“Local Watershed Handles Routine Business”

It took the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), approximately three hours to get through their agenda at their meeting held in Barnesville on 02/24/14. Some time was spent discussing the status of a proposed lateral to Wilkin County Ditch (C.D.) No. 3 in Sections 31 and 32 of Akron Township. The preliminary hearing was held on 02/20/14 in Breckenridge. Landowners in attendance expressed concerns regarding the project cost. In accordance with Minnesota Drainage Law, the next step will be for the Board to decide whether or not the project should continue. If the order is approved, the next steps will be completion of the Engineer's Detailed Survey Report and the appointment of Viewers to assess benefits and damages. Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator, suggested that the Board table any decision on that action until he can meet with the petitioners to discuss the project further. Also discussed was the need to increase the petitioner's bond. By law, the petition must be accompanied by a bond in the amount of at least $10,000. At this time, the expenses have exceeded that amount and the petitioner agreed to furnish an additional $5,000 bond.

Also discussed early on in the meeting was a drainage concern brought to the Board’s attention by a landowner in Section 21, Tanberg Township, Wilkin County. Allegedly, there has been drain tile installed upstream of his property and the water is now draining across his land. If a culvert was installed in a field road, the water would drain directly into Wilkin C.D. No. 6-A. A field investigation will be conducted this spring, when conditions permit, with the neighboring landowners.

Discussion also took place regarding the sizing of culverts in the northwest corner of Akron Township, Wilkin County. The matter came up last summer when landowners noted that the County Highway Department had, at some point in time, installed a larger culvert in County Road (C.R.) No. 169, between Sections 5 and 6. There are three crossings downstream of that location, which have smaller culverts. A study was completed late last fall by Houston Engineering Inc. (H.E.). All of that information was furnished to the concerned landowner last week. Albright thought he would be back after reviewing the information to request downstream culvert sizing changes.

Other business included:

- Reviewed their financial status, the Board currently has $1,550,798.87 on hand.

- Discussion pertaining to a permit filed by Dirk Swanson last spring, which requested to install pattern tiling in the NW¼ of Section 21, Kragnes Township, Clay County, west of Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 75. Last fall, the Board noted approximately 37 acres of the field were not assessed to drain west, eventually into Clay C.D. No. 20. Swanson filed a petition to add that land to the drainage system. The hearing to include the noted property has been scheduled for Thursday, April 3, 2014, at 7:00 PM in the Moorhead City Hall Council Chambers. Notices will be sent to affected landowners.

- Approval of a permit to the Clay County Highway Department for their regrading of County State Aid Highway (CSAH) No. 52 beginning at T.H. No. 9 and going west to C.R. No. 56. Erik Jones, Engineer, H.E., has reviewed the application. Most of the culverts along this stretch will be replaced with the same size pipes at the same elevation. The one major change will be replacement of the 29” dia. gravity flow storm sewer outlet for the underpass at the Otter Tail Valley railroad with a new 33” dia. pipe. The pipe outlets on the north side of the road approximately 1,300 feet downstream.

- Discussed a historic diking complaint in the SW¼, Section 29, Riverton Township, Clay County. In the fall of 2011, the neighboring upstream landowner filed a complaint about additional
material that had been placed on top of the dike on the north side of CSAH No. 12. The Board directed the landowner to remove that material. The landowner took no action in that regard. A survey of the area was conducted by H.E. on 11/23/12. The survey showed that the upstream buildings are approximately 1.5 feet higher than the top of the new dike. The information was furnished to both landowners in the fall of 2013. Consequentially, the upstream landowner indicated that the dike still needed to be lowered to its original elevation. Albright suggested that a field meeting with all affected parties be held this spring to resolve this issue.

- Pertaining to Project No. 75, a proposed lateral to Wilkin C.D. No. 31, which would have been located on the east side of T.H. No. 9 in Section 14, Connelly Township, an informational meeting will be held with the landowners on Wilkin C.D. No. 1-C to discuss the potential repair of a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) protected watercourse (Whiskey Creek), also located in Section 14. The informational meeting will be held on Monday, March 3, 2014, at 7:00 PM in the courtroom, Wilkin County Courthouse, Breckenridge. Notices have been sent to affected landowners.

