“Another Late Night Meeting for Local Watershed”

It took approximately 4 hours to get through the agenda at the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) meeting held in Barnesville on 7/25/11. A number of major issues were discussed, including the potential new office building and the possibility of the BRRWD rejoining the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB). Jerome Deal, Wheaton, MN, who is a Manager on the Bois de Sioux Watershed District Board, their delegate to the RRWMB, and the Retention Committee Co-Chair of the Red River Retention Authority (RRRA), attended to discuss what's currently happening in the Basin. The Board reviewed a letter, dated 7/19/11, from the RRWMB that listed a number of reasons why they felt the BRRWD should consider rejoining. Some recent positive discussions have taken place between the two organizations. Recent developments within the Red River Basin magnify the importance of utilizing efforts to maximize efficiencies and effectiveness to best serve the citizens of the Basin. The RRRA was established in 2010 and provides an opportunity to participate with our North Dakota partners in providing the leadership, decision making, and financing necessary to realize the retention goals for the Basin. Through the RRRA, potential federal dollars would be leveraged by one-half of the RRWMB monies collected by member districts. Member districts will continue to benefit from the RRWMB levy by retaining the other half for use on local projects. The RRWMB is currently reviewing their Governing Documents with hopes that the BRRWD would participate in those discussions and recommendations. Flooding has major social, economic, and environmental impacts in the Red River Basin. As part of the problem, all basin watershed districts must be part of the solution if we are to succeed. They invited the BRRWD to once again partner with them in a unified effort to implement basin-wide flood solutions that share the accountability and responsibility of reducing flood damage in the Red River Valley.

Deal asked if the Board had any questions regarding the RRWMB letter. Congressman Collin Peterson and our local Senators are working hard on a Farm Bill that will allocate money to the Valley to do flood detention work. Much of the Federal work would be done through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Deal felt it was a "new day in water management" regarding how business will be conducted. He thought the BRRWD was too large and had too many water issues to not be a participant in these discussions. One option to reconsider the BRRWD's membership to the RRWMB would have been to advertise the RRWMB levy in the Budget Hearing process. A decision would not need to be finalized until 12/15/11 regarding membership. That issue did not even come to a vote because several members felt we should not consider rejoining. They felt we should wait to see how things develop and discuss this issue further with the Advisory Committee. No action was taken on the request. The Clay County Board of Commissioners has gone on record supporting the BRRWD to rejoin.

The BRRWD also spent some discussing the status of a potential new office. Our current office lease expires on 8/31/11. The estimated cost of a new building in Commercial Park is around $800,000. The Board is looking at an existing building that might be retrofitted to their use. They want to explore those costs. A building inspector has been hired to review the building in question. The BRRWD is currently looking for rental space for a 6-9 month period. The Board would also like to review the potential new building with their Advisory Committee.

Other business included:

- The Board discussed a drainage concern associated with the County State Aid Highway (CSAH) No. 52 regrading project in Barnesville. The contractor installed two culverts to reroute water flow to assist with the construction work. A neighboring landowner expressed concerns. The County will be contacted regarding the temporary culvert installation.
A Manager from the Wild Rice Watershed District attended the meeting to observe. He commented that the BRRWD has respect among the landowners and discussed several popular projects, including the Hay Creek/Stinking Lake Sediment Reduction project that is being done in conjunction with the NRCS and the Becker County Soil and Water Conservation District. He urged the Board to "keep up the good work".

The Board approved permits to: Sam Braton to build 800' of road with a ditch on the east side in the SW1/4, Section 32, Humboldt Township, Clay County; Brian Wang for 156 of pattern tiling with outlets to Clay County Ditch No. 3 in the NE1/4, Section 8, Moland Township, Clay County; the City of Moorhead for 28th AVE S improvements; Clay County Highway Department for the installation of a new approach/culvert into their new Barnesville shop off CSAH No. 52; Elkton Township for 3,300' of tiling in 170th ST S between Sections 25 and 26 with an outlet to Spring Creek; and Andy Liedahl to replace an existing approach with a 24" dia. culvert along 80th ST S and the east line of Section 29, Alliance Township, Clay County.

The Board agreed to file Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Flood Damage Reduction financial assistance requests for the Lake Alfred High Water Outlet and the County Line Outlet projects.

Appraisers are nearing completion of their work regarding the HRBP Outlets along Trunk Highway No. 34 and Lake Jacobs. Hearings on both projects can be scheduled in the next several weeks.

A settlement agreement has been reached with the landowner north of Hawley on the Cromwell Township High Water Outlet project. The Board agreed to the settlement terms.

The Board discussed DNR funding needed to complete Phase 3 on the Oakport Flood Mitigation project. If the needed $1.5 million can be secured from the 2011 bonding bill, it would mean that Wall ST will only need to be closed for the 2011 construction season. The project still needs $4.5 million in State funding for Phase 4 (Broadway) with intentions that this work would be done in 2012.

The City of Georgetown has received $3 million for their levee improvement project in the 2011 bonding bill. An informational meeting was scheduled for 8/11/11 at 8:00 PM in the Georgetown Community Center. With the funding, the project should proceed quite rapidly, including easement acquisitions, buyouts, and preparation for construction.

The Board received elevations from Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.) for 130th AVE N between Sections 11 and 14, Kragnes Township. Landowners had expressed concerns that the road is partially washed out on the north side of Clay County Ditch No. 10, allowing water to spill from the ditch, primarily in the spring, flooding nearby buildings. The homeowners would like to see the road raised to its pre-existing condition before the erosion occurred. A meeting with Kragnes Township will be scheduled.

Approved a $40,000 funding request from River Keepers for 2012. The money will be raised through the BRRWD M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, taxing authority. This issue will be discussed further at the upcoming budget hearing, scheduled for 8/22/11 at 9:00 PM in the Barnesville office.

The Board authorized H.E. to investigate repair petitions filed for work on Clay County Ditch Nos. 10 and 59.

The Board authorized the repair of 0.75 miles of Clay County Ditch No. 58 along the west line of Section 7, Elkton Township.
• The Managers discussed continuing repair work on Becker County Ditch No. 15, primarily in Sections 2 and 3, Audubon Township. The work will be coordinated with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

• The Board approved payment of bills totaling $222,620.57

The next regular BRRWD meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 8, 2011, at 8:00 PM in the Barnesville office. All meetings are open to the public. For more information, please visit our Website at www.brrwd.org.