BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

BARNESVILLE, MINNESOTA 56514

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MINUTES FOR MANAGERS’ MEETING
January 25, 2016

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), held their regular meeting on Monday, January 25, 2016, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office. BRRWD Managers present were Gerald L. Van Amburg, Mark T. Anderson, John E. Hanson, Breanna L. Kobiela, Troy E. Larson, Catherine L. Affield, and Peter V. Fjestad. BRRWD Staff attending included: Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator, and Erik S. Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI). Others attending included: Lyle Hovland and Stephanie Miranowski, Wilkin County Commissioners; Robert Zimmerman, Engineer, and Michael Redlinger, Manager, City of Moorhead; Eric Dodds, Advanced Engineering & Environmental Services, Inc. (AE2S); Pat Otto, Trana Rogne, Don Nelson, and Marcus Larson, MnDak Upstream Coalition; and landowners: Jerry Nordick, Jared Nordick, Bradley Nelson, Jay Nord, and John Ready.

Chairman Van Amburg called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM and announced that the proceedings were being recorded to aid in the preparation of the minutes.

Secretary's Report. The Board reviewed draft minutes for the 01/11/16 annual meeting. Anderson noted one correction. Motion by Larson to approve the minutes, subject to correction. Seconded by Fjestad. Approved.

Treasurer's Report. The Board reviewed the BRRWD's financial status reports, including the total 2015 revenue/expenditures for the general and administrative levies. Albright noted that both the general revenue and expenditures are down somewhat from 2014, while administrative expenditures are about average at 1.44% of the administrative levy ($250,000). Cash on hand is $483,488.48. The total income for the year is $82,049.60, and income since the last meeting is $75,046.55, including County 2015 delinquent tax payments for property and ditches/projects from Becker ($6,308.97), Otter Tail ($3,078.89), and Wilkin ($17,818.59) and a reimbursement from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) for the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) ($47,840.10). Albright explained that the 2009 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding has been closed out, and the funds were allocated to the respective ditch systems/projects. Albright distributed the Managers' 2015 W-2 forms.

Business brought before the Board included:

Permit No. 16-001, Dwight Mickelson. Applicant proposes a 54.9 acre wetland restoration within the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM)/Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) easement boundary in Section 16, Parke Township, Clay County. The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) prepared the engineering design. Mickelson, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), BWSR, and the Clay Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will be responsible for the project operation and maintenance. Jones noted that the Board had previously reviewed this application. BWSR provided additional information and changed the applicant to the landowner. He recommended permit approval. Motion by Anderson to approve Permit No. 16-001. Seconded by Kobiela. Approved.

Permit No. 16-002, Ed Stellmach. Applicant proposes to install 80 acres of pattern tiling in the SE¼, Section 8, Atherton Township, Wilkin County, outletting to a natural grassed waterway that eventually drains to the south tributary of Whisky Creek. Motion by Hanson to approve Permit No. 16-002, subject to our standard tiling disclaimers. Seconded by Larson. Approved.
Duane Boeder Complaint. Albright visited with Frank Schindler last week regarding Kevin Boeder's complaint about Schindler's removal of an approach in Section 33, Barnesville Township, Clay County. Albright plans to draft a list of options regarding this issue for Schindler and the Boeder family's review.

Bryan and David Henderson Waterway Concern. A landowner informational meeting was held on 01/22/16 to present HEI's survey information to the landowners and to gather input regarding possible options to address Ron Conzemius' farming in the waterway in the SW¼, Section 27, Manston Township, Wilkin County. Albright reported that the general consensus at the meeting was to contact Terry Nielsen, the out-of-state landowner of the NW¼, Section 27, Manston Township, and the renter, David Abel, about cleaning the natural waterway on his property to help drain area water north to the Manston Slough project.

This part of the waterway hasn't been surveyed, and Albright suggested that HEI could do that work this spring. Albright discussed the waterway drainage route to Manston Slough and noted that Tom Arnhalt plans to meet with him on Wednesday. Arnhalt farms in Sections 20 and 21, Manston Township, and finds it very difficult to work around this waterway, which is in poor condition with erosion and no buffers. Arnhalt was interested in rerouting the waterway straight west of Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 9, which would require a petition for a project to extend Project No. 21, Wilkin County Ditch (C.D.) No. 13-Lateral.

