

**Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District Meeting Minutes
February 14th, 2024 at 6:30 pm at the MFCRWD Office**

Board of Managers Present: Ruth Schaefer, Jay Hedtke, Jeff Gertgen

Attending virtually: Shane Braegelman (departed Zoom call at approximately 8:00pm)

Not present: Amanda Toutges

Staff & Guests Present: Dan Coughlin, District Administrator; Jon Morales, Program Manager; Leah Melges, Office & Finance Manager.

Attending virtually: Andy Johnson, Project Manager (phone and Zoom); Brady Schmitz, District Engineer; and John Kolb, District Attorney

1. President Schaefer called the meeting to order at 6:37 pm.
2. President Schaefer recited the District's mission statement: "We exist for the protection and preservation of water quality in the Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District."
3. Approval of Agenda: A motion to approve the distributed agenda made by Manager Gertgen, seconded by Manager Hedtke. Motion passed unanimously.
4. Consent Agenda
 - a. Financial Report / Expenditure Report / Approval of Payables
 - b. Regular Board Meeting Minutes – January 10th, 2024
Motion by Manager Hedtke, seconded by Manager Gertgen to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed unanimously.
5. Discussion / Business Items
 - a. Appointment of North Fork Crow River Collaborative (One Watershed) Representative(s):
 - i. The appointment for a Policy Committee Representative was not designated in the annual resolution at last month's board meeting. Manager Schaefer currently serves as the District's representative. Manager Gertgen expressed interest in being the new representative. This was unanimously agreed upon by Manager Schaefer and Manager Hedtke, and Manager Gertgen was named the new North Fork Crow River Collaborative Representative.
 - b. Updates on the Proposed New London/Lake Monongalia Nanobubble Project:
 - i. State Bonding Bill Language:
District Administrator Dan Coughlin is working with Representative Dave Baker on developing this bill to be presented at the State Capitol, timeline is yet to be determined. New London City Council members are being asked to draft letters of support to accompany the trip to the Capitol.
Representative Baker recommended we secure 25% of the funding, via local match/grant/etc. for the project to demonstrate our level of commitment in addition to potential state funding. In a meeting with Coughlin and Program Manager Jon Morales yesterday, Moleaer CEO Nick Dyner discussed the company's willingness to cover half (or potentially all) of our 25% match

portion through their R&D/marketing budget. In exchange, they would require access to all telemetry and lake data, as well as the ability to showcase the city and project in any of Moleaer's future advertising endeavors. LCCMR grant fund applications are due at the end of March and District Administrator Coughlin will be submitting for those grants as well.

ii. Overview of Meeting with Professor Miki Hondzo, U of M – Saint Anthony Falls Lab:

Professor Miki Hondzo was a member of the original 2002 hydrogen sulfide study, along with Steve Mc Comas, which identified the amount of sediment oxygen demand for hydrogen sulfide. Program Manager Jon Morales went to the Saint Anthony Falls lab to visit Professor Hondzo to discuss moving a portion of that study from a lab study to a field study. The lab builds their own buoys, which can do data collection, and Professor Hondzo has volunteered 3 of his buoys for this study. Dissolved hydrogen sulfide monitoring is another metric that will be measured, and Professor Hondzo offered use of his amplifier to run the probes to obtain these metrics. Professor Hondzo recommended we start with preliminary monitoring in 4-5 locations, taking oxygen temp and pH, at 10 cm increments throughout the water column. Due to potentially unsafe ice conditions at this time, Morales will reach out to the county regarding interest in potential collaboration, specifically the use of their hovercraft.

iii. WBIF Funding Availability:

Procurement of an ice auger and safety equipment will need to be independent of WBIF funding dollars.

Erin Vruwink, intern from last summer, could potentially return this summer to assist in collecting monitoring data. With her experience last summer assisting Program Manager Jon Morales with monitoring, and Professor Hondzo's willingness to mentor and supervise this summer, Erin can earn advanced internship college credits. This was presented to the Personnel Committee, along with combining the two summer part-time positions into one totaling 440 hours, resulting in a cost reduction of \$8000 that can be put to use in other areas to help fund this project. This is Administrator Coughlin's recommendation. The Board expressed support for the summer worker proposal which will be brought to the March meeting for formal authorization.

Next week Program Manager Morales will meet with Professor Hondzo and Chris Stephan, from Moleaer, to discuss the efficacy of nano bubble technology. The study will consist of bringing in our sediment cores to have Moleaer test the nano bubble technology in a lab to see what impact can be expected on a larger scale on Lake Monongalia/Mill Pond.