- Pertaining to Project No. 74, Clay C.D. No. 51-Proposed Lateral No. 3, the petitioner will be meeting with one of the Viewers on 03/17/14 to discuss their Report. The next step will be to schedule the final hearing.

- Noting that the office is still working with landowners to secure the remaining easements needed for Project No. 56, Mansston Slough Restoration. The contractor will be back this spring when conditions permit to hopefully finish the project by the 09/30/14 deadline.

- Noting that Albright met with Oakport Township representatives regarding the funding needed to complete Project No. 49, Oakport Flood Control. The BRRWD needs $5.26 million to complete Phase 4. We will be working with the Legislature during this upcoming session in that regard.

- Noting that with a recent billing to the DNR for Project No. 39, Georgetown Levee Improvements, the grant only has approximately $10,000 left in the account. Albright has prepared a budget showing that approximately $170,000 will be needed to complete this project. The DNR will be contacted. At the last meeting, the Board discussed a request from the Minnesota Department of Transportation regarding use of the storm water pond on the east side of T.H. No. 75 as an outlet for part of their storm water runoff associated with the T.H. No. 75 regrading project, which will be done in 2014. The Board signed a Memorandum of Understanding in that regard.

- Noting that an informational meeting regarding Clay/Wilkin Judicial Ditch No. 1 will be held on Thursday, February 27, 2014, at 1:30 PM in the Barnesville office. Notices have been sent to affected landowners. The landowners want to discuss the flooding issues that arose this past June when the area received approximately nine inches of rainfall in three hours.

- Albright has furnished a petition to landowners in Sections 30 and 31, Riverton Township, and Section 25, Glyndon Township, for a possible legal lateral to Clay C.D. No. 12. It will be up to the landowners to determine whether or not they want to petition to move this project forward. An informational meeting was held on 02/12/14 in the Barnesville office to discuss historic drainage problems in this area. The consensus was that development of a lateral would address these issues.

- Discussed acquiring 14 miles of temporary right of way (r-o-w) along Clay C.D. No. 10, so that the ditch can be cleaned in 2014. H.E. will conduct an analysis regarding the amount of r-o-w needed and who are the affected landowners. Action will be taken at the upcoming meeting to purchase the needed temporary r-o-w.
Noting that the next Mediation Project Team meeting will be held on April 24, 2014, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office. Albright is working with a landowner in Section 11, Manston Township, Wilkin County, to address erosion and flooding concerns along the South Branch of the Buffalo River. A funding request was submitted to the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (RRBFDRWG) regarding survey costs associated with the Barnesville Township area drainage study. A meeting was held 02/19/14 with representatives from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to discuss a number of Wetlands Reserve Program projects. The annual joint conference of the Red River Watershed Management Board and the RRBFDWBG is scheduled for March 25-26, 2014, at the Holiday Inn in Detroit Lakes. A tentative agenda was reviewed. All Managers were encouraged to attend.

Albright noted that the findings of fact, conclusion of law and order for the enlargement, and definition of the new eastern boundary for the BRRWD has been filed with the Secretary of State. Copies were sent to Becker, Clay, West Otter Tail, Otter Tail, and Wilkin Counties. The next step will be to start the update of the Revised Watershed Management Plan for the newly added area. A revised development schedule will be discussed at the next meeting.

Discussing the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program. A Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for 02/27/14. The Department of Agriculture wants to schedule an informational meeting with the affected landowners on Whiskey Creek as soon as possible. The Board also signed a grant with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) in the amount of $80,000 that can be used as incentives in the pilot area for 2014.

Noting that a strategic planning session with Donna Rae Scheffert is scheduled for 03/13/14 at 4:00 PM in the Barnesville office. Ms. Scheffert was hired through a BWSR grant to do strategic planning and overall review of the BRRWD. Her final report is expected in April.

Discussed changes to the Hawley Buffalo River Restoration project. A meeting was held with the DNR and City representatives on February 18, 2014. We will now proceed without the neighboring landowner to the north, who was unwilling to sell his property. DNR funding for the project needs to be encumbered by 06/30/15. We hope that construction on the project could begin after Labor Day, 2014.

Approved payment of bills totaling $15,409.24.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, will be held on Monday, March 10, 2014, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office, located at 1303 4th AVE NE, Barnesville. All meetings are open to the public. For more information, please visit our website at www.brrwd.org.