

BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

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MINUTES FOR MANAGERS' MEETING

May 24, 2021

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), held their regular meeting on Monday, May 24, 2021, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office. The meeting was also available online. BRRWD Managers present were Peter V. Fjestad, Catherine L. Affield, Gerald L. Van Amburg, John E. Hanson, Mark L. Hanson, Troy E. Larson, and Paul G. Krabbenhoft. BRRWD staff in attendance were Kristine M. Altrichter, Administrator, and Bennett Uhler, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI). Others attending online: Landowner Cary Anderson.

At 7:01 PM, President Fjestad called the meeting to order and announced that the meeting was being recorded to aid in the preparation of minutes.

Agenda. Additions to the meeting agenda: the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) proposal, United States Geological Survey (USGS) joint funding request, and an update on Project No. 81, Whiskey Creek Enhancement. **Motion** by Larson to approve the amended agenda. **Seconded** by Krabbenhoft. **Approved** by unanimous roll call vote.

Secretary's Report. The Board reviewed draft minutes for the 5/10/21 regular meeting, the 5/13/21 Clay County Ditch (C.D.) Nos. 12, 21, 55, 58, and 69 Buffer Hearing, and the 9/17/15 Wilkin C.D. Nos. 5A, 22, and 26 Buffer Hearing. **Motion** by Affield to approve the minutes. **Seconded** by J. Hanson. **Approved.**

Treasurer's Report. The Board reviewed the BRRWD's 5/24/21 financial update. Cash on hand is \$2,910,303.95. Income received since the 5/10/21 meeting totals \$249,222.53, and for the year, totals \$2,092,749.73. Year to date Account Receivables total \$14,693,120.38.

Other Business brought before the Board included:

Ditch Buffer Findings and Order. The Board reviewed the Findings and Order for the buffer installations on Clay C.D. Nos. 12, 21, 55, 58, and 69. **Motion** by Van Amburg to approve the Findings and Order for the referenced ditch systems. **Seconded** by Krabbenhoft. Cary Anderson, who owns land on Clay C.D. No. 58, had a question about his new residential easement boundary line. Wade Opsahl, Technician, HEI, will be asked to contact Anderson. Van Amburg amended his motion to approve the Findings and Order, pending resolution of Anderson's C.D. No. 58 easement inquiry. **Approved.**

Clay C.D. No. 3 Repairs. Uhler presented the results from the bid opening for the C.D. No. 3 repair project in Section 8, Moland Township. The Engineer's estimate was \$85,000. Uhler recommended that the Board award the contract to Northern States Excavating, Inc., Fargo, ND, for their bid of \$81,282. **Motion** by J. Hanson to award the contract to Northern States Excavating, Inc. **Seconded** by Affield. **Approved.**

LSOHC 2022 Funding Request. Uhler presented a status update of the 2022 Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) Grant application for Phase 2 of the Buffalo River Watershed Stream Habitat Program. The funding is targeted for District-wide stream restoration projects, including a 7-mile restoration of the Upper Buffalo River channel in Becker County and a 4.2-mile restoration of the Upper South Branch of the Buffalo River channel and riparian habitat corridor in Wilkin County. Additional reaches within the BRRWD in Clay County where the funding could potentially be used include the Glyndon East Tributary

restoration project and the restoration of the Whisky Creek tributaries west of Barnesville. Uhler will be submitting the application this week. The LSOHC will hold hearings this summer to award the funding.

COE Wetland Credit Purchase. The Army Corps of Engineers (COE) submitted a request to purchase 0.5 wetland credits from the BRRWD's wetland bank by August 2021 to mitigate impacts from the FM Diversion Red River Control Structure on the Minnesota side of the river. They inquired if the BRRWD is willing to sell credits, and what rate they would charge. Altrichter reported on the rates BWSR paid when they purchased credits from the BRRWD in August 2020. The Board discussed the COE's request. Manager Van Amburg and the Staff will investigate wetland credit rates for the Board's review at the next meeting.

