"BRRWD Holds Annual Meeting"

On January 13, 2020, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), held their annual meeting at 7:00 PM in Barnesville. The Board cast a unanimous ballot to reelect the current officers to serve another term in 2020: Jay A. Leitch, President, Clay County; Peter V. Fjestad, Vice President, Otter Tail County; Mark T. Anderson, Treasurer, Clay County; John E. Hanson, Secretary, Becker County. Vogel Law Firm was appointed as the 2020 BRRWD legal consultant, and Barnesville Midwest Bank was designated as the official 2020 BRRWD depository, subject to the use of any other depositories within the District as needed throughout the year, provided they are FDIC insured. BRRWD Lobbyist Joel Carlson's existing two-year contract expires at the end of 2020. The BRRWD published Requests For Proposals for all services in area newspapers. Two engineering companies responded: Moore Engineering, Inc. and Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI). Both proposals were forwarded to the Managers prior to the meeting for review. The Board appointed HEI as the BRRWD's engineering consultant for a two-year contract (2020-2022), including the current Barnesville administrative office staff: Bruce Albright (Administrator), Kathy Fenger (Assistant Administrator), Julie Jerger (Senior Administrative Assistant), and RaeAnn Berg (Administrative Assistant).

The Board heard from two landowners associated with Project No. 80, Stony Creek Water Resources Management Plan, regarding the status of the project and the easement option acquisitions. Both felt that the project has been delayed long enough by studies for nearly 5 years, and they asked the Board to make a decision to either move forward with the project development or drop it. After an extended discussion regarding the various design alternatives and concerns about the project's benefit/cost ratio, the Board approved a motion on a 5 to 2 vote to move forward with the development of the Alternative 1 project design, to work with the landowners to complete the easement option acquisitions, and to start the funding search.

A landowner expressed concerns about the 12/11/19 Minnesota-Clay County Joint Powers Agreement informational meeting pertaining to the Fargo-Moorhead (FM) Diversion. There was a miscommunication regarding who was invited to the meeting and what topics would be discussed. BRRWD President Jay Leitch explained that there are two separate groups of landowners with different issues. The recent meeting was held for those landowners affected by the environmental/biometric monitoring right-of-entry easement. The landowners involved with the soil boring right-of-entry eminent domain issue also attended the meeting expecting their issue to be discussed but were disappointed when their concerns were not addressed.

Other business included:

- The Board reviewed the 12/31/19 annual financial reports, including the project account balance sheet, administrative disbursements, summary of income, and the accounts receivable report. Total 2019 income was $5,770,437.16, and administrative expenses totaled $343,507.69. The 2019 Accounts Receivable still totals $4,468,064, including delinquent taxes and ongoing grant agreements. Cash on hand at the end of the year was $2,712,837.18. The office also prepared a worksheet showing the individual account financial activities for 2019 and allocated a 1% administrative fee ($50,572.94) based on the amount of the expenses for each account over the year. After average account balances for the year are calculated, accounts with a negative average are charged interest at the rate of the Midwest Bank loan, and accounts with positive balances were allocated interest, including the 2019 bank account interest income ($58,600.68). The 2019 year-end account transfers from the Minnesota Statutes Annotated 103D.905, Subd. 3, account ($543,832.15) were completed for several programs/projects, some which do not have assessment areas. A final 12/31/19 balance sheet was prepared, showing the project/ditch system account balances reflecting the interest allocation/account transfers. The Board then reviewed the current 1/13/20 financial reports. Income since 1/1/20 was $205,382.82, including $171,921.32 from Clay County for 2019 ditch tax proceeds, $33,136.50 from Wilkin County for Buffer Initiative Aid, $225 from HEI for
office rent, and $100 from Agassiz Valley Co-op for meeting room rental. Cash on hand is $2,918,220, and 2020 Accounts Receivable totals $5,573,684. The Board also approved payment of the bills totaling $549,515.82.

- Entered into Executive Session to discuss the status of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources contested case and the FM Diversion Authority's (DA) permit denial. The Board scheduled a Special Executive Session meeting with both BRRWD Attorneys to continue discussion regarding the lawsuits on Friday, January 24, 2020, at 2:00 PM in the Vogel Law Firm office in Fargo. A motion was made and seconded to approve the FM DA's BRRWD permit application (Permit No. 19-003). After discussion, the motion was withdrawn with the understanding that the issue will be revisited at a future Board meeting, following the upcoming special meeting.

- Approved permits to Otter Tail County to replace an existing bridge on County State Aid Highway No. 15 between Sections 26 and 27, Orwell Township, downstream of the Orwell Dam; Pheasants Forever to install 12 wetland restorations in Sections 11, 13, and 14, Eglon Township, Clay County, including ditch plug construction, sediment removal, and tile removal; and the Minnesota Department of Transportation for culvert improvements including pipe lining, culvert modifications, and the removal of one cattle-crossing in various state roads in Clay, Otter Tail, and Becker Counties. All permits are subject to our standard conditions and disclaimers.

- Approved Pay Request No. 3 in the amount of $76,988 for States Borders Construction, Inc. for their work on Wilkin/Otter Tail Judicial Ditch No. 2 outlet improvement.

- Approved a resolution to seek an increase of the Watershed Districts' general administrative fund levy from $250,000 to $500,000 and authorized staff to forward the document to the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD).

- Noted that the MAWD Legislative Breakfast and Day At The Capitol event is scheduled for March 18-19, 2020, at the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel Downtown, St. Paul. Staff will handle reservations and registrations. Managers Hanson, Fjestad, Anderson, and Van Amburg plan to attend.

- Noted that the Red River Watershed Management Board Drainage Conference will be held on Monday, January 27, 2020, at the Marriott Hotel and Convention Center, Moorhead, and the 32nd Annual Conference of the Erosion Control Association will be held in Plymouth, MN, on January 22-23, 2020.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, January 27, 2020, 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.