

BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

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MINUTES FOR MANAGERS' MEETING

January 8, 2018

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), held their annual meeting on Monday, January 8, 2018, at 5:30 PM in the Barnesville office. BRRWD Managers present were Gerald L. Van Amburg, Mark T. Anderson, John E. Hanson, Catherine L. Affield, Peter V. Fjestad, Jay A. Leitch, and Troy E. Larson. Others attending included: Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator and Erik S. Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI); Dr. Steven J. Taff, Associate Professor Emeritus, Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota; Chuck Anderson, landowner and ARC Appraisals; and landowner Thomas Paulson.

Starting with a catered supper at 5:30 PM, the Board met with Dr. Taff to review the results of his easement value study. He was hired as a consultant to provide a method for the BRRWD to determine the value of easements on flood damage reduction (fdr) and natural resource enhancement (nre) projects, primarily for cropland. Dr. Taff presented a synopsis of his study, which proposes a procedure that will be transparent, flexible, and inexpensive for the BRRWD to use to determine easement values. The process will provide a base value that can be used to initiate landowner easement negotiations. Dr. Taff discussed the current easement acquisition options available to the Board and the "pros and cons" of each method. He suggested a different alternative based on the assumption that the BRRWD would only require a limited use of the property to store water on the land periodically and temporarily. The easement value for this type of acquisition could be calculated by how the project will adversely impact the property's value. Dr. Taff created a spreadsheet the BRRWD could use to calculate fair easement values, using typical income and expense criteria for a parcel of land based either on the county averages or actual landowner input to determine a net income derived from that land. This amount can be added to the estimated productivity value for the land, including the application of a discount rate to allow for future parcel value variation. The USDA standard discount rate in 2016 was 3.125%. The next step is to allow for the probability for flooding on the property during the spring, summer, or fall seasons, either from the project or natural high-water events. Natural flooding losses would generate revenue from crop insurance, but with project flooding, there is no insurance compensation, so the BRRWD would need to factor that cost back into the easement value. All the listed criteria provide a risk-adjusted annual net return estimate for the land potentially under easement. The calculator can provide the expected income return with or without the impact of a project. The difference between these two values equals the "lifetime" value of the easement, or what it would cost the landowner to allow the BRRWD to install a project on their property in terms of lost revenue, adjusted for flood risk, etc. This amount would be the minimum amount of compensation the landowner should receive. Dr. Taff also discussed potential downstream flood reduction benefits achieved by upstream retention projects. The group had an extended discussion regarding the options to determine easement values with the use of the calculator. Dr. Taff plans to forward the final study for the Board's review in the next work or two. He will also be available to work with the Board or staff to familiarize them with the use of the tool.

Chair Van Amburg called the annual meeting to order at 7:10 PM and announced that the proceedings were being video recorded to aid in preparation of the minutes.

Secretary's Report. The Board reviewed draft minutes for the 12/11/17 regular meeting. **Motion** by Affield to approve the minutes. **Seconded** by Larson. **Approved.**

Treasurer's Report. The Board reviewed the 12/31/17 annual financial reports, including the project account balance sheet, administrative disbursements, summary of income, and the accounts receivable report.

Total 2017 income was \$3,958,277.75; administrative expenses totaled \$494,357.89. The 2017 Accounts Receivable totals \$2,891,144, including delinquent taxes and ongoing grant agreements. Cash on hand at the end of the year was \$2,183,743.51. The office also prepared a worksheet showing the individual account financial activities for 2017 and allocated an administrative fee (1%) based on the amount of the expenses for each account at the end of the year. After average account balances for the year are calculated, accounts with a negative average are charged interest at the rate of 3.375% (Midwest Bank loan rate), and accounts with positive balances were allocated interest, including the 2017 bank account interest income (\$7,974.50). The 2017 year-end account transfers from the Minnesota Statutes Annotated (M.S.A.) 103D.905, Subd. 3, accounts (\$603,661.50) were completed for several programs/projects that do not have assessment areas. A final 12/31/17 balance sheet was prepared, showing the project/ditch system account balances reflecting the interest allocation/account transfers.

