

MINUTES OF VIRTUAL / CONFERENCE CALL MEETING
RED RIVER JOINT WATER RESOURCE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
MARCH 9, 2022

A virtual / conference call meeting of the Red River Joint Water Resource District (RRJWRD) Executive Committee was held on March 9, 2022, at 9:30 a.m.

Present were Gary Thompson, Traill County Water Resource District; Ben Varnson, Nelson County Water Resource District; Dan Jacobson, Southeast Cass Water Resource District; Josh Ihry, Steele County Water Resource District; Arv Burvee, Richland County Water Resource District (alternate); Carol Harbeke Lewis, Secretary-Treasurer; Nina Stone, Accountant; Melissa Maertens, Administrative Assistant; Sean M. Fredricks, Ohnstad Twichell, P.C.; Tom Perdue, Grand Forks County Water Resource District; William A. Hejl, Rush River Water Resource District; Don Kemp, Pembina County Water Resource District; Tasha Krueger, Steele County Water Resource District Secretary-Treasurer; Jessica Spaeth, Traill County Water Resource District Secretary-Treasurer; Randy Gjestvang, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Keith Weston, Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) Executive Director; Danni Halvorson, International Water Institute; Rob Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB); Zach Herrmann and Mike Opat, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Lyndon Pease and Nathan Trosen, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Morrie Lanning, Barr Engineering Co.; Dani Quissell and John Suter, North Dakota Water Users Association; and Daniel Thomas, USGS. Larry Tanke, Walsh County Water Resource District, was absent.

Minutes

It was moved by Manager Jacobson, seconded by Manager Ihry and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2022, meeting.

Treasurer's report

Manager Varnson moved to approve the Financial Report and the payment of wire transfers, as presented. Manager Ihry seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

2023 Budget

Discussion was held on the 2023 budget for the RRJWRD. After discussion, Manager Ihry moved to approve and authorize the Chairman to sign the *Red River Joint Water Resource District Resolution Recommending 2023 Budget*. Manager Jacobson seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

2023 Water Development Plan

Discussion was held on projects to submit to the NDDWR for the 2023 Water Development Plan. A motion was made by Manager Ihry and seconded by Manager Jacobson to authorize Randy Gjestvang to submit *LiDAR Tool Development – Hydro Conditioning for use in Water Delineation Tool on IWI Map Portal* to the NDDWR for the 2023 Water Development Plan. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Border Town Access Group (BTAG) study

Tom Perdue indicated the Border Town Access Group (BTAG) contacted him regarding a study on the Red River and into Oslo, Minnesota. Randy Gjestvang indicated the group has worked with Walsh County Water Resource District as a sponsor for a previous BTAG study. Mr. Gjestvang indicated the study does not appear to be eligible for RRJWRD cost-share funding. He said the project could be included in the NDDWR 2023 Water Development Plan with a local water resource district as the sponsor of the study, as BTAG does not have taxable authority as required to apply for State Water Commission cost-share funding.

Elm River Dam No. 1 and Elm River Dam No. 2 Improvements – cost-share request

Lyndon Pease reviewed the proposed Elm River Dam No. 1 and Elm River Dam No. 2 Improvements Project. The project would address deficiencies and update the dams to bring them into compliance with the state's current design standards. Traill County Water Resource District is requesting the RRJWRD provide 90% cost-share on the non-federal, non-state share of the project. Mr. Pease indicated if the project does not go forward, the dams are more susceptible to major damage or failure during medium to large floods. The emergency spillways could experience severe erosion because of the frequency of use and depth of flow. Sean Fredricks indicated Section X of the RRJWRD *Cost-Share Policies and Procedures* states the RRJWRD may vary from its cost-share policies and procedures on an individual or case-by-case basis if deemed necessary by the RRJWRD. Randy Gjestvang stated this project is an extraordinary circumstance and he recommends approval of the cost-share request from Traill County Water Resource District.