RRWMB LiDAR. The RRWMB is planning to collect LiDAR data in the Red River Valley and offered to include non-member Watershed Districts at the RRWMB member rate of \$125-\$150/square mile (sq. mi.). The regular non-member rate is approximately \$400/sq. mi. The Board discussed the benefits of current LiDAR data and the potential benefits of the new data. The RRWMB needs a response from the BRRWD by 6/9/21. Altrichter will contact Rob Sip, RRWMB Administrator, to ask for more time and information for the Board to make a decision regarding this offer.

Otter Tail River WRAPS/TMDL. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) reports for their Otter Tail River Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) and Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies are open for public comment through 6/9/21.

BRRWD Advisory Committee. The Board reviewed a list of the 2020 Advisory Committee members and discussed how members are selected and the Committee's function. Each Manager agreed to be responsible for finding potential Committee candidates for their respective counties. They will provide an update on their progress at the 6/14/21 meeting.

MAWD Region 1 Meeting. The Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) plans to hold regional meetings this summer to inform members about policy updates, provide opportunities to connect with state agencies, and to address regional issues. Currently, MAWD is organizing a virtual introductory meeting on Tuesday, June 22, 2021.

HR Committee Staff Transition. Altrichter reported that at their last meeting on 5/10/21, the Committee tentatively completed their recommendations for the Staff Transition Proposal. Following tonight's Board meeting, the Committee will meet again to review their proposal, which will be distributed to the full Board this week. Altrichter recommended that the Board hold a special meeting prior to the 6/14/21 Board meeting for an in-depth review, so that the Managers could be prepared to vote on the recommendations at that meeting. The Committee has a tentative Staff transition date of 8/1/21. **Motion** by Larson to hold the special Board meeting to review the Staff Transition Proposal on 6/14/21 at 5:30 PM. **Seconded** by Affield. **Approved.** The IT Request for Proposals (RFP) are due on 6/10/21 and a recommendation for IT services will be included in the final draft proposal.

As part of the Staff transition to BRRWD employment, the Staff researched Website service options and recommended a service called WIX. The initial cost of WIX is \$306 for a three-year plan. **Motion** by Van Amburg to authorize Staff to move forward with the proposed website update. **Seconded** by M. Hanson. **Approved.**

Future Meeting Format. The Board discussed how to handle the virtual option for the meetings, now that the Covid restrictions have been lifted in Minnesota. They agreed to continue to offer the virtual public option.

Whiskey Creek Enhancement. Uhler reported that a landowner in the N½, Section 1, Nilsen Township, Wilkin County, maintains that his property should not be included in the project assessment area because his

water does not drain north to Whiskey Creek. A field review identified a culvert fitted with a flap gate in 280th ST that prevents the water in Section 1 from draining north to the project. Manager Larson confirmed the flow of drainage in this area. The 30-day appeal period ends on 5/26/21. Staff will investigate the best process to remove the property from the water management district assessment (wmd) area.

USGS Gauging Contract. The USGS forwarded their standard joint funding agreement contracts for the Hawley and Sabin flood stage gauging stations for 10/01/20-9/30/21. The BRRWD and the USGS would split the costs. They also asked if the BRRWD would consider entering into an agreement for 2022 through 2026. **Motion** by Van Amburg to sign the USGS contract and begin the process to continue funding the operation of the stream flow gauging stations. **Seconded** by Krabbenhoft. **Approved.**

Minnesota-Clay County Joint Powers Agreement (MCCJPA) Update. Van Amburg furnished a report on the last JPA meeting for the Board's review. The next meeting is scheduled for 5/27/21.

Bills. The Board reviewed bills totaling \$556,186.19. **Motion** by J. Hanson to approve payment of the bills. **Seconded** by Affield. **Approved** by unanimous roll call vote. See detailed bill list below.

Next Meeting Agenda. The Board will meet at 5:30 PM prior to the 6/14/21 meeting to review the Staff Transition Proposal. HEI will have a bid award recommendation for Project No. 81, Whiskey Creek Enhancement Phase 1 construction contract. The Board will provide an update on the Advisory Committee membership search.

Next Meeting. The Board will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, June 14, 2021, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office. The conference line phone number is 1-701-404-1699. Conference ID: 810 298 227#. More information will be posted on the BRRWD's website prior to the meeting at www.brrwd.org.

Adjournment. President Fjestad adjourned the meeting at 8:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John E. Hanson, Secretary