



Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting (formerly Watershed Planning Commission)

November 20, 2024 – 4:30 p.m.

In-person and Microsoft Teams Videoconference

CAC Members in Attendance

Brad Blackett
Josh Borton
Kevin Chamberlain
Steve Hamrick
Andy Riesgraf
Sandy Weber

VRWJPO Staff in Attendance

Travis Thiel, Administrator
Brita Moore-Kutz, Communications & Outreach Specialist

Others in Attendance

Curt Coudron, Resource Conservationist, Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Josh Borton at 4:35 p.m.

2. Roll Call

All members present except Jim Kotz.

3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

No comments.

4. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Sandy Weber to approve the agenda, seconded by Brad Blackett. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

5. Approval of Minutes from the August 14, 2024, Meeting

Motion by Brad Blackett to approve the minutes, seconded by Steve Hamrick. Motion carried on a 4-0 voice vote (Sandy Weber abstained).

6. Business Items

a. Recommend Adoption of the Final Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2025 Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

Travis Thiel presented the final budget and levy. There were recent changes to the budget based on tax information received from Scott County, updates to planned Dakota and Scott SWCD programming, cash matches required for Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) grant projects, and updates from the Dakota County Finance Department affecting revenue projections for the VRWJPO.

The Watershed will have a lower-than-usual cash reserve in 2025, though Travis said he does not expect that to continue in 2026. Due to decreases in tax capacity in the watershed areas, which came to light after the draft budget and levy were approved, the tax levies for both counties were also lowered.

Brad Blackett asked if Dakota County as a whole is experiencing budget reductions due to the lower tax capacity. Travis explained that the draft tax district levy for the watershed was approved in September and that the VRWJPO cannot levy more than that amount in the final version. To keep the tax impact per household the same as the draft levy projected, the dollar amount of the final levy was lowered as well.

Motion by Kevin Chamberlain to recommend adoption of the budget to the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board, seconded by Andy Riesgraf. Motion carried on a 6-0 voice vote.

b. Approval of 2025 Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee Meeting Dates

Travis provided some context on recent discussions with the Joint Powers Board regarding the CAC meeting structure. The Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) establishing the VRWJPO was undergoing revisions, including striking reference to Open Meeting Law regarding CAC meetings. Based on legal opinion on Open Meeting Law, the CAC would be able to meet virtually to provide review and comment on items that come before them, while recommendations to the Joint Powers Board must be completed in person to comply with the law.

The planned dates for 2025 CAC meetings are:

- February 12
- May 14
- August 13
- November 19

Motion by Sandy Weber to approve the dates for 2025, seconded by Andy Riesgraf. Motion carried on a 6-0 voice vote.

c. Update on Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee Member Terms and Status

Sandy Weber is currently completing an interim term (previously an open incumbent seat) on the CAC. Travis asked her to send him notification if she plans to keep serving and begin her first official term.

Josh Borton's term ends at the end of 2025, which is also the end of his eligibility. He would have to take a year off from the CAC before he could serve again, though new proposed language for the JPA would allow members with expiring eligibility to continue until a replacement is found. There was also proposed language to open eligibility to residents of anywhere in either Dakota or Scott counties, not just those residing in the watershed.

Information only.

d. Comments on Revised Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Communication Plan

Brita Moore-Kutz presented the 2025 Communication Plan. The document is organized to be more digestible for other audiences, rather than large amounts of text as previous versions of the plan had used. The plan contains target audiences, key messages, and action items.

Staff hope to increase community awareness of the VRWJPO, the natural resources in the watershed, and stewardship activities people can take on.

Brad Blackett complimented staff on the recent video with Senior Watershed Specialist Kelly Perrine at Alimagnet Lake, discussing the alum treatment project there. The video was shot by the City of Apple Valley, but received strong engagement and represented the VRWJPO well. Brita added that she's pursuing stronger communications relationships with local government units (LGUs) in the watershed.

Information only.

7. Updates

a. Chairperson's Report

None.

b. Staff Updates

Curt Coudron

- Implementing projects such as Water and Sediment Control Basins and Grassed Waterways with private landowners.
- Held pilot Lawns Reimagined classes earlier in the summer.
- Third round of Landscaping for Clean Water grant applications is being processed. There were 16 projects in the Vermillion River Watershed in 2024.

Brita Moore-Kutz

- Hosted a table for VRWJPO at the Dakota County Fix-It Clinic at the Pleasant Hill Library in Hastings the previous weekend.

Travis Thiel

- The revised JPA will go before both County Boards following a recommendation from the JPB. The new version changes the name of the Watershed Planning Commission to the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). *Note: At the time of minutes transcription, this change has gone through and is reflected in this document.*
- Travis and Water Resources Engineer Jeff Dunn hosted a training with Vermillion Township in October to assist them with meeting the watershed's erosion and sediment control Standards. They intended to show township officials what they needed to do if someone approached them about a permit for grading activities. City and County staff use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps to analyze the areas, but it proved difficult to instruct township officials to use GIS maps. Townships generally do not have staff capacity to adequately enforce the Standards. VRWJPO manages the permitting program for Eureka Township, but that would not be feasible for all townships in the watershed. Instead, staff propose to change VRWJPO erosion and sediment control standards to state NPDES standards, which require permits for land disturbances of one acre or more. This would also be consistent with the neighboring North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization. LGUs can set their own permitting ordinances to be stricter than VRWJPO's if they prefer. This and any other Standards revisions would come up for approval at the same time as the next Watershed Plan in 2026.
- VRWJPO received an application for the Community Advisory Committee. Travis distributed it to the Chairs of the CAC and JPB. The applicant is a Rosemount resident.
- The VRWJPO is proposing to implement a five-year agreement with Dakota County SWCD for services, which aligns with Dakota County's agreement with the SWCD. The equivalent agreement with Scott SWCD will remain at one year.

8. Adjourn

Motion by Kevin Chamberlain to adjourn, seconded by Steve Hamrick. Motion carried on a 6-0 voice vote.