A memo was sent to Manager Gertgen and Manager Braegelman with the Projects Committee regarding the MPCA connection with Kurt Anderson

falling through. In November 2023, Anderson agreed to conduct air H2S monitoring at the dam to collect current data. However, in January 2024, Anderson said he is unable to help us due to staffing issues.

RAECO Rents is a company that supplies the same monitor the MPCA uses, a quote for 5 weeks of use of a SPM Flex is \$5760. In order to use this equipment, we need to order a kemp cassette, which has a 3 week lead time on ordering, so the decision needs to be made in a timely manner if we hope to begin monitoring in March. Manager Gertgen made a motion for funding not to exceed \$5800, with an insurance rider if necessary, seconded by Manager Hedtke. Motion passed unanimously.

Program Manager Jon Morales asked for clarification on potential additional costs to RAECO Rents. Manager Gertgen made a motion to amend his motion to approve \$5800 in an amount not to exceed \$7000, seconded by Manager Hedtke. Motion passed unanimously.

Morales reported that Todd Miller, the Kandiyohi County Maintenance Engineer, is the point person for the current aerator that is upstream in Lake Monongalia currently, which they will decommission if we are put in a more efficient unit. Miller will consult with Brad Carlson with the fisheries department to determine whether the county is willing to look at what their average electricity bill costs are with the current aerator, and the potential of contributing that cost they would be saving to the Nanobubble Project.

Denise Elson with MPCA has our permit which is currently being run through 3 sectors: aeration, public water works and water appropriation. In addition, we will need to obtain buoy permits, which are through Kandiyohi County Sheriff's Department.

c. CD-47 Project Updates:

- i. Back in April of 2023, Project Manager Andy Johnson reached out to the Army Corp of Engineers and designs were completed in October 2023. In November 2023, the permit for MPCA and Army Corp went in, resulting in 4 rounds of questioning addressing habitat impact as well as 4 additional meetings which delayed the start of construction work. The MPCA grant being held up due to the 1W1P Amendments has also resulted in the delay of our project design and permit timeline. After meeting with the Army Corp of Engineers and Stantec, it was determined that the CD-47 project will not happen this year, due to not having obtained the necessary permits and March 1st is the start of fish spawning on the river. The Army Corp of Engineers has not approved our permit yet, and they have a year to either issue a waiver or deny the permit. The contracted construction company, Confluence, is willing to honor the current contract with some potential changes to the cost of materials, labor, and fuel not to exceed excessive amounts. They would require potentially \$25,000 down with them to secure their work. The contract with Confluence will be re-written for next year, which can then be presented at the board meeting next month for Board approval. Once the Army Corp of Engineers approves the permit, we have 5

years to complete the project and there are still 2 years remaining on the BWSR grant timeline.

Johnson also reached out to 1W1P regarding possible education dollars for Manager Schaefer's Lake Planning Presentation, but funding is only available for soil health at this time from FY22 funding.

Project Manager Johnson also reported on a meeting last month with Spicer City Administrator Jen Beckler and Public Works Director Chad Lien to review storm water projects for Spicer. They will look into aspects of modeling design and long-term street plans to see what may fit with our designs. A similar meeting was also had with the City of Belgrade.

d. 2024 Staff Project Planning Discussion Summary:

- i. District Attorney John Kolb reported on a meeting between himself, Watershed District staff (Dan, Jon, Andy and Leah) and district engineers (Chris Meehan and Brady Schmitz from Stantec) to discuss current and upcoming potential projects. High importance was placed on the focus of how our monitoring can help create projects and concepts to be developed and presented to the Board. Project Manager Andy Johnson sat down with Program Manager Jon Morales and helped identify 4 additional monitoring sites within our watershed. Jon Kolb highlighted other parameters to consider: how to create fiscal capacity through various authorities under statute to get projects on the ground, as well as how to work within 1W1P to ensure our specific projects fit into the plan. He zeroed in on the need to develop a framework to establish structure and prioritize the goals to make sure the fiscal health of the District stays level. One program to re-assess is the septic loan program's purpose and the efficiency of it: reviewing the cost/benefit of it, and if the District feels this funding could be re-allocated to other programs/projects that align with the Districts overall goals.

e. Proposed Lake Planning / AIS Management Seminar:

