MINUTES OF VIRTUAL / CONFERENCE CALL MEETING
RED RIVER JOINT WATER RESOURCE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
ORIGINATING AT WEST FARGO PUBLIC WORKS
810 12TH AVENUE NW, WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
MARCH 13, 2024
9:30 A.M.

A virtual / conference call meeting of the Red River Joint Water Resource District (RRJWRD) Executive Committee was held on March 13, 2024, at 9:30 a.m.

Present were Josh Ihry, Steele County Water Resource District; Keith Weston, Southeast Cass Water Resource District; Ben Varnson, Nelson County Water Resource District; Don Kemp, and Luann Kemp, Pembina County Water Resource District; Gary Thompson, Traill County Water Resource District; Tom Perdue, Grand Forks County Water Resource District (Sr. Alternate); Melissa Hinkemeyer, Secretary-Treasurer; Leilei Bao, Accountant; Carolyn Fiechtner, Administrative Assistant; Sean M. Fredricks, Ohnstad Twichell, P.C.; Randy Gjestvang, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Dani Quissell, North Dakota Water Users Association; Brian Fuder, Red River Retention Authority; Kurt Lysne, and Nathan Trosen, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Zach Herrmann and Mike Opat, Houston Engineering, Inc., Duane Breitling, Cass County Commissioner; David Kramar and Danni Halvorson, International Water Institute (IWI); Christi Fisher, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Morrie Lanning, Barr Engineering Co.; and Daryl Ritchison, North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network (NDAWN).

Approval of Agenda
It was moved by Manager Varnson, seconded by Manager Thompson, and unanimously carried to approve the agenda, as presented.

Minutes
It was moved by Manager Perdue, seconded by Manager Kemp, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the January 10, 2024, meetings (two sets).

Treasurer's Report and Bills
Manager Weston moved to approve the Financial Report and the payment of the wire transfers, as presented. Manager Perdue seconded. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

2025 Budget
Discussion was held on the 2025 budget for the RRJWRD. Following discussion, Manager Varnson moved to approve and authorize the Chairman to sign the *Red River Joint Water Resource District Resolution Approving 2025 Budget*. Manager Kemp seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

NDAWN all-season weather gages

Daryl Ritchison presented on NDAWN all-season weather gages and their capabilities. NDAWN all-season weather gages provide valuable weather data such as snow depth and precipitation that is used for many purposes, including flooding predictions. The RRJWRD previously funded 15 all-season weather gages, of which 14 have been installed. The remaining gage will be installed this year. NDAWN is seeking funding to install an additional 7 all-season weather gages throughout the Red River Basin. The additional gages will help provide more accurate data throughout the Red River Basin and NDAWN data can be accessed by the public for free at www.ndawn.info. Mr. Ritchison noted the Metro Flood Diversion Authority will also be funding all-season weather gages in the Red River Basin that will be beneficial to the Metro Flood Diversion Project. Mr. Ritchison also continues to work on securing funding for all-season weather gages in the Red River Basin in Minnesota. The all-season weather gages have an estimated lifespan of 20 years and are typically installed in the summer.

It was moved by Manager Weston and seconded by Manager Thompson to approve and allocate funding for 7 additional NDAWN all-season weather gages in the Red River Basin in North Dakota and authorize the Chairman to sign the *Agreement* regarding the gages with NDAWN / North Dakota State University. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Cost-share request – Pembina County Water Resource District – Tongue River NRCS Watershed Plan

Manager Kemp reported the Pembina County Water Resource District requests cost-share from the RRJWRD for the Pembina County WRD – Tongue River NRCS Watershed Plan to construct the preferred alternative of the Plan. The project will restore approximately 1.8 miles of the Tongue River upstream of Lake Renwick.

Zach Herrmann explained to the Board that this is a restoration project due to severe erosion related to a 2013 flooding event. The project will consist of applying a channel hardening process and raising the channel bottom. The project will help reduce sediment deposits into Renwick Dam. Mr. Herrmann noted Pembina County Water Resource District is requesting 90% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, under Article X of the RRJWRD *Cost-Share Policies and Procedures,* not to exceed $596,385. Randy Gjestvang recommended approval of the cost-share request from Pembina County Water Resource District.

