comment letter for the VRWJPO plan kickoff.

#### **Travis Thiel**

The previous Thursday, Travis attended the public meeting at the Burnsville City Hall on the results of the feasibility study for possible alum treatment on Alimagnet Lake with the cities of Apple Valley and Burnsville. The consensus of the room, mostly consisting of lake associations, was that alum treatment should move forward. They were concerned about what would happen with the plant aquatic invasive species (AIS) with less algae, which the cities can manage with herbicide. The VRWJPO plans to apply for Clean Water Fund grant money and work with the lake associations to protect the lake from AIS.

#### **Brita Moore-Kutz**

Brita managed the VRWJPO table at the City of Hastings's Party in the Park in mid-July, which was attended by more than 1,000 people. She handed out Stormwater Crosswords. She'll also be tabling at the Dakota County Fair Natural Resources Building and ordered pencils and dog waste pickup bags for handing out to guests.

Brita also met recently with Kathy Lepley, the graphic designer of the VRWJPO interpretive signs, when Kathy was visiting Minnesota. They toured several the interpretive signs already in place that Kathy designed.

#### **Melissa Bokman-Ermer (sent via email)**



Melissa forwarded the tour calendar invite to the Scott County Board and other officials and shared the Request for Proposals for Stakeholder Engagement consultants for the 2026-35 Watershed Plan on the Scott County website.

Commissioner Slavik added prior to adjournment that he went on the Southeast Irrigator Tour in the North Cannon River Watershed, along with farmers, SWCDs, and the Commissioners of Agriculture and Department of Natural Resources. He would like them to invite more local government officials on those tours.

## 8. Adjourn

*Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland, seconded by Commissioner Wolf. The motion passed on a 3-0 vote to adjourn at 2:05 p.m.*

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, August 24, 2023, at 1 p.m. in Conference Room A at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, 4100 220<sup>th</sup> Street West, Farmington, MN.

Respectfully submitted by

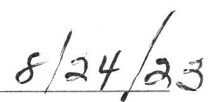
Brita Moore-Kutz

Communications & Outreach Specialist for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Attest

  
Commissioner

Secretary/ Treasurer

  
Date