Albright pointed out that Arnhalt could also improve his ability to farm the quarter by squaring up buffers along the waterway. **Motion by Fjestad to authorize HEI to conduct the additional referenced survey in the NW¼, Section 27, Manston Township. Seconded by Anderson. Approved.**

Clay/Wilkin County Line Drainage Concerns. An informational meeting was held on 01/15/16 to review HEI's survey information and discuss possible options regarding drainage concerns on the county line west of T.H. No. 75 between Wolverton and Holy Cross Townships. The landowners might be interested in a new drainage ditch installation on the south side of the county line that would carry water directly to the Red River. The Board discussed downstream landowner concerns regarding the condition of the outlet on the Red River and a possible tiling alternative. Jones estimated that a preliminary engineering analysis would cost about $1,000-$1,500 to look at drainage options. **Motion by Fjestad to authorize HEI to provide an analysis of the existing survey data to evaluate potential project options for the area landowners' review. Seconded by Anderson. Approved.**

Project No. 77, Clay C.D. No. 51-Lateral No. 3. Albright gave a brief report on the status of the project development and the Norby appeal/lawsuit. The Court has not yet set a date for the hearing. BRRWD Attorney Tami Norgard, Vogel Law Firm, is still investigating our insurance coverage for the lawsuit. Albright explained that the appeal costs are covered under Drainage Law as the project's expense, but the BRRWD insurance carriers should cover the lawsuit costs. There is also a possibility that the two litigants might work out a land deal that could put an end to this ongoing drainage dispute.

Project No. 56, Manston Slough Restoration. The staff will work on the final project budget to determine if the costs exceeded the bond sale amount. If so, the BRRWD will split the overage with the local landowners, according to the Appraisers' Report (1/3 benefited landowners-2/3 BRRWD).

Project No. 49, Oakport Flood Mitigation. Ulteig Engineers, Inc. (UEI), has scheduled the Phase 4 preconstruction meeting on Friday, January 29, 2016, at 11:00 AM, in their Fargo office. Attorney Corey Elmer, Vogel Law Firm, has about three temporary easements for Phase 4 that still need to be acquired before construction begins this spring.

Albright noted that the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority (DA) has requested that all the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) signers provide information about their flood control expenditures. He will provide a report of what the BRRWD has spent in the last several years on our flood control projects, including Oakport Township and the City of Georgetown.
Project No. 39, Georgetown Levee. Albright forwarded a final billing for approximately $200,000 to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to close out the Georgetown grant. The grant amendment, which added $109,000 to cover the final project costs, will expire on 03/31/16.

The Board discussed the Greywind house condemnation. US Bank is working with Greywind to revise his old home loan by amending the legal description to add his new house. As part of the condemnation proceeding, the BRRWD was required to submit a check for the appraised value of Greywind’s old house ($20,000). If the Court awards Greywind the $20,000, he can return it to us and not owe the BRRWD anything more for his new house.

Project No. 30, Clay/Wilkin Judicial Ditch No. 1 (J.D. 1). Albright is working with the landowners to revise the diversion petition to take water west along the south side of the County line to Wolverton Creek. Based on discussions with Attorney Norgard, the petition will be redrafted using a different provision under Chapter 103E, Minnesota Drainage Law.

Project No. 24, Wilkin C.D. No. 44. Albright is working with the landowners on a draft petition for Manston Township to abandon the north ditch, remove a deteriorated centerline pipe, and relocate the ditch on the south side of 170th ST as part of the legal ditch system in Sections 3 and 10, Manston Township.

Mediation Project Team (PT). The next PT meeting will be held on Thursday, January 28, 2016, in the Barnesville office at 1:30 PM.

South Branch of the Buffalo River. Albright has had conversations with area landowners who are interested in the possibility of restoring the river channel east of T.H. No. 9 and at the possible retention capabilities in Sections 10 and 11, Manston Township. Jones will have additional information to review with the PT on 01/28/16.

Barnesville Township Area Study. Albright will participate in two conference calls that are scheduled on 01/28/16 and 01/29/16 to discuss pipelines issues with the NuStar and Magellan pipeline companies.

Frank and Cheryl Schindler visited the office last Friday to discuss information they found on the DA's website showing a map that the BRRWD submitted with our funding application for the Barnesville Township project that shows the Schindler farm in the project area. The Schindlers have indicated that they do not want to be included in the proposed project. Albright assured Schindler that the BRRWD was not required to build the project according to the map that we submitted with the application. Albright noted that he also discussed the proposed project with the Schindlers to show them how it might operate and the possible benefits for their property.

WRP Projects. Albright visited with Cathee Pullman, NRCS State Conservationist, at the Red River Basin Commission Conference last week regarding NRCS funding for retention projects.

