

MINUTES OF SPECIAL VIRTUAL / CONFERENCE CALL MEETING  
RED RIVER RETENTION AUTHORITY  
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT  
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA  
MARCH 16, 2022

The Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) held a virtual / conference call meeting on March 16, 2022, at 10:00 a.m.

Participating were John Finney, Gary Thompson, Greg Holmvik, Rodger Olson and Bill Petersen, Board members; Theresa Ebbenga and Stacy Lundberg (for Ted Preister), non-voting members; Keith Weston, Executive Director; Carol Harbeke Lewis, Secretary-Treasurer; Nina Stone, Accountant; Melissa Maertens, Administrative Assistant; Mary Podoll, Christi Fischer and Rita Harmsen-Sveen, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Rob Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB); Zach Herrmann, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Pat Downs, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Morrie Lanning, Barr Engineering Co.; and William A. Hejl, Rush River Water Resource District. Board member Ben Varnson and non-voting member Pat Fridgen were absent.

John Finney called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

**Agenda**

It was moved by Bill Petersen, seconded by Gary Thompson and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda.

**Minutes**

It was moved by Gary Thompson, seconded by Rodger Olson and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2021, meeting.

**Financial Report**

It was moved by Bill Petersen, seconded by Rodger Olson and unanimously carried to approve the Financial Report, as presented.

**Bills**

It was moved by Gary Thompson and seconded by Greg Holmvik to approve Check #1591 and the wire transfers, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**NRCS report**

Rita Harmsen-Sveen reported on the status of the 6 active RCPP Watershed Plans in North Dakota. The Upper Maple River Watershed Plan is requesting an exception to the benefit-cost ratio for the Plan and the RRRA will be asked to provide a letter of support to accompany the request. The Rush River Watershed Plan has been sent to the Chief at

the National Watershed Management Center for authorization and Moore Engineering, Inc. is currently working on the project design that is due in September 2022. The North Branch Park River Watershed Plan and Tongue River Watershed Plan are being revised based on comments received. The Shortfoot Creek Watershed Plan and the North Branch Antelope Watershed Plan are currently working on maximizing environmental benefits.

Keith Weston reported Cassie Ahmed has changed positions within the NRCS and her office is now located in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. Ms. Ahmed will remain a point of contact for NRCS questions or needs in the Red River Basin. The NRCS Minnesota Assistant State Conservationist – Field Operations will also be located in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.

### **Outreach – public service ads and announcements**

Mr. Weston discussed a proposal from Midwest Radio & Digital of Fargo-Moorhead for continued commercials to highlight RRRR topics and retention projects in the Red River Basin. Discussion was held on how to reach the northern Red River Basin through radio. Mr. Weston indicated there is an option to participate in various live and pre-recorded shows that are broadcasted further north in the Red River Basin. Mr. Weston stated the radio commercials have been a great outreach opportunity thus far.

A motion was made by Rodger Olson and seconded by Bill Petersen to approve and authorize Co-Chair Gary Thompson to sign the Midwest Radio & Digital of Fargo-Moorhead proposal for radio commercials, and to authorize Mr. Weston to locate an additional radio station in the northern area of the Red River Basin to highlight RRRR topics and retention projects in the Basin. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

### **Outreach – RRRR 2022 Retention Project Priorities List legislative mailing**

Mr. Weston reported the 2022 Retention Project Priorities List was recently sent to Minnesota and North Dakota legislators for their information. A few legislators have responded to the information thus far.

### **National Watershed Coalition**

Keith Weston stated the RRRR is a member of the National Watershed Coalition and he is planning to reach out to the Coalition to update them on the activities of the RRRR.

### **Office space**

Mr. Weston reported the Cass County Administrator recently inquired if the RRRR is interested in office space as part of the proposed remodel and potential expansion at the Cass County Highway Department. The Board discussed the matter and indicated they are not interested in relocating the office at this time; however, if other water-related groups such as the NDDWR Red River Office, RRBC or IWI co-locate within Cass County offices, the RRRR will revisit the topic.

### **Federal talking points**

Mr. Weston stated a federal talking points paper was developed to assist in discussions with legislators and federal partners regarding the RRRRA. The document will be distributed to the Board.

### **Legislative committee**

Discussion was held on the RRRRA potentially forming a committee to discuss legislative involvement of the RRRRA. The Board directed Gary Thompson, John Finney, Keith Weston, Randy Gjestvang and Rob Sip to further discuss the matter.

### **RRWMB legislative and project update**

Rob Sip briefly discussed the upcoming RRWMB and Flood Damage Reduction Workgroup 23rd Annual Joint Conference that will be held March 22 and 23 in Moorhead, Minnesota. The conference will be an in-person event and everyone is invited to attend. Mr. Sip also reported on legislative updates in Minnesota regarding flood damage reduction, retention and drainage projects. The RRWMB remains focused on securing funding for current and upcoming projects the RRWMB has invested in.

### **Agency and partner reports**

Theresa Ebbenga reported the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) will be presenting at the RRWMB and Flood Damage Reduction Workgroup Joint Conference. Ms. Ebbenga also reported on MDNR updates including ongoing work on flooding, potential drought conditions and the beginning of fire season in Minnesota. The MDNR also continues to work on the Metro Flood Diversion Project.

### **Meeting schedule**

The next RRRRA meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. at the RRWMB office in Ada, Minnesota.

### **Adjournment**

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

APPROVED:

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Gary Thompson  
Co-Chair

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John Finney  
Co-Chair

ATTEST:

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Carol Harbeke Lewis  
Secretary-Treasurer