- i. Board Chair Ruth Schaefer has been working with Margaret Johnson from the SWCD to plan a few seminars. Manager Schaefer has reached out to James Johnson to present a seminar on lake surveys, permitting and collaborating with the DNR to educate lake associations on the services that are available. This event has been tentatively scheduled for Friday, March 15th, 2024 at the Dethlef's Center and Manager Schaefer is requesting \$2000 in funding to cover the cost of the presenter, location rental and box lunches for participants. District Administrator Dan Coughlin identified funding available in the AIS/Short Notice Projects Reserve Fund to finance this if the Board approves. A suggestion was made by Program Manager Jon Morales to set up a zoom link for those snowbirds that may be south but might want to attend virtually. A motion was made by Manager Gertgen to proceed having the Lake Planning AIS Management Seminar, priced not to exceed \$2000, seconded by Manager Hedtke. Motion passed unanimously.

f. Meeting Date Change Request / Discussion:

- i. District Administrator Dan Coughlin has been invited to join the Doctoral program at the University of Sioux Falls, for which classes occur on Wednesday evenings. He presented a request to the Board of Managers to adjust the regular board meeting date to accommodate his doctoral program. The Board was in agreement of potentially moving the meeting date if it can be coordinated with the District Attorney. Coughlin and District Attorney John Kolb will look for a feasible day of the month to select.

g. Agenda Additions / Other Matters: None.

6. Reports & Updates

- a. Administration – Dan Coughlin: None.
- b. Program Manager – Jon Morales

Sampling has begun for WPLMN, which is the earliest start the District has ever had.

The District has been at the table with MN Dot looking at projects and designs for the Hwy 23 interchange, which is scheduled for 2027. During the last meeting, the need to have the city of New London at the table was identified. MN Dot is concerned with future development on the other side of Hwy 23 where the interchange will connect, and it's affect on any storm water impact. They plan to bring in the New London City Administrator and council member on the July 24th, 2024 meeting to discuss New London impacts.

Morales also gave an update on the Lake Calhoun Project: The MN DNR intends to work with local partners to implement the Dietrich Lange WMA renovation and enhancement project. Local partners include: MFCRWD, Kandiyohi County, the Green Lake Property Owner's Association, and the Lake Calhoun Association. A Joint Powers Agreement will be established between the MN DNR and the MFCRWD and used to transfer funds to the Watershed District to secure engineering services for the project which will consist of 3 components: Crow River Diversion structure (replace with rock arch rapids design), Crow River Diversion bridge (replace with a steel multi-beam bridge) and the Lake Calhoun outlet structure (replace with rock arch rapids design).

c. Project Manager – Andy Johnson- None.

d. Finance Manager – Leah Melges

Finance Manager Melges reported that all 2023 entries into Banyon have been completed, including bank reconciliations through the end of the year. All that remains to close out FY2023 will be final adjustments made after the audit process is complete. Audit prep work has begun for the 2023 audit and the tentative on-site date is the end of April 2024.

Updated contact information and designations for 2024 Board of Managers and staff have been submitted to BWSR for their Watersheds Directory on their website.

Melges has been developing a system to track the payments received from Kandiyohi and Meeker counties for special assessments on septic loans and BMP's we have issued through State Revolving Loan funds. We currently have 9 through Kandiyohi County and 1 through Meeker County.

Melges reported that the new JPMorgan US One Cards have been issued. After February's cycle on the old Chase Ink Card, we should be able to close out that account and operate solely on our new commercial credit card.

Finance Manager Melges showcased the new MFCRWD website, and has been adding content to the website, which will go live Friday, February 16th, 2024. Email invitations for Board portal and Staff portal logins have been sent to MFCRWD email addresses. Once the invitation has been accepted, a prompt will appear to create a password granting access to the Board or Staff portals.

e. District Engineer – Brady Schmitz- None.

f. District Attorney – John Kolb- None.

g. Other Reports from Managers / Staff:

Manager Hedtke expressed concern about the Xcel Energy power line that is coming through the District, and directly through his property. District Administrator Dan Coughlin and Project Manager Andy Johnson have discussed this and will plan to attend an informational meeting when it is held.

7. Public Access Forum: No public input was received.

8. Adjournment: Motion made by Manager Hedtke, seconded by Manager Gertgen to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting declared adjourned by President Schaefer at 8:34 pm.

Submitted by,

Approval Attested by,

Leah Melges
Recording Secretary
Office & Finance Manager

Ruth Schaefer
President