Stony Creek Comprehensive Project. Jones and Albright are working on easement value options. Chuck Anderson, ARC Appraisals, provided recent land sale information in the proposed project area.

The Board discussed upcoming grant opportunities for the Stony Creek and Wolverton Creek projects, including BWSR's Targeted Watershed Drainage Program, the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC), and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding. Jones noted that the LCCMR applications are due April 1, 2016. He is going to include the Stony Creek setback levee design for the LCCMR application, which funds both pilot and implementation projects and is weighted towards natural resource enhancement (nre)/water quality benefits. Van Amburg suggested that we contact our Lobbyist, Joel Carlson, as he has some LCCMR contacts. Albright noted that there will probably be no BRRWD projects in the 2016 bonding bill.
The Board discussed HEI's evaluation of the Stony Creek project, based on the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) STar Value scoring to see how the project would rank for funding if the BRRWD were RRWMB members. HEI used three scenarios for water detention for the 100-year flood for 7, 14, and 30 day durations. The 7-day scenario would be mainly for local storage with the longer durations having more impact on timing of flow contributions to the mainstem of the Red River. The duration of the gated storage greatly affects the STar Value and the potential RRWMB funding amount. The RRWMB is looking for detention sites with the capability to store water up to 30 days, but only on an "as needed" basis. Jones explained that geotechnical engineers would conduct a stability analysis on the embankment to determine the ability of the site to detain water for extended durations. He noted that the soils are sandy in parts of the Stony Creek site, where gated storage might not be an option.

Albright suggested that the BRRWD hold three regional meetings to discuss the new Revised Watershed Management Plan (RWMP), 2015 Minnesota Legislation regarding buffer strips in cooperation with the SWCDs, the BRRWD's long range plan regarding the need for flood damage reduction (fdr) projects, and to discuss ways to possibly finance these fdr projects, including RRWMB membership. Motion by Anderson to authorize staff to schedule the meetings and publicize the notices. Seconded by Fjestad. Approved.

Jared Nordick, Wilkin SWCD Supervisor, commented that Don Bajumpaa, District Manager, Wilkin SWCD, has new bufferstrip maps available that he could present at the meetings. The Board had an extended discussion regarding implementation of the new bufferstrip legislation.

**RWMP/Watershed District Enlargement (WDE).** Albright reported that the BWSR Northern Committee reviewed the BRRWD boundary corrections at their 01/13/16 meeting. The BWSR Board will review and approve it on 01/27/16. Van Amburg thought there would be no problems with approval. Jones has some work left on the draft RWMP, but for the most part, it is finished.

**Buffalo River/Upper Red River Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)/WRAPS.** Albright checked with Jim Ziegler, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), regarding the status of TMDL for the Buffalo River. It appears that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is now in charge of reviewing the TMDL/WRAPS documents, which is holding up final approval. Albright noted that our TMDL must be updated every 10 years. The current update process for the Buffalo River has already taken seven years and is still not completed.

The Upper Red River TMDL Study should be completed by 06/30/16.

The International Water Institute (IWI) is starting planning for their 2016 monitoring effort. Albright plans to schedule a meeting with River Watch and IWI monitoring staff to determine the monitoring sites.

**Elkton Township Wetland Restoration.** Changes to BWSR staff and their review process have delayed approval of the BWSR easement title opinions.

Chuck Anderson is still waiting for a response from Ziegler Construction's insurance company regarding his crop loss claim. Albright noted that the insurance adjustor shouldn't need anything more from the BRRWD.

**2015 Bufferstrip Legislation.** The DNR hosted a Buffer Mapping Initiative Webinar on 01/20/16. In December, the Board authorized HEI to review each of the 84 ditch systems under the BRRWD jurisdiction to determine which system needs to be brought into compliance with the new bufferstrip legislation. Wilkin County has provided easement exhibits for C.D. Nos. 3, 12, and 28. The office will forward those documents to the landowners for signature, and then we will record them with the County.
**Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee.** The Board plans to schedule a meeting with the Phase 1 landowners and assist them in submitting EQIP applications to NRCS by the 08/01/16 ranking/scoring signup period.

Jones had the Wolverton Creek Phase 2 Enbridge Ecofootprint grant application ($300,000) ready for the Board's approval and signature so that he can submit it by the 01/28/16 deadline. **Motion** by Anderson to authorize Chair Van Amburg to sign the Ecofootprint grant application. **Seconded** by Fjestad. **Approved.** Wilkin County has also applied for an Enbridge grant for the Nordick Demonstration Project. Albright wrote a letter of support for that application.

