NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 22, 2019
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"BRRWD Hosts Full House"

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), had a standing room only crowd of nearly 100 attendees at their regular meeting on March 11, 2019, in their Barnesville office. The main issue that attracted so many citizens was the Fargo-Moorhead (FM) Diversion Authority's (DA) permit application, recently filed with the BRRWD. Representatives from the DA, Clay County, Cass County, Wilkin County, the Richland-Wilkin Joint Powers Authority, the MNDAK Upstream Coalition, landowners, homeowners, and a contingency of FM realtors all made statements both for and against approval of a BRRWD permit for the Diversion project. The other issue the audience commented on was the BRRWD's recent decision to request a contested case hearing regarding the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) decision to issue a conditional permit for the Diversion Project. Many landowners from the upstream staging area south of Fargo spoke in support of the BRRWD's action, while others who work or live in the FM area encouraged the Board to drop their case and to address any issues through the BRRWD permitting process. Because of the intense public interest that the Diversion permit application has generated, the Board decided to schedule a permit hearing where each side will be given 60 minutes to present their arguments. Notices will be published when an appropriately sized venue is located. The Board also plans to conduct a field review of the project area.

Board members will meet with the authors of the DNR's Diversion permit on March 15, 2019, in St. Paul to discuss the BRRWD's contested case. The Board also authorized BRRWD President Jay A. Leitch to sign a Rule 408 Agreement, which states that any information that either party provides during their upcoming meeting can't be used in the actual contested case proceeding.

Kevin Campbell, Clay County Commissioner and Vice Chair of the DA, reported to the Board that the Minnesota-Clay County Joint Powers Agreement (MCCJPA) is still in draft form. As a member of the Minnesota Land Committee, President Leitch will be able to comment on the draft, even though the BRRWD decided to decline a full membership in the MCCJPA.

The Board discussed potential Diversion project impacts to the Cities of Georgetown, Comstock, and Wolverton and agreed that we should be able to address those concerns through conditions the BRRWD places on the Diversion permit.

Other business included:

- Reviewed the BRRWD's monthly financial statements, including the project account balance sheet, administrative disbursements, summary of income, and the accounts receivable report. Cash on hand is $3,404,296.18. Administrative disbursements this month equal $19,028.32 and to date, total $60,135.45. Current 2019 accounts receivable are $6,088,936. Total income this year is $1,132,542.40. Income received since the 2/11/19 meeting totaled $91,773.50, primarily from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources for the second payment from our 2017 Clean Water Fund PTMApp and Geomorphology Accelerated Implementation grant ($67,500) and a payment from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for our Otter Tail River Planning 319 Grant ($20,437.73). The balance of the income came from the Midwest Bank accounts interest ($3,910.77) and Houston Engineering, Inc. monthly office rent ($225). The Board authorized staff to work with Midwest Bank to setup an Insured Cash Sweep account, which pays a higher interest rate (2.39%) and could allow the money to be FDIC insured while keeping the funds available for Midwest Bank to use locally. The Board also approved the payment of bills, totaling $238,381.47.
• Approved a request for $63,924.19 from the Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to provide funding for erosion repairs on DNR protected waters in Wilkin County in conjunction with the State 2015 Buffer Strip Initiative. Both the BRRWD and Wilkin County received Riparian Aid Grant funding for the last three years to be used for water quality and riparian resource protection. The BRRWD still had some of this funding available from the Wilkin County appropriations.

• Approved permits to the Wilkin County Highway Department to replace a bridge in the SE¼, Section 2, McCauleyville Township, with a 10’ x 4’ precast concrete box culvert and end sections; the Clay County Highway Department to grade and resurface 15th AVE N in Moorhead from 34th ST N to County State Aid Highway No. 9 in Section 34, Oakport Township; Arvig Communications to install fiber optic cables from Trunk Highway No. 9 east along the north side of 90th AVE N for 0.5 miles, subject to our standard utility disclaimer; and Trent and Craig Seter to install a crossing with 48” dia. culvert or equivalent arch pipe over a natural waterway in the northwest corner of the NW¼NE¼, Section 35, Riverton Township, Clay County, to access their pastureland, subject to purchasing credits to mitigate and wetland impacts.

• Received an update on Project No. 79, Wolverton Creek Restoration. Phase 2 easements have been forwarded to the landowners. Letters have been sent to landowners who didn't respond after the first mailing to encourage them to complete the temporary easement acquisition process.

• Awarded the Project No. 78, Clay/Wilkin Judicial Ditch No. 1-Improvement, construction contract to Dennis Drewes, Inc. for their low bid of $937,590. The total project cost is estimated to be $1,662,408. The Clay County Commissioners will consider a bond sale resolution for the project at their 3/19/19 meeting.

• Approved the revised BRRWD Bylaws.

• Noted that the Managers plan to attend the Red River Watershed Management Board's (RRWMB) Annual Drainage Conferenced on March 19, 2019 and the RRWMB/Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group 21st Annual Joint Conference on March 20-21, 2019. Both events will be held at the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Moorhead.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next meeting on Monday, March 25, 2019, at 7:00 PM in the BRRWD office, located at 1303 4th AVE NE, Barnesville, MN. All meetings are open to the public. For more information about the BRRWD, please visit our website at www.brrwd.org.