The Board then reviewed the current 1/08/18 financial reports. Albright noted that income since 1/1/18 was \$226.01 from HEI for office rent (\$225) and Otter Tail County for delinquent 2017 property taxes (\$1.01). Cash on hand is \$2,183,969.52, and 2018 Accounts Receivable totals \$5,933,672. **Motion** by Leitch to approve the Treasurer's Report, subject to the annual audit and the referenced interest and administrative allocations and account transfers. **Seconded** by Fjestad. **Approved.** Albright noted that the BRRWD office building construction loan was paid off in 2017.

220th ST Ditch Investigation. Tom Paulson recently met with State Senator Wenstrom and Representative Backer to discuss possible funding for a proposed ditch system project that would route water west along 220th ST in Sections 31 and 32, Mitchell Township, Wilkin County, outletting to Whiskey Creek. They indicated that they might be able to help with project funding and asked for more information. The Board authorized Jones to prepare a one-page factsheet regarding the proposed project for the Legislators. He said it was nearing completion, and he would forward it to Albright this week.

Other business brought before the Board included:

Permit No. 17-002, Moorhead Park Department. Applicant proposes to install a bike bridge across the Clay County Ditch (C.D.) No. 41 outlet to provide access to M.B. Johnson Park in the SE¹/₄, Section 29, Oakport Township. Action on this application had been postponed pending receipt of the plans. We recently received a location map and plans for the project. Albright noted it has no upstream hydraulic impacts. Based on the information provided, Jones recommended permit approval.

Permit No. 17-130, Clay County Highway Department. Applicant proposes to reconstruct County State Aid Highway (CSAH) No. 19 from Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 10 to 12th ST S through the City of Glyndon with curb and gutter installation. The project crosses Clay C.D. No. 68 at 12th ST S, but Jones noted the work will not affect the ditch bottom and would only require that they reestablish the grass along the roadway. Jones recommended permit approval.

Motion by Anderson to approve Permit Nos. 17-002 and 17-130. **Seconded** by Affield. **Approved.**

Permit No. 17-119, Robert Yaggie. Yaggie filed a permit application to install pattern tiling in the SW¹/₄, Section 26, Manston Township, Wilkin County, on 10/11/17. Downstream landowners/operators had concerns about the adequacy of the proposed outlet route that would drain the tile water in the north ditch of CSAH No. 26 west to a natural waterway in Section 27, eventually to the Manston Slough Restoration project. There are wetland issues further downstream on the Nielsen/Abel property in the NW¹/₄, Section 27, which could be addressed by side-casting the spoil outside of the wetland areas during the cleanout. HEI has completed a wetland delineation for this property. The Local/State/Federal (LSF) notification forms were submitted to the Wilkin County Environmental Office and the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) this week. Jones reported that the COE has indicated that they don't have jurisdiction and will send us a confirmation letter on their decision. Don Bajumpaa, Wilkin Environmental Officer, has asked for more information. Jones will be meeting with Bajumpaa this week to discuss project impacts as it relates to the Wetlands

Conservation Act (WCA). Paulson noted that the landowner could have cleaned the ditch in question several years ago in the NW¼, Section 27. Jones asked if Paulson could forward any information he has regarding that work, as it would be important to have these details for his meeting with the County. The Board still plans to meet with all the affected parties this winter to work out the details of the agreement regarding the Yaggie tiling project and ditch cleanout.

Project No. 79, Wolverton Creek Restoration. A meeting has been scheduled with Craig Lingen, Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), on 1/10/18 to review the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) data to determine potential BRRWD and CREP easement allotments. The staff hopes to have the temporary easement forms ready by the end of the month so that we can forward them to the Phase 1 landowners for signature. The Board discussed using Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) easement rates for the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) Grant easement values. Dr. Taff thought that this method would probably be acceptable. Jones discussed a possible method to acquire an easement on enrolled CREP acreage. Ted Rud, Engineer, HEI, prepared a report with a breakdown of the 336.91 acres needed for the Phase 1 easements: BRRWD would have to acquire 157 acres, 140 acres would be eligible for CREP funding, and 42 acres are enrolled in existing RIM. The RIM acreage would just remain in the program. Jones noted that the BRRWD would have to apply for a construction permit for the RIM acres. For Phase 2 easements, the BRRWD would have to acquire 54 acres, 217 would be covered by CREP, and for Phase 3, 134 acres of BRRWD easements and 70 acres of CREP easements, for a total of 811.72 easement acres for the entire project. Jones explained that the more CREP funds we can use for easements, the more LSOHC funding will be available for construction. Albright noted that our goal is to be ready to open bids for Phase 1 by the end of March, and begin construction around June 1, 2018.