**Otter Tail River Restoration.** The BRRWD has scheduled a landowner informational meeting for Thursday, February 25, 2016, at 7:00 PM in the County Court Room, Breckenridge. Notices will be sent to the affected landowners.

**Special Agenda Items.**

**BRRWD Rules Update.** Albright provided the Board with a draft copy of our revised Rules for their review. He explained that most of the old Rules were included in the revised draft. Deviations from the old Rules are highlighted in yellow in the draft copy to facilitate review. Albright used the Wild Rice Watershed District's recently updated Rules as a template. The Board discussed the changes in the Rules revision. Changes include new subsurface tile regulations. Manager Larson raised concerns about target crests at various gauges on the Red River. Jared Nordick commented that once the river has crested, the tile pumps should be allowed to go back into operation. The Board briefly discussed if the BRRWD can mandate new regulations on existing permitted tile systems. They also discussed upcoming issues with compliance with the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit requirements. The Board can forward their comments to Albright to incorporate into the draft Rules. Work on the Rules revision will continue over the next several months. Once the Rules are completed, the BRRWD will submit the draft to BWSR/cities/agencies for a 60-day review period. The BRRWD is also required to hold a public hearing prior to final BWSR approval.

**BWSR Biennial Budget Request (BBR).** BWSR has notified the BRRWD that they will be soliciting planned activities and associated budgets for the FY2018-2019 in March 2016. They are working on a new way to submit the information in eLINK rather than with spreadsheets.

**Ditch Maintenance Services LLC.** Gene Berger from Wheaton, MN, sent the BRRWD information about his new cattail control service. He has developed an invert emulsion system to eliminate drift and place herbicide on target. Currently, the BRRWD uses LM Road Services LLC, who walk the ditches and apply the herbicide, which Albright felt did the best job on cattails. He noted that their rates are also cheaper. Albright will keep the information on file for future reference.

**Water Summit.** Governor Dayton's Clean Water Summit will be held Saturday, February 27, 2016, at the InterContinental Saint Paul Riverfront in St. Paul. Albright noted that the Izaak Walton League forum is scheduled for Saturday, March 12, 2016. He has been invited to make a presentation.

**March Conference.** The RRWMB and the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (RRBFDRWG) are holding their March Conference on March 23-24, 2016, in the Courtyard by Marriott, Moorhead. This year, the Drainage WorkGroup meeting will also be held in conjunction with the RRWMB Conference.

**Laserfiche.** The Board discussed an electronic document management system (EDMS), Laserfiche, to address office paperwork storage. Albright provided information regarding this product for the Board's review. He suggested that the Board could meet with Joel Blackford, OPG-3, for a presentation of the
system in the near future. The Board directed Albright and staff to meet with Blackford and to furnish them with a report.

**Area I 2016 Senior Envirothon.** Wilkin, West Otter Tail, and Becker SWCDs have asked the BRRWD to consider a donation to the Junior (10/05/16) and Senior (05/04/16) Envirothons to be held at the Prairie Wetland Learning Center in Fergus Falls. **Motion** by Hanson to contribute $200 to each County to support their participation in this event. **Seconded** by Kobiela. **Approved.**

The following bills were presented for approval:

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**Motion** by Fjestad to approve payment of the bills. **Seconded** by Affield. **Approved.**

At 9:00 PM, the Board had a brief recess to allow time for Manager Affield to arrive prior to a discussion regarding the FM DA 2016 budget. The Board reconvened at 9:20 PM.

**FM DA 2016 Budget.** The Board reviewed a proposed draft motion prepared by BRRWD Attorney Tami Norgard, Vogel Law Firm, as discussed and directed on 01/11/16, regarding the DA's 2016 budget, which is as follows:

**Proposed Motion to Approve Diversion Authority 2016 Budget**

I hereby make a motion to approve the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority’s proposed Fiscal Year 2016 proposed budget of $237.5 million, upon the following conditions:

1. Until the Minnesota DNR completes its environmental review, there will be no money spent on the following items:

   (a) Land Acquisition in the DCAI Phase I, for the Staging Area (WP-38), the Wild Rice Control Structure, the I-29 Bridge and Road Raise, the CR-81 Bridge and Road Raise, the BNSF Moorhead RR Raise, the Highway 75 Bridge and Road Raise, the Drayton Dam Mitigation, Wild Rice Mitigation, Hardship and Opportunistic land acquisitions.
2. Until the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota has lifted the injunction on the construction of the Oxbow, Hickson, Bakke ring levee, none of the budget associated with the construction of the OHB Levee (WP-43) shall be expended.