The Board discussed the request. After discussion, it was moved by Manager Weston to recommend the RRJWRD Full Board approve the request from Pembina County Water Resource District for 90% of the non-federal, non-state share regarding the Tongue River NRCS Watershed Plan, not to exceed $596,385, in accordance with Article X of the RRJWRD *Cost-Share Policies and Procedures*. Manager Varnson seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

IWI Methods Development for Improved Crop Analysis project update

David Kramar provided a presentation update of the IWI Methods Development for

Improved Crop Analysis project that involved the RCPP – North Branch Antelope Creek and RCPP - Upper Turtle River Dam #10 Watershed Plans. The project includes the use of more-detailed satellite data and development of a model that addresses the immediate need to improve crop acreage estimates by crop type for two watersheds so the economic analysis for two watershed plans currently in development can be finalized. Mr. Kramar will continue to refine the project in coordination with the NRCS.

Sargent County WRD membership

Discussion was held on the reduced RRJWRD membership dues received from Sargent County for 2024. Chairman Ihry and Mr. Gjestvang met with Sargent County Water Resource District and Sargent County Commissioners to discuss the RRJWRD budget process, the substantial cost-share directly received in Sargent County from the RRJWRD, and future cost-share opportunities through the RRJWRD for Sargent County. The Sargent County Commission misunderstood the RRJWRD budget request.

After discussion and review of the RRJWRD *By-Laws*, Manager Thompson moved to conclude Sargent County Water Resource District is not obligated to pay the remaining RRJWRD membership dues requested from Sargent County, and Sargent County Water Resource District remains eligible for RRJWRD cost-share funding. Manager Varnson seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The Board directed the Secretary-Treasurer to send correspondence to the Sargent County Water Resource District informing them of the decision.

RRJWRD logo

The Board reviewed and discussed various potential logos for the RRRA. After reviewing the various logos, a motion was made by Manager Weston and seconded by Manager Kemp to authorize the RRJWRD logo working group to hire a consultant to create a logo for the RRJWRD as discussed, not to exceed $2,000. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Long Term Flood Solutions study update

Mr. Gjestvang provided an update on the Red River Basin Commission's Long Term Flood Solutions study for the Red River basin. Mr. Gjestvang continues to participate in the technical committee discussions and provide comments on the study reports on behalf of the RRJWRD.

Lake Traverse / Mud Lake and Baldhill Dam operating plans updates

Mr. Gjestvang reported on updates to the Lake Traverse / Mud Lake and Baldhill Dam operating plans. Mr. Gjestvang and the Board have provided comments during the various comment periods for the updates of the operating plans on the importance of lake drawdowns for flood damage reduction efforts.

Legislative updates

Dani Quissell and Sean Fredricks reported on legislative updates regarding water resource districts.

Dani Quissell noted the North Dakota Water Resource Districts Associations' Joint Summer Water Meeting will be held July 10-11 in Minot, North Dakota.

Member Water Resource Districts project reports

Member Water Resource Districts reported on current activities in their districts.

Manager Kemp, Pembina County Water Resource District, reported Houston Engineering is working on a feasibility study for a potential project on a legal assessment drain. Pembina County Water Resource District is also continuing various legal assessment drain maintenance and reconstruction projects.

Manager Varnson, Nelson County Water Resource District, reported they are working on tree removal efforts, maintenance of legal assessment drains, and a bank stabilization project.

Manager Perdue, Grand Forks County Water Resource District, attended the IWI Conference at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks, North Dakota and stated there was great attendance at the event. Grand Forks County Water Resource District is also assisting Niagara, North Dakota, on a project involving the Niagara pond, as well as clean outs of legal assessment drains and an ongoing effort to identify a project to alleviate flooding issues in Mekinock, North Dakota.

Manager Thompson stated Traill County Water Resource District is continuing various legal assessment drain maintenance and reconstruction projects.

Manager Weston reported Southeast Cass Water Resource District is currently working on drain maintenance projects and coordinating with various entities to help facilitate local projects as well as snagging and clearing projects along the Sheyenne River.

Chairman Ihry, Steele County Water Resource District, reported they are working on future reassessments of legal assessment drains, continuing work with FEMA to obtain funding for repairs related to previous flood events, beaver dam removals, processing of subsurface water management permit applications, and facilitating a public meeting for the Elm River Dams #1, #2 and #3 projects.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the RRJWRD Executive Committee is scheduled for May 8, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department.

Adjournment
There being no further business to be considered by the Board, the meeting adjourned without objection.

APPROVED:

_____
Josh Ihry
Chairman

ATTEST:

_____
Melissa Hinkemeyer
Secretary-Treasurer