

# ***BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT***

BARNESVILLE, MINNESOTA 56514

1303 4th AVE NE

PHONE 218-789-3100

Website: [www.brrwd.org](http://www.brrwd.org)

---

---

## MINUTES FOR SPECIAL MANAGERS' MEETING

June 14, 2021

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), held a special meeting on Monday, June 14, 2021, at 5:30 PM in the Barnesville office. BRRWD Managers present in the office were Peter V. Fjestad, John E. Hanson, Catherine L. Affield, Paul G. Krabbenhoft, Mark L. Hanson, Troy E. Larson, and Gerald L. Van Amburg. BRRWD Staff attending included Kristine M. Altrichter, BRRWD Administrator, RaeAnn Berg, Administrative Assistant, and Zach Anderson, Watershed District Specialist, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI). Others attending in person: Wayne Johnson and Kurt Mortenson, Otter Tail County Commissioners; Lyle Hovland, Wilkin County Commissioner; BRRWD Attorney Tami Norgard, Vogel Law Firm; and landowner Mark T. Anderson.

President Fjestad called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM and advised the audience that the meeting was being recorded.

BRRWD Administrator Altrichter presented the Staff Transition Proposal. The Human Resources (HR) Committee recommended contracting with HighRoad Partners, to provide the HR Services, including compliance with State and Federal employment laws, payroll management, on-boarding, compensation, on-call HR support, and HR technology support. The cost is \$240 per month (\$80 per employee) for a 12-month contract with an implementation fee of \$240 due at contract signing.

The HR committee recommended a benefits package including Health, Dental, Vision, Short and Long Term Disability, Life and Accidental Death & Dismemberment. The BRRWD will pay the premium for the employee, but the employee is responsible for paying the premium for additional members on the plan. As a public entity the BRRWD is required to enroll eligible employees in the Public Employee Retirement Association (PERA) and contribute to employees' accounts, as outlined in Minnesota Statute. The anticipated cost for monthly premiums and PERA contribution for 3 employees is \$3,127.79 per month.

Sara Noah, Noah and Associates, Inc., completed a salary survey of positions in northwestern Minnesota similar to the BRRWD positions to create a pay grade and scale for each position. Following transition, the BRRWD will have a District Administrator, Watershed Specialist II, and Administrative Assistant II. Total monthly cost to the BRRWD for staff would be approximately \$14,300. It was noted that Senior Administrative Assistant Julie Jerger will remain with HEI until her retirement. The HR Committee will continue in its current capacity and conduct annual reviews prior to the Annual Budget Hearing to determine possible staff grade changes for the Board's consideration.

The Board reviewed the Information Technology (IT) Services proposal from High Plains Technology, including help desk support, 20 hours of onsite support, networking monitoring, device maintenance, monthly reporting, network security, and data backup for a monthly cost of \$375 with a 12-month contract.

The Board discussed the acquisition of an office vehicle. Staff are waiting for information regarding the State bid before moving forward. Staff anticipate a four-door pickup truck will be purchased/leased from a dealer within the BRRWD, if competitive with the state bid.

The Board reviewed a financial summary of the proposals discussed. The anticipated yearly cost to transition 3 employees to BRRWD employment would be \$215,600. Krabbenhoft asked for a comparison of the current costs to those following the transition. Altrichter explained that while it was difficult to determine the actual

administrative costs, it is anticipated that there will be long term administrative savings as a result of the transition.

Wayne Johnson asked how administrative costs exceeding the administrative tax levy will be managed. Van Amburg explained that the administrative tax levy does not cover all the administrative costs, so the BRRWD has levied an administrative fee (currently 1%) to each project/ditch system account, based on the account's annual financial activity/expenses. Altrichter noted staff time will be allocated to the respective project and ditch system accounts, as it has been in the past, so not all of staff time will be charged to the administrative account. Johnson thought that moving forward after transition, the new staff arrangement will provide the public with more fiscal clarity regarding BRRWD activities.

The group discussed the cost associated with the transition, it was understood there may not be a reduction, but concerns regarding perceived conflict of interest should be lessened by the District employing their own staff.

Altrichter and Z. Anderson noted that transitioning the Staff to BRRWD employment will allow staff to assume more tasks historically managed by HEI in Fargo, which will provide cost savings, and allow for more efficient and effective processes.

The County Commissioners commented that it appears that the BRRWD is moving in a very healthy direction with the staff transition, and they supported the Board's decision.

President Fjestad adjourned the meeting at 6:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John E. Hanson, Secretary