

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Managers  
Of the Two Rivers Watershed District  
Held: Thursday, February 18, 2021 @ 3:00 p.m.**

The Board of Managers of the Two River Watershed District held a special meeting beginning at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 18, 2021. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the meeting was held in the upstairs meeting room of the Kittson County Courthouse in Hallock, MN with social distancing guidelines in place. The meeting was also held via “GoTo Meeting” to allow for the public to attend electronically either by phone or by computer.

Managers present included President Paul Olsonawski, Secretary Daryl Klegstad, Treasurer Joel Muir, Bruce Anderson, Rick Sikorski, and Scott Klein. Vice President Roger Anderson attended electronically. None were absent.

Others present included District Administrator Dan Money, Head Technician Matt Thompson, Attorney Jeff Hane (Brink, Sobolik, Severson, Malm & Albright, P.A.), Engineers Nate Dalager & Jake Huwe (HDR Engineering), and landowner Bredy Christianson.

The meeting was called to order by President Olsonawski. It was noted that the primary purpose of today’s meeting will be for the Board of Managers to discuss items specific to the Klondike Clean Water Retention Project #11. Many of these items do not get discussed at regular board meetings due to time constraints and other agenda items, and therefore this special meeting is being held to discuss in depth the various project components.

District Administrator Money gave a report on the following and distributed handouts:

**Project Fact Sheet:** A project fact sheet was distributed and discussed. It includes descriptive information of the project location, size, and objectives. It describes the flood damage reduction and the natural resources enhancement components of the project. It also provides information on the funding and phasing of the project and includes maps and timelines. This information can be used on the District’s website, as a handout, a mailing, news release or other print, electronic or social media. A line item cost estimate of proposed phase 1 construction was also provided. The Managers indicated this was a good tool, and some have provided this information to constituents.

**Record of Decisions:** A handout was provided showing the record of decisions that have been made by the Board regarding the project dating back to November 1, 2017. It includes information regarding public hearings, right of way acquisition, project phasing, informational meetings, decisions regarding various project components, permitting, and funding. This information can be referred to periodically to show the project history and decision making steps that have been taken by the Board of Managers.

**Permit Status:** A spreadsheet has been developed to track the various permits that are necessary to build the project. It is intended to be a reference for the various wetland, dam safety, ditch, road, environmental review, water quality, and historic preservation permits. It lists the permit, agency, requirements, status and timeline of each permit. The document will be updated periodically throughout the project process.

**Funding:** It was noted that project funding efforts are on-going. So far commitments have been obtained from the Red River Watershed Management Board (\$7.2 million), the MN DNR’s Flood Hazard Mitigation Program (\$250,000), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (\$256,022), Enbridge (\$100,000), Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (\$30,000), Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (\$1.9 million), and the Two Rivers Watershed District (\$1.5+ million). Future

funding sources will be sought from the Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant, LSOHC, and possibly the RRWMB. Just over \$6 million of these sources has been used to obtain land and approximately \$500,000 has been used on planning, permitting, and engineering design so far. Approximately \$5.3 million of the \$13 million that is need for phase 1 construction has been committed. N. Dalager mentioned that good progress has been made, and there is some momentum right now for funding. Money mentioned he plans to apply for additional LSOHC funds in 2021 and additional funds from the FHM grant program. Another possibility is to go back to the RRWMB if necessary.

**Right of Way:** Previous information was reviewed regarding right of way that is needed along the diked inlet. In 2018 the Board of Managers had authorized purchasing the land needed for 110% of the assessor's market value. It was considered that 10% would be offered in order to obtain an option to buy. The remaining 100% would need to be finalized within 15 years. To date, no landowners have agreed to the purchase agreements.

The Board of Managers considered the offers and how to move forward. Consideration was given to potentially purchasing an easement instead of buying the land outright. This would give the landowners to retain ownership with the authority to post the land and possibly hay it. In this scenario the District would need to be able to enter onto the land and have the right to construct and maintain the project in perpetuity.

Attorney J. Hane was directed to prepare examples that could be used for options to either 1) purchase the land, 2) purchase of an easement, or 3) contract for deed. Money was directed to prepare a draft letter that would be sent to landowners to inform and update them regarding the project, ask for their input, and inquire regarding preferences for purchase outright or easements. This information will be presented to the Board at their March 4<sup>th</sup> regular meeting.