Jones suggested that the Board consider the temporary easement rates. The Board discussed a possible rate of \$250/acre/construction year for cropland. **Motion** by Fjestad to set the Phase 1 temporary easement rate for cropland at \$250/acre/construction year. **Seconded** by Anderson. **Approved.** Albright noted that we will also develop a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding project maintenance with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and the Wilkin Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Project No. 78, Clay/Wilkin Judicial Ditch (J.D.) No. 1 Diversion. The main petitioners, Blayne Tonsfeldt, Bryan Kritzberger, and Paul Anderson, attended the 12/11/18 meeting to get an update on the status of the J.D. No. 1 Diversion project. At that meeting, Jones presented a summary of the draft Preliminary Survey Report, and concerns were noted about the proposed project's cost and Clay County's potential benefits. A meeting was held with the petitioners on 12/21/17 to continue the discussion about alternatives. Another meeting is scheduled for 1/11/18 at 8:00 AM in the BRRWD office to consider a possible improvement for the J.D. No. 1 outlet in Clay County instead of the diversion option, which might yield a more cost-effective project. Jones has several alternatives for an improvement project for the petitioners to consider at their next meeting. Jones noted that the project will still be expensive (\$1.5 million), but the outlet improvement could provide better drainage for more property, and we should be able to reuse several of the concrete culverts just by lowering their elevations. He explained that the major issue with J.D. No. 1 in Clay County is that upstream water from Wilkin County gets to the county line faster than the downstream channel can drain out, so the water in the ditch gets higher than the side inlets and they close, causing water to pond on the adjacent fields until all the Wilkin County water has passed through the system. By lowering the downstream channel/outlet, more water gets out of the system earlier, plus the flow will be lower in the ditch and the side inlets will stay open longer, allowing water in the adjacent fields to drain off earlier. Jones noted that models for both alternatives show flood reduction at the County line.

Albright explained that the petition may have to be revised and refiled. The petitioners increased their bond to \$40,000 following the last meeting.

Project No. 49, Oakport Flood Mitigation. Albright reported that Ulteig Engineers, Inc. (UEI) has nearly finished the levee certification process. The preliminary maps have been submitted to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and are under review. He noted that several Oakport residents have contacted

the office regarding their flood insurance premium renewals that are coming due in January. Once the levee is certified, their premiums should be reduced.

The Board briefly discussed the status of the Larson-Kopperud lawsuit.

Albright reported that Gladen Construction, Inc., will be working to remove the spoil material this spring as conditions permit. The contract has a 6/30/18 deadline. The contractor will work with the owners of one location where they will have to cross cropland to access the spoil disposal site this spring before field work begins. Albright contacted Carl Pierce regarding our annual lease to store spoil material on his property. The lease payment (\$3,000) is included on tonight's bill list. **Motion** by Anderson to approve renewing the 2018 temporary storage lease in the amount of \$3,000 with Carl A. Pierce. **Seconded** by Fjestad. **Approved.** The Pierce site will be one of the first to be cleaned up this spring by the contractor. The Board briefly discussed the Fischer family stockpile lease.

Audubon Dakota received a Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) grant to complete their native grass seeding and clipping/mowing. Albright met with a researcher from North Dakota State University (NDSU) to coordinate access to the project property for small mammal (deer mice) trapping/population counts.

Albright noted that the wetland restoration work is progressing, except for the site along the north side of Wall ST NW. More work will be necessary if we want the site to qualify for mitigation banking. HEI will prepare recommendations for site restoration work for the Board's review in the next few weeks.

Project No. 21, Wilkin C.D. No. 13-Lateral/C.D. No. 13. The Bradley Nelson crossing was not completed this year, so it will be a priority next spring. Albright still plans to contact landowner John Thompson regarding the channel repair and inlet pipe installation along his property on C.D. No. 13-Lateral.

Project No. 1, Wilkin C.D. No. 22 Repair. William Nichol Excavating, Inc., did get started on the main ditch repair this fall, but weather has now shut them down. This work will be completed next spring when conditions allow.

BWSR Drainage Records Modernization (DRM) Grants. The Board was successful in obtaining a BWSR FY 2018 DRM grant. The grant (\$50,000) will be used to upload our ditch systems records to an online system to make them more accessible. HEI has developed a procedure to streamline the process. Albright expects BWSR will forward the grant contract for the Board's review and signature in the next few weeks. HEI will also submit an estimate for their services for the Board's approval. Van Amburg noted that the Wild Rice Watershed District (WRWD) also received a grant (\$25,000) for this work.

Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP). The Board discussed and responded to the questions on the annual Level 1 PRAP check list. Albright will file the form, should BWSR ask. Albright noted that BWSR has prepared several training videos related to the Data Practices and Open Meeting Law designed to provide Watershed Boards with free training on these topics. He suggested that the Board could watch the short presentations over a series of meetings. The Board did fall short on the Level II PRAP performance standard for "Board Training". The Managers thought this might an effective way to address this issue.

Upper South Branch of the Buffalo River. Thomas Eskro, Engineer, HEI, contacted the Rogelstad family regarding their interest in a project on their property. Albright noted that the BRRWD plans to present the family with several acquisition options with the hope that our project can move forward. There is other property that has recently been identified that potentially could also be part of the project. Albright noted that a meeting with BWSR and the Wilkin SWCD to formalize a funding plan is scheduled on 1/11/18 at 10:00 AM in the BRRWD office.

Wilkin County Ditch Repairs. The Board discussed some right-of-way (R/W) payment adjustments that will need Board approval once the landowners have been contacted and are satisfied with the changes. Albright noted that he met with Shawn Norman regarding his appeal. Norman indicated that he will assume responsibility for the buffer strip installation along Wilkin C.D. No. 44.

A landowner, who has land assessed to both Wilkin C.D. No. 42 and 43, contacted Albright with questions about their assessment for the repair project. Their land is enrolled in RIM and is not in crop production. Albright explained that when the benefits were redetermined in 1988, their land was in the benefit area at a combined assessment of about \$10/acre for both systems (\$5 each). At this point, it wouldn't be feasible to hold a redetermination for just their property. Albright suggested that the Board could consider a redetermination of benefits for these ditch systems in the future since area drainage has changed since the BRRWD constructed Project No. 31, Deerhorn Creek Levees, and then establish a benefit area for Project No. 31, which doesn't have one currently.

Postage Meter Upgrade. The office was recently contacted by Pitney Bowes regarding a rent increase for our older model postage machine. The current rate is \$40.55/month with no long-term lease agreement. The lease for a new machine with the latest technology is \$43/month with a 63-month lease. Metered postage cost less than stamps. The company is recommending that we upgrade at this current promotional rate. **Motion** by Fjestad to approve the postage meter upgrade. **Seconded** by Anderson. **Approved.**

One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P). The draft MOA, draft By-Laws, and scope of work have been completed and are ready to be distributed to the SWCDs and Counties for their review and signature.

Red River Basin Commission (RRBC) Conference. The RRBC is holding their 35th Annual Land & Water International Summit Conference on January 23-25, 2018, at the Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Albright and Managers Hanson and Fjestad plan to attend.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)/Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS). Albright reported that Jim Courneya, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), notified him that the WRAPS for the Upper Red River Study has been approved, and they have forwarded the TMDL to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for review and approval. There is a 319 Grant workshop Webinar scheduled tomorrow from 1:00-2:00 PM. Albright will participate in the meeting at the HEI office in Fargo. The BRRWD should be eligible district-wide for 319 Grant funds this year now that the WRAPS and TMDL have finally been completed.

2015 Buffer Law. Albright noted that the BRRWD must hold hearings for each of our ditch systems that need to have buffer strips established by the 11/01/18 deadline. Staff is working on a schedule for those hearings, which will include the preparation of Viewers' Reports, hearing notices to all the landowners for each system, and easement payments. Jones noted that there is funding available from the Counties for the buffer initiative implementation. There are several ditch systems that already have adequate buffers and won't need to be included in the buffer process.

Elkton Wetland Restoration. Albright noted the Briks Family notified him that they need the Getz family to agree to mitigation for approximately 0.3 acres of wetland on their property, which is part of a larger wetland site that the Briks Family LP is trying to mitigate with banking credits from the Elkton wetland restoration. The Briks Family needs this acreage to complete their wetland banking credit purchase associated with the Manston Slough project. Albright plans to contact the Getz family regarding this issue. Mark Aanenson, HEI, is working with the COE regarding the wetland banking credit acreage on the Elkton site. BWSR and the COE do not agree on how many banking credits the Elkton site created.