3. Until federal funds are appropriated, none of the Diversion Authority’s budgeted expenses shall be spent for land acquisition or construction associated with the CR 16/17 and Gated Inlet (WP-26, WP-28).

Albright provided copies of the proposed motion to the audience. He explained that the DA met on 12/15/15 to present their FY2016 Budget, totaling $237.5 million. Five of the six agencies involved in the JPA on the DA have already approved the budget. The DA is made up of the six agencies who are signers of the JPA, including the BRRWD, Clay County, the City of Moorhead, the City of Fargo, Cass County, and the Southeast Cass County Joint Water Resource District. He added that the budget is based on three conditions or assumptions that the DA has acknowledged: the DNR would issue its final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and a record of decision, the preliminary injunction on the Oxbow, Hickson, Bakke (OHB) Ringdike construction would be lifted, and that federal appropriations will be identified for the project. The DA expects that these conditions will be met sometime in the first or second quarter of 2016.

Manager Anderson suggested that Item No. 1 of the proposed motion include the words "and permits are issued" or "record of decision" following the words "Until the Minnesota DNR completes its environmental review", so that work on the inlet wouldn't take place until Army Corps of Engineers (COE) has the DNR permit for the high hazard dam. Albright explained that Norgard left out the referenced language because the "record of decision" language is associated with an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW), not an EIS.

Manager Affield commented that she would like to see the BRRWD approve only the portion of the 2016 budget that funds the DNR's EIS process, as we did for the 2015 DA budget. She felt that would be best for the taxpayers in the BRRWD and the State of Minnesota.

Manager Fjestad suggested that we should also consider the pending upstream lawsuit. He stated that he wasn't against flood control work within the City of Fargo, but was concerned about the COE's public statement that they plan to start work on the diversion inlet this year. Van Amburg pointed out this work would only be done if federal funds are appropriated to the COE this year, which is one of the conditions already in the budget language and the proposed motion. He explained that the inlet work was announced because in order to be eligible for possible federal funding, the money needs to be obligated to a project.

Van Amburg stated that the motion as proposed appeared to protect the taxpayers because nothing can take place until all the conditions have been met. Manager Kobiela said that the proposed motion was essentially what the Board had discussed at the last meeting she attended, and she was comfortable with the motion as presented with the conditions. Affield felt that the conditions should be met before the BRRWD approves the 2016 budget, and added that she didn't like the way the motion was worded. Van Amburg felt that everything the BRRWD is concerned with was covered in the budget conditions. **Motion** by Hanson to approve the proposed motion as written to approve the 2016 FM DA Budget. **Seconded** by Kobiela. In favor: Hanson and Kobiela. Opposed: Larson, Affield, Anderson, and Fjestad. **Disapproved.**

Van Amburg asked the Board if there was any other way they would like to handle the DA budget approval process other than the defeated motion. He felt that it was important that the BRRWD be a part of the Diversion process. Larson felt that the BRRWD hasn't had much influence on the DA in regards to the project development. Anderson was concerned that the DA has not contacted any landowners on the Minnesota side of the Red River regarding their inclusion in the proposed upstream staging. Van Amburg agreed that there is work to be done regarding the upstream landowners. Fjestad felt that since the BRRWD has not been told how the DA budget is going to impact the District financially, it is difficult to approve a budget. He referenced last year's DA loans from Cass County and the City of Fargo. Van Amburg noted that the
2016 DA budget doesn't call for any money from Minnesota entities. He added that a large part of the budget is for flood mitigation within the City of Fargo. Van Amburg noted that the referenced inlet would only be funded with federal money if the government decides to appropriate funds this year.

Eric Dodds, Engineer, AE2S, confirmed that the inlet would be built with federal funds, and there is no money in the DA's budget for inlet construction. Dodds stated that there was money in the proposed budget for mitigation in the City of Fargo and cemetery mitigation in the upstream areas. Van Amburg felt the Board should reconsider their decision at a future meeting and look for another way to approve the DA budget. In light of the pressure put on the Board from groups opposing the Diversion, it was unlikely that we would be able to move forward on this issue right now.

Next Meeting. The BRRWD will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, February 8, 2016, at 7:00 PM in our Barnesville office.

Adjournment. Motion by Hanson to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Fjestad. Approved. Chairman Van Amburg adjourned the meeting at 10:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John E. Hanson, Secretary