MINUTES OF VIRTUAL / CONFERENCE CALL MEETING
RED RIVER JOINT WATER RESOURCE DISTRICT FULL BOARD
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
SEPTEMBER 18, 2024
9:30 A.M.

A virtual / conference call meeting of the Red River Joint Water Resource District (RRJWRD) Full Board was held on September 18, 2024, at 9:30 a.m.

Present were Josh Ihry, Steele County Water Resource District; Keith Weston, Southeast Cass Water Resource District; Bruce Anderson, Barnes County Water Resource District; Gerald Melvin, Maple River Water Resource District; Robert Thompson, North Cass Water Resource District; Don Kemp, Pembina County Water Resource District; Arv Burvee, Richland County Water Resource District; Richard Sundberg, Rush River Water Resource District; Michael Wyum, Sargent County Water Resource District; Larry Tanke, Walsh County Water Resource District; Melissa Hinkemeyer, Secretary; Leilei Bao, Treasurer; Sean M. Fredricks, Ohnstad Twichell, P.C.; Jack Dwyer, North Dakota Water Users Association; Randy Gjestvang and Yaping Chi, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Brian Fuder, Red River Retention Authority Executive Director; Chuck Fritz and Taylor Lemieux, International Water Institute (IWI); Zach Herrmann, Mike Opat and Jacob Wognum, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Kurt Lysne, Moore Engineering, Inc.; and Morrie Lanning, Barr Engineering, Co. Grand Forks County, Nelson County, Ransom County, and Traill County Water Resource Districts were absent.

Approval of agenda
It was moved by Manager Tanke, seconded by Manager Sundberg, and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda, as presented.

Minutes
It was moved by Manager Burvee, seconded by Manager Sundberg, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the June 12 (two sets), 19 and July 31, 2024, meetings, as presented.

CD Report
Discussion was held on creating two new CDs to take advantage of the high interest rates while member Water Resource Districts continue to develop their projects that will likely request cost-share in the future.

It was moved by Manager Burvee and seconded by Manager Sundberg to approve and authorize the following:

- Approve BankNorth - Casselton as a depository of RRJWRD public funds

- Authorize the Secretary and Treasurer to create a new CD at BankNorth - Casselton in the amount of $1,000,000 for a term of 11 months at 5.00% interest
- Authorize the Secretary and Treasurer to create a new CD at Alerus Financial in the amount of $1,000,000 for a term of 14 months at 4.50% interest

Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The Board indicated as CDs mature, they prefer to renew them for longer terms to continue to take advantage of high interest rates.

Financial Report

It was moved by Manager Weston and seconded by Manager Sundberg to approve the Financial Report, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

IWI River Watch / River of Dreams programs update

Taylor Lemieux gave a presentation on the IWI River Watch and River of Dreams programs. Ms. Lemieux said the River Watch program is a program offered to high schools in the Red River Basin and their annual forum is being held in Grand Forks, North Dakota on February 25, 2025. The River of Dreams program reaches over 1,500 elementary students in the Red River Basin and involves learning about rivers and the Basin and launching a wooden canoe to see how far it will go. The Board discussed adding trackers to the canoes as well as attracting new schools to join these programs. Ms. Lemieux thanked the Board for their longstanding financial support for the IWI River Watch and River of Dreams programs.

RRJWRD Executive Committee alternate appointment

Chairman Ihry indicated there is an available alternate position on the RRJWRD Executive Committee as Manager Burvee has been appointed to fill the position that was previously held by Gary Thompson. Managers interested in the alternate position on the RRJWRD Executive Committee should contact Chairman Ihry. An appointment will be made at the next Full Board meeting on December 12.

Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) appointment

Brian Fuder, RRRA Executive Director, noted Rodger Olson resigned from the Maple River Water Resource District and thereby the RRJWRD and RRRA, thus the RRJWRD will need to appoint a new member to the RRRA to fill the vacant position.

A motion was made by Manager Sundberg and seconded by Manager Tanke to appoint Manager Weston to the RRRA for the remainder of calendar year 2024. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Cost-share request – Walsh County Water Resource District – Emergency Action Plan (EAP) updates for ten dams

Manager Tanke stated the Walsh County Water Resource District is pursuing EAP updates for ten dams in the District. Walsh County Water Resource District is requesting 65% of the non-federal, non-state share of the project to update the EAPs for ten dams

in the District, not to exceed $29,705. Randy Gjestvang stated the Executive Committee recommended the Full Board approve the request.

Manager Weston moved to approve and authorize the Chairman to sign the *Cost-Share Agreement* with Walsh County Water Resource District for up to 65% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share regarding the project to update EAPs for ten dams in the Walsh County Water Resource District, not to exceed $29,705. Manager Sundberg seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

RRJWRD Potential Projects list

Mr. Gjestvang briefly discussed the RRJWRD Potential Projects list. Member Water Resource Districts should keep Mr. Gjestvang informed of changes to projects on the list or project to add to the list. The list helps the Board and staff plan and budget appropriately.

Sponsors of projects on the RRJWRD Potential Projects list updated the Board on their projects.

Manager Kemp stated Pembina County Water Resource District continues to work on their dam safety improvement projects at Olson, Bourbanis, Herzog and Senator Young dams. They are also working on a Tongue River Watershed Dams Safety Improvements project to address improvements needed as the dams age.

Manager Tanke discussed Walsh County Water Resource District projects including safety improvements at Bylin, Fordville and Matecjek dams. Discussion was held on inflationary costs of dam safety projects. Manager Weston indicated the RRRA could help communicate with federal representatives regarding the current and future dam safety needs in the Red River Basin. The Board agreed.

