

BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

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MINUTES FOR MANAGERS' MEETING

February 8, 2018

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), held a special meeting on Thursday, February 8, 2018, at 6:30 PM in the Barnesville office. BRRWD Managers present were Jay A. Leitch, Gerald L. Van Amburg, Mark T. Anderson, John E. Hanson, Catherine L. Affield, and Peter V. Fjestad. Others attending included: Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator, and Erik S. Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI), landowner Chuck Anderson, and the Blue Eagle Builders Lego League.

Chair Leitch called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM and introduced the Blue Eagle Builders Lego League, who gave a presentation regarding the projects they've been working on this past year. Since last fall, the group has been using our office garage for their meetings. The League recently competed in a regional tournament with other area Lego Leagues and won the opportunity to compete at the state level this Saturday. Their Advisor, Troy Webber, thanked the Board for the use of the building. He explained that the Lego League program sets two goals for their members. The first is the design, building, and programming of complete robot missions, and the other is a research project. The group's research project topic was the presence of E. coli in Blue Eagle Lake. Their research yielded an innovative solution to capture E. coli as it enters the lake through a series of white pine wood filters. The Board gave the group input and comments regarding their presentation, and then recessed the meeting to view the Lego League's robotic presentation. The group had a brief discussion regarding the possible sources of the E. coli in Blue Eagle Lake.

Other business brought before the Board included:

At 7:05 PM, Chair Leitch reconvened the meeting, and Manager Affield arrived.

Stony Creek Restoration. Albright noted that Chuck Anderson, a Stony Creek landowner, was in attendance regarding the status of the project. Specifically, he wanted to know if the Board had decided anything about easement values. Albright gave a brief history of the ongoing area drainage problems associated with Stony Creek, Clay County Ditch No. 31 (straightened portion of Stony Creek), and Hay Creek. Albright pointed out that one of the main reasons the BRRWD considered a project for this area was that area landowners asked the BRRWD to help them with flood control. One of the results of this request was Project No. 8, Stony Creek Detention, which was constructed in the 1980s.

The Board also reviewed a project development timeline Jones prepared. Albright explained that the current proposed project would be comprehensive and include both natural resource enhancement (nre) and flood damage reduction (fdr) features, a redetermination of benefits that would include the upstream area, and off-channel retention on agricultural land. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has earmarked Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) stream habitat funding for the Stony Creek restoration project construction. Jones explained that we could potentially use the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) funding for the channel restoration easement acquisitions. Manager Leitch questioned the value of the downstream benefits compared to the estimated project costs (\$14 million). State funding could be available for 50% of the fdr features of the project. Albright pointed out that the State Legislature will be considering Flood Damage Reduction project funding this session, and the Board should decide if they wish to move forward with the project in case he's called to testify on behalf of the project.

Albright explained that HEI submitted some questions this week to Dr. Taff regarding his benefit analysis calculator, and Dr. Taff indicated that he would get back to HEI next week. The group had a brief discussion

regarding Taff's calculator parameters and the BRRWD's traditional easement rates, which historically, have been based on fair market values. Leitch felt before we move forward, we should have an idea if the project can provide \$14 million in benefits. **Motion** by Van Amburg to authorize HEI to provide a summary of the project's potential benefits. **Seconded** by Anderson. **Approved.** Leitch noted that he hoped that the cost for HEI to do the research wouldn't be excessive. Jones felt he would be able to provide the information at a reasonable cost, and he will try to have the information for the 3/12/18 meeting.

Chuck Anderson pointed out that the area landowners are anxious to know what the easement values will be. He felt that easement evaluation process has taken too long (already 3 years) and is holding up the project development. Albright noted that we currently have a group of willing landowners, and we should try our best to work with them on determining a value for their land as soon as possible. Anderson noted that four of his quarters are tiled and suggested that it might be a good site to investigate tiling as a feasible option for flood reduction/retention and water quality monitoring.

Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB). The Board discussed the recent changes taking place with the RRWMB administration. Albright noted that the new Executive Director, Rob Sip, has contacted him regarding the possibility of the BRRWD rejoining the RRWMB. The group discussed the history of the BRRWD and RRWMB relationship. Leitch discussed the RRWMB strategic planning, administrative changes, and pending retention projects. The group discussed the pros and cons of RRWMB membership. In the end, the Board felt the ball was in the RRWMB's court and it is up to them to come up with reasons why the BRRWD should consider rejoining.

Assistant Administrator. The Hiring Committee noted that they met with HEI President/CEO Jeff LeDoux on 2/2/18 to discuss the overhead costs of our current staff. An updated list of the staff job descriptions/duties was distributed to the Managers for their review. Albright distributed information via email regarding regional Watershed District Administrator salaries to Managers. Some Managers noted they hadn't received the email, so Albright will resend the information.

Conservation Practice Assistance Contract. The BRRWD has an agreement with the Clay Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to share the costs of new buffer installation on the ditch systems. Jones presented the Flat Rate Conservation Practice Assistance Contracts for the Board's signature. **Motion** by Anderson to authorize Albright to sign the contracts on behalf of the BRRWD. **Seconded** by Fjestad. **Approved.**

Administrative Levy Discussion. Manager Fjestad reported that at the recent Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) Board of Directors meeting, there was a discussion about asking the State Legislature to increase the current \$250,000 Watershed District Administrative Levy cap. He put the BRRWD on the list of Watershed Districts that would benefit from an increased levy cap taking into account our 2012 District expansion that added nearly 400 square miles to the BRRWD.

Next Meeting. The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, February 12, 2018, at 7:00 PM in our Barnesville office.

Adjournment. **Motion** by Anderson to adjourn the meeting. **Seconded** by Fjestad. **Approved.** Chair Leitch adjourned the meeting at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John E. Hanson, Secretary