BRRWD Goals. Albright provided an updated list of the BRRWD's Short-Intermediate-Long Term Goals for the Board's review and future discussion.

The following bills were presented for approval:

Accounts Payable	Description	Account	Amount
AmeriPride	December rug billing (2)	Admin.	\$ 64.42
Area I Junior/Senior Envirothon	West OT Envirothon Contribution	M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3	\$ 100.00
Carl A. Pierce	2018 Temporary Storage Lease	Pj. 49, Oakport	\$ 1,000.00
Carmen Pattengale	December Cleaning (2)	Admin.	\$ 130.00
Catherine L. Affield	#17-36, 11/01/17-12/31/17	Admin.	\$ 187.74
City of Barnesville	#10009194, 12/25/17 billing	Admin.	\$ 869.15
Evie's Kitchen	1/8/18 Annual Meeting Meal	Mediation PT	\$ 40.00
Fuchs Sanitation	#12136, 12/31/17 Garbage billing	Admin.	\$ 51.48
Gerald L. Van Amburg	#17-42, 11/01/17-12/31/17	Varies	\$ 809.56
HEI	December Billing	Varies - See attached	\$ 98,374.98
Jason Rick Snow Removal	December Snow Removal (8)	Admin.	\$ 765.00
Jay A. Leitch	#17-41, 11/01/17-12/31/17	Varies	\$ 705.55
Joan E. Lazorekno	2018 Temporary Storage Lease	Pj. 49, Oakport	\$ 1,000.00
Joel Carlson, Inc.	January Lobbyist Fees	Admin.	\$ 850.00
John E. Hanson	#17-39, 11/01/17-12/31/17	Varies	\$ 748.06
Liberty Business Systems, Inc.	#313115, Contract overage	Admin.	\$ 107.88
MN Dept. of Natural Resources	#228923, 8th Contract billing	M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3	\$ 10,150.00
Moorhead Public Service	11/15/17-12/18/17 Service	Pj. 49, Oakport	\$ 32.84
Olson Construction, Inc.	#59304, Beaver Control/Repairs	Varies	\$ 8,240.00
Peter V. Fjestad	#17-38, 11/01/17-12/31/17	Varies	\$ 470.43
Petty Cash	Office Supplies	Admin.	\$ 100.00
Premium Waters, Inc.	#366590-12-17, office water	Admin.	\$ 41.62
Purchase Power	December Postage	Admin.	\$ 150.00
Richard L. Pierce	2018 Temporary Storage Lease	Pj. 49, Oakport	\$ 1,000.00
Rinke Noonan Law Firm	Drainage & Water Conf Reg. (2)	Admin.	\$ 190.00
RRVCPA	12/01/17-01/01/18 Service	Pj. 49, Oakport	\$ 84.36
Thomas Seelye	#228900, tree removal	Becker C.D. No. 5	\$ 900.00
Troy E. Larson	#17-40, 11/01/17-12/31/17	Admin.	\$ 177.04
Troy E. Larson	#17-33, 09/01/17-10/31/17	Admin.	\$ 177.04
Twin City Hardware	#916400,new hand-held kit for door	Admin.	\$ 811.87
Ulteig Engineers, Inc.	#69696, Levee Cert. thru 11/30/17	Pj. 49, Oakport	\$ 10,675.00
Ulteig Engineers, Inc.	#70469. levee cert. thru 12/31/17	Pj. 49, Oakport	\$ 350.00
United States Treasury	Form 941 - 4th QTR	Admin.	\$ 699.98
Wilkin County Highway Dept.	Culverts	Wilkin C.D. No. 15	\$ 19,753.74
Wm. Nichol Excavating	#248, Ditch Clean out	Wilkin C.D. No. 22	\$ 4,725.00
WREC	11/18/17-12/18/17 Service (2)	Pj. 46, Turtle Lake	\$ 191.56
Xcel Energy	11/21/17-12/26/17 Gas Service	Admin.	\$ 141.52
			\$ 164,865.82

Motion by Anderson to approve payment of the bills. **Seconded** by Fjestad. **Approved.**

2018 BRRWD Annual Meeting.

Election of 2018 Officers. Albright noted that four Managers are up for County reappointment in 2018: Fjestad, Hanson, Larson, and Leitch. The office will send notices to the respective counties regarding these appointments, which must be finalized by 8/31/18. Chairman Van Amburg noted that he has decided not to run for reelection and nominated Leitch to be the new BRRWD Chair. **Seconded** by Anderson. **Approved.** **Motion** by Anderson to cast a unanimous ballot to reelect the current Treasurer, Secretary, and Vice Chair. **Seconded** by Larson. **Approved.** The BRRWD officers for 2018 will be as follows: Chair-Jay Leitch, Vice Chair-Peter Fjestad, Treasurer-Mark Anderson, and Secretary-John Hanson.