Mr. Gjestvang briefly discussed Grand Forks County Water Resource District projects including rehabilitation of Larimore Dam, and projects at Upper Turtle River Dam #10 and Upper Turtle River Dam #8.

Mr. Gjestvang briefly discussed the McVille Dam Spillway Improvements project. McVille and Nelson County Water Resource District is working on getting involvement from the City of McVille on the project.

Chairman Ihry updated the Board on future improvement projects at Biabon Dam, Beaver Creek 20 Dam, and Hope Dam.

Kurt Lysne discussed the Cass County Joint Water Resource District projects, the Upper Maple River Regional Conservation Partnership Program – Site #1 and Site #2. Mr. Lysne noted site #2 can be removed from the list as the project is no longer being actively pursued.

Manager Burvee updated the Board on the Mantador Dam future project, Antelope Creek Detention Project Study and Wild Rice River Watershed Planning study.

Manager Wyum stated Sargent County Water Resource District continues to work on the Shortfoot Creek Watershed Detention project.

Manager Anderson updated the Board on Barnes County Water Resource District projects that can be added to the list including Clausen Springs Dam improvements, Little Dam improvement project that will begin construction soon, a project on 10 Mile Lake and a low head dam hazard mitigation project (Brown Dam).

Lower Red River Regional Detention Analysis Study update

Mr. Gjestvang updated the Board on the Lower Red River Regional Detention Study that is a joint effort with the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) and the Red River Basin Commission (RRBC) in coordination with the Corps of Engineers. The Study is not yet complete, as the Corps of Engineers continues to work on the modeling for the Study. The Executive Committee approved an extension request of the *Agreement for Cost-Share Reimbursement* with the State Water Commission for cost-share funding for the study. The extension request was submitted to the NDDWR and will be considered by the State Water Commission at their meeting on October 10. Zach Herrmann is working on coordinating a meeting with the Corps of Engineers to gather more information on their proposed budget and timeframe to complete the study. Mr. Gjestvang stated the study is very important as it will inform us how much detention is needed in each tributary of the Red River to achieve the goal of 20% peak flow reduction in the mainstem of the Red River.

Legislative Updates

Jack Dwyer and Sean Fredricks reported on legislative updates regarding water resource districts including proposed bills regarding flowage easements, watercourse determinations and stream crossing standards, and discussion on SB 2372 and proposed landowner versus landowner conflict remedies.

The Board also discussed concerns related to NDDWR permitting delays. The permitting delays have caused member Water Resource Districts to delay construction of projects by months or in some cases more than a year, which in turn increases project costs substantially.

A motion was made by Manager Sundberg and seconded by Manager Weston to include NDDWR permitting timelines in resolutions to be discussed at the 61st Annual Joint North Dakota Water Convention. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Brief discussion was held on ideas for water manager training at the 61st Annual Joint North Dakota Water Convention including topics such as financial management of water resource districts, a presentation from the North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund, and boardsmanship training.

Attendance

The Board discussed recent issues reaching a quorum at RRJWRD Full Board meetings and how to improve attendance at meetings. Chairman Ihry indicated if Managers are unable to attend, communicate with your designated alternate to have them attend in your place.

The Board also discussed implementing an automated text message reminder of upcoming RRJWRD meetings. The Secretary will look into options regarding automated text messages for discussion at the November Executive Committee meeting. Chairman Ihry noted in the meantime, Managers should inform themselves of their designated alternate(s).

Member updates

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

Manager Anderson, Barnes County Water Resource District, updated the Board on the Little Dam improvement project that will be under construction soon, the re-evaluation of a main legal assessment drain, other drain maintenance projects and processing of subsurface water management system permits.

Manager Melvin, Maple River Water Resource District stated the District is processing subsurface water management system permits as well as complaints between landowners. Maple River Water Resource District also has legal assessment drain improvement projects that are delayed by procedures related to cost-share funding.

Manager Thompson, North Cass Water Resource District, updated the board on the Elm River Dam Nos. 1, 2 and 3 improvement projects and also stated the District is having discussions on the jurisdiction of intercept culverts through roads into legal assessment drains.

Manager Kemp reported Pembina County Water Resource District has an ongoing major drain reconstruction project as well as repairs to Drain #82.

Manager Burvee stated Richland County Water Resource District is conducting standard maintenance of their facilities as well as processing subsurface water management system permits.

Manager Sundberg, Rush River Water Resource District, stated the District is coordinating various interfaces with the Metro Flood Diversion Project that is under construction within their district boundaries. The District is also looking into flattening side slopes on the Rush River to help address slope failures and improve facilitation of spring runoff. There has also been recent discussion with a solar farm company on using solar farm properties as a site for temporary detention primarily used during spring runoff.

Manager Wyum reported Sargent County Water Resource District recently met with the North Dakota Water Topics Overview Committee to discuss their Drain #11 project in more detail.

Manager Weston, Southeast Cass Water Resource District, reported on ongoing reconstruction projects of Drains #10 and #27, as well as standard operation and maintenance projects.

Chairman Ihry stated Steele County Water Resource District is working on animal damage control activities, weed control efforts, processing of subsurface water management system permits and complaints between landowners. The District also has ongoing reconstruction projects of Drains #6 and #11 as well as the Elm River Dam Nos. 1, 2, and 3 improvement projects.

Manager Tanke, Walsh County Water Resource District, stated the District is currently working on weed control efforts, surface water drainage permits and general operation and maintenance of their facilities. Manager Tanke expressed concerns regarding inflationary costs of operation and maintenance of water resource district facilities.

Next meeting

The next scheduled Full Board meeting is Thursday, December 12, 2024, at 12:00 p.m. at the Bismarck Hotel and Conference Center, 800 South 3rd Street, Bismarck, North Dakota.

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