It was moved by Manager Varnson and seconded by Manager Jacobson to recommend the RRJWRD Full Board approve the request from Traill County Water Resource District for 90% cost-share on the non-federal, non-state share regarding the Elm River Dam No. 1 and Elm River Dam No. 2 Improvements Project, not to exceed \$1,286,100. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. The Board encouraged Traill County Water Resource District to diligently pursue an increased level of funding from the NDDWR for the project.

Legislative updates

Discussion was held on legislative updates regarding water resource districts. Sean Fredricks and Dani Quissell updated the Board on the SB 2208 interim study.

Basin Wide Funding Plan

Zach Hermann updated the Board on a potential pilot project for funding water conveyance projects in the Red River Basin through the RRJWRD. Mr. Herrmann outlined the proposed steps to continue development of the Basin Wide Funding Plan. The first step is to survey member water resource districts to identify upcoming water conveyance projects in the Red River Basin and associated project costs and schedules. The information requested will be similar in nature to information requested by the NDDWR for the 2023 Water Development Plan. Mr. Hermann noted the project surveys regarding the Basin Wide Funding Plan will be due in May with a completed Plan estimated for 2023.

RRWMB report

Rob Sip reported on recent activities of the RRWMB. The aerial portion of the LiDAR collect in Minnesota is complete and the RRWMB is in the process of testing the data in two watersheds. Once testing is complete, the data will be used by the IWI to create LiDAR-derived products. Mr. Sip reported on legislative updates regarding the RRWMB. The RRWMB annual conference with the Minnesota Flood Damage Reduction Workgroup is scheduled for March 22 and 23 in Moorhead, Minnesota. Everyone is welcome to attend the in-person event.

Metro Flood Diversion Project report

Manager Jacobson updated the Board on the Metro Flood Diversion Project. The Corps of Engineers is on or ahead of schedule on the components of the Metro Flood Diversion Project that they are constructing. Manager Jacobson stated the Public-Private Partnership developer is preparing to begin work later this year on the Diversion Channel and Associated Infrastructure of the Metro Flood Diversion Project. Cass County Joint Water Resource District continues to acquire property rights necessary for the project, including flowage easements.

IWI report

Danni Halvorson reported on recent projects and activities of the IWI. IWI is working to secure funding through the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality for the River of Dreams program and the RRJWRD is the matching local sponsor for the project. The annual River Watch Forum will be held on March 30, 2022, at the Alerus Center and will be an in-person event. There are over 250 students registered for the event and the RRJWRD is being asked to select and present the Managers Choice award for the event. Manager Ihry indicated he will attend the event on behalf of the RRJWRD to present the award. The Board directed Keith Weston to select the winner of the award prior to the River Watch Forum event.

Red River Basin Commission (RRBC) report

Manager Jacobson briefly reported on recent projects and activities of the RRBC including an upcoming tour of the Netley Marsh project in June and efforts to coordinate the bathymetry collection of the Red River mainstem from the South Dakota border to the Canadian border.

RRRA report

Keith Weston highlighted recent activities of the RRRA. The RRRA 2022 Retention Project Priorities List was recently sent to Minnesota and North Dakota legislators for their information. Discussion was held on upcoming outreach opportunities for water resource districts through radio commercials. Mr. Weston also updated the Board on a potential summer tour and ongoing Regional Conservation Partnership Program projects in the Red River Basin. A federal talking points paper was also developed to assist in discussions with legislators and federal partners regarding the RRRA. The next meeting of the RRRA will be held on March 16, 2022.

NDDWR / State Water Commission report

Mr. Gjestvang reported on recent meetings and activities he has participated in. The Lower Red River Regional Detention Analysis project is ongoing and is within budget. The NDDWR LiDAR data for the entire Red River watershed will be available in May. Mr. Gjestvang briefly reviewed the new process for requesting cost-share from the NDDWR through the WebGrants program. The State Water Commission is considering updates to their cost-share policy and will host meetings regarding the matter this summer. Brief discussion was held on flood forecasts in various areas of the Red River Basin.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the RRJWRD Executive Committee will be held on May 11, 2022, at 9:30 a.m., originating at the Cass County Highway Department.

Adjournment

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

APPROVED:

Gary Thompson
Chairman

ATTEST:

Carol Harbeke Lewis
Secretary-Treasurer