Appointment of 2018 Consultants. Harold Rotunda, Certified Public Accountant (CPA), submitted a letter of agreement regarding his services to conduct the 2017 audit. He indicated that the fee for his services would be the same as last year at \$2,100. **Motion** by Fjestad to hire Rotunda to complete the 2017 audit and Salber and Associates, Inc., to prepare the 2017 W-2s and 1099s. **Seconded** by Leitch. **Approved.**

Vogel Law Firm submitted a proposal for 2018 legal services with a \$5.00/hour rate increase. **Motion** by Fjestad to hire Vogel Law Firm as the BRRWD's legal consultant for 2018. **Seconded** by Affield. **Approved.**

The Board discussed HEI's 2018 proposal for engineering services. The rates will rise approximately 3% for 2018. The BRRWD receives a discount from HEI's regular hourly rates. The office staffing would remain the same, including Albright (Administrator), Julie Jerger (senior full-time administrative assistant), Kathy Fenger (full-time administrative assistant), and Danielle Scheffler (part-time administrative assistant). The agreement includes a monthly office rental payment of \$225 to the BRRWD for any non-watershed work coming out the BRRWD Barnesville office. **Motion** by Anderson to appoint HEI as the BRRWD's 2018 engineering consultant. **Seconded** by Fjestad. **Approved.**

2018 Financial Designation. **Motion** by Anderson to designate Barnesville Midwest Bank (primary) and Wells Fargo Bank (secondary), as the official 2018 BRRWD depositories, subject to the use of any other depositories within the District as needed throughout the year, provided they are FDIC insured. **Seconded** by Larson. **Approved.**

Stony Creek Restoration. Albright discussed the project process/status. He noted that the Board will have to consider a possible redetermination of benefits for Clay C.D. No. 31. Jones discussed different options for C.D. No. 31 in conjunction to the project: the creation of a watershed management district (WMD) like the Wolverton Creek project, or the preparation of an Appraisers' Report with a redetermination of benefits. The current benefit rates haven't changed since the project was built in 1907. The Board discussed potential funding sources, including a Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) grant. Jones will prepare a LCCMR funding application. Van Amburg noted that we should contact our lobbyist, Jay Carlson, to contact our local legislators regarding this funding opportunity for Stony Creek.

Otter Tail River Restoration. Albright noted that the staff had a conference call with the COE regarding the status and development of the restoration project last month, and another call is scheduled for the end of January. It appears that the COE can have their work on the feasibility report and environmental assessment completed by the end of 2018, which would position the project to be eligible to apply for LSOHC funding in 2019.

Assistant Administrator. The Board discussed Albright's planned absence at the end of January for medical treatment. They also talked about the issue of hiring an assistant administrator. Van Amburg thought the Board needed to decide whether the assistant administrator should be a BRRWD employee or if we should continue the practice of contracting with HEI for the office staff. Van Amburg noted that our current staffing relationship with HEI has been very successful. **Motion** by Hanson to authorize HEI to move forward with hiring an assistant administrator for the BRRWD. **Seconded** by Larson. Affield asked if we should investigate the option of the BRRWD hiring their own employee before deciding on how to move forward with hiring Albright's assistant. She felt the first step in the hiring process is to develop a job description for the assistant administrator position. The Board had an extended discussion about the hiring process. Hanson withdrew the motion and Larson withdrew his second. **Motion** by Anderson to appoint Managers Leitch, Affield, and Van Amburg to a committee to explore hiring options. **Seconded** by Fjestad. **Approved.** The Board wanted the committee to report back as soon as possible, so that this process can move forward.

Next Meeting. The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, January 22, 2018, at 7:00 PM in our Barnesville office.

Adjournment. Motion by Fjestad to adjourn the meeting. **Seconded** by Anderson. **Approved.** Chairman Van Amburg adjourned the meeting at 9:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John E. Hanson, Secretary