Update regarding the land exchange application that was made to the DNR was provided. 480 acres of existing wildlife management area in section 13 is proposed to be traded with 480 acres of District land in section 10. Also 320 acres of State owned land in section 12 is proposed to be traded for 320 acres of District land in section 27. The proposal is currently on hold pending completion of the project environmental assessment worksheet. The EAW is being prepared by District staff and is expected to be ready for public comment in the next 60 days.

**Operating Plan:** HDR Engineering has prepared a draft operating plan, taking into account both the flood damage reduction and the natural resources enhancement elements of the project. Several meetings have been held with District staff, DNR representatives, MPCA representatives, and others. Trigger points are suggested for both closing the gates at the onset of a flood and opening them post-flood. In addition, flow augmentation is incorporated to try and achieve natural resources benefits of maintaining a minimum 20 cubic feet per second on the South Branch Two Rivers and 10 cubic feet per second on the Middle Branch Two Rivers. A few adjustments still need to be done to the operating plan, but it is in a format that can be used and discussed in order to finalize it.

Manager Sikorski mentioned frustration that this project does not fully address crossover flooding that occurs from the Roseau River. Some of his constituents have expressed their concerns to him regarding the crossovers and the proposal to place a dike around section 31 of Juneberry Township. This is in an area where overland flow occurs now and there is a perception that a dike in this area will cause water levels to be higher.

Some discussion was held regarding this issue and the fact that it seems to keep coming up time and again. Project designs and functions in this area have been discussed in detail at several past meetings. Sikorski mentioned that something should be done on the boundary line between the Roseau WD and the Two Rivers WD. Money replied that this has been discussed many times in past 20 years at meetings between the TRWD, RRWD, and Roseau County. The Watershed Districts have stated that if plugs were put in the lateral ditches at ground elevation, they could be permitted. Roseau County has stated in the past that as the Ditch Authority they would move on the recommendation, however to date they have not taken action.

Engineers Huwe and Dalager addressed the concerns of Sikorski regarding the KCWRP design plans in section 31 and the effects that the project will have regarding the crossover flows. They stated the project as designed will not have any negative impacts to the adjacent lands in this vicinity. It was noted that the KCWRP will have a minimal positive effect, because it is proposed to take inflows at times from the SD 72 system through Laterals 6 (Huseby ditch) and lateral 8 (Mel Wang ditch). Discussion was held on these effects both real and perceived. Sikorski mentioned it would be more palatable for area landowners if the dike around section 31 was changed to only utilize ½ of section 31. Huwe noted that if that were done, there would be little to no effect on the adjacent lands and the project would lose about 1,200 acre feet of storage. The plan and layout have been discussed in detail at previous meetings and the board of managers previously approved the current layout. Alterations to the Huseby ditch will greatly improve drainage, and Huwe detailed surveys and diagrams that show this effect.

Huwe introduced an alternative to potentially add to the existing plan that would take more of the overflow water and help adjacent landowners even more. This idea would involve creating a spillway at both the Huseby and Mel Wang ditches to let high water flow west to the sw corner of section 33, where it could either enter the project or head north around the project. Another spillway at SD 72 lateral 12 would be constructed on the county line which would allow water to get away from section 31 better. These additional spillways would have a net positive effect for the lands to the east and north of section 31.

Sikorski re-iterated that landowners in the area are concerned that the project would make matters worse. Members of the Board of Managers as well as Dalager and Huwe re-iterated that the project will not make the situation worse and will make it slightly better. Sikorski indicated he would like the minutes to state that if it is shown that after the project is built the flooding situation has worsened because of the project, the TRWD will take measures to rectify the problem. No action was taken on the matter, however HDR Engineering was directed by the Board of Managers to further develop the concept they proposed regarding spillways on laterals 6, 8, and 12 of State Ditch #72 and present and designs and drawings at the March 4<sup>th</sup> TRWD regular meeting.

**Public Information:** Discussion was held regarding how to communicate progress and status of the project to the public. Money was directed to put together a public information plan consisting of fact sheets, news releases, direct mailings, and other materials to release periodically to electronic and print media.

With no other matters to come before the Board of Managers, the meeting was adjourned.

Attest:

  
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Daryl Klegstad, Secretary

  
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Paul Olsonawski, President

