"Local Watershed Welcomes New Manager"

At their regular meeting held on November 28, 2016, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) welcomed new Clay County Manager Jay Leitch. Mr. Leitch has agreed to fill out the term formerly held by Breanna Kobiela, who announced in late August that she and her husband were buying a house in Fargo, North Dakota. Mr. Leitch lives in north Moorhead, along the Red River of the North, so he is very familiar with flooding issues, etc. The oath of office was administered to Mr. Leitch, whose term will end on 8/31/18.

Other business included:

- Reviewed the BRRWD’s financial status. Since the last meeting, we have received income totaling $73,802.76. Cash on hand is $529,551.49. Bruce Albright, Office Administrator, noted that two large bills had been sent pertaining to the Oakport Flood Mitigation Project. He expected reimbursement from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Clay County Highway Department next week.

- Discussed a drainage concern located in the NE¼, Section 22, Prairie View Township, Wilkin County. The upstream landowner felt that this segment of natural waterway should be cleaned. He noted that drainage from the BRRWD’s Lake Jacob Project utilized this area. He felt the natural waterway was silted in. The owner of the property felt that if there was a sediment problem, it came from the upstream neighbors’ drainage activities. The Board of Managers agreed to have Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI) conduct a survey of the area including upstream and downstream of the complaint to analyze drainage in and around this area. Once the survey information is obtained, it will be furnished to the landowners and another meeting will be held regarding what needs to be done.

- Approved permits to Chad Nelson to install a 12” diameter tile line across the NW¼, Section 34, Norwegian Grove Township, Otter Tail County; Steve Thompson to install an approach with culverts in the NW¼, Section 3, Alliance Township, Clay County; and Kraig Nelson to install a water and sediment control basin in the NW¼, Section 21, Hamden Township, Becker County.

- Discussed a pending permit application to re-route a natural water course in the NE¼, Section 10, Andrea Township, Wilkin County. Erik S. Jones, Engineering, HEI, noted that the applicant, Thomas Deal, has agreed to hire HEI to do the design work. The waterway will be re-routed south along County Road No. 19 and then west back into Wilkin County Ditch (C.D.) No. 31. Jones noted that the field survey work has been completed. He expected that a design would be available for review at the upcoming 12/12/16 meeting.

- The Board directed office staff to contact two landowners in Section 3, Callaway Township, Becker County, regarding recent drainage activities for which they did not acquire a BRRWD permit. The downstream landowner filed a complaint this summer. Once the landowners file the required permit applications, the Board can decide what corrective actions may be needed.

- Discussed another drainage complaint filed for recent tiling in Section 28, Mitchell Township, Wilkin County. The landowner had received a permit for the project back in 2013. However, the tile was just installed this fall, and the location of the outlet was moved. Downstream landowners are concerned about the proposed water path. Administrator Albright will contact the applicant to determine why the project plan was modified.
• Discussed the status of Project No. 56, Manston Slough Restoration. Water is still going over the north dam spillway at elevation 972’. Contractors have been hired to start cleanout of the downstream outlet (Wilkin C.D. No. 13-Lat.). Their work will be weather dependent. The Natural Resources Conservation Service would like to see boards removed in the dam to lower the water elevation so they can conduct work on their adjoining Wetland Restoration Program properties. The native grass seeding contract was closed out with B & J Landscaping, Inc.

• Pertaining to Project No. 49, Oakport Flood Mitigation, the office has received a letter from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry regarding potential prevailing wage law violations that may exist under the Phase 4 contract. Administrator Albright has been in touch with their office in this regard. A meeting was also held on 11/17/16 with the project contractor, R.J. Zavoral and Sons, Inc., to discuss their claim totaling $152,500 as a result of delays outside of their control. They noted acquisition of the necessary easements, removal of a house, and relocation of a Century Link cable as delays. More information is being gathered regarding the claim.

• Noting that the next Mediation Project Team (PT) meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 15, 2016 at 1:30 P.M. in the Barnesville Watershed Office. Active projects being discussed by the PT include Barnesville Township Area Drainage Investigation, Stony Creek, and the South Branch of the Buffalo River in Wilkin County.

• Noting that States Border Construction plans to begin work on the repair of Wilkin C.D. No. 7 next week, weather permitting.

• Noting that an informational meeting is scheduled for Friday, December 9, 2016, at 9 A.M. in the BRRWD Office with area agency personnel to discuss analysis being completed on the Otter Tail River downstream of Orwell Dam. This area was initially channelized by the Army Corp of Engineers back in the 1950s. Since then, the area has experienced severe erosion. Parties are interested in looking at ways to restore the original channel.

• Reviewed a draft Operation and Maintenance agreement with the City of Moorhead regarding Project No. 71, 50th AVE Flood Control. The City of Moorhead would maintain those portions of the project within their jurisdictional boundaries. The City would be willing to do the work outside of their jurisdictional boundaries but would be reimbursed by the BRRWD. The information will be reviewed for action at the upcoming 12/12/16 meeting.

• Approved payment of bills totaling $75,041.82.

The next meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is scheduled for Monday, December 12, 2016, at 7:00 PM in the BRRWD Office, located at 1303 4th AVE NE, Barnesville, MN. All meetings are open to the public. The Board agreed not to hold their second meeting in December on 12/26/16 due to the Christmas Holiday. For more information, please visit our website at www.brrwd.org.