

Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District Meeting Minutes
May 8th, 2024 at 6:30 pm at the MFCRWD Office

Board of Managers Present: Ruth Schaefer, Jeff Gertgen, Shane Braegelman, Jay Hedtke (arrived at 6:32 p.m.) Not present: Amanda Toutges

Staff & Guests Present: Dan Coughlin – District Administrator; Andy Johnson – Project Manager; Jon Morales – Program Manager; Leah Melges – Office & Finance Manager; Chris Meehan – District Engineer; and John Kolb – District Attorney; Josh Kavanaugh (departed at 7:32pm), DNR; Dale Anderson – County Commissioner; Attending Virtually: Chris Stephan – Moleaer Inc.

1. President Schaefer called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
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. Additions / Corrections to the Agenda: **A motion to approve the updated distributed agenda made by Manager Gertgen, seconded by Manager Braegelman. Motion passed unanimously.**
4. Consent Agenda
 - a. Financial Report
 - i. Finance Report
 - ii. Approval of Payables / Expenditures
 - b. Resolution 2024-06, Authorization of Final 2023 Fund Transfers
 - c. Resolution 2024-07, Determination of BMP Grant (M-01-2020) Completion and Authorization of Final Grant Payment to Tracey and Jay Hedtke
 - d. Regular Board Meeting Minutes – April 10th, 2024
Motion by Manager Braegelman, seconded by Manager Gertgen to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed unanimously.
5. Discussion / Business Items
 - a. Request by Manager Gertgen to play excerpt from the County Commissioner Meetings comments. The video clip was unable to be cued up prior to the start of the board meeting, but County Commissioner Dale Anderson was in attendance so he simply reiterated comments made at the County Board level that they are very pleased and impressed with the work that the District has been doing.
 - b. Consideration of a 2024 Atwater (Tadd Lake) Pilot Nanobubble Project – Projects & Practices Committee / Staff:

District Administrator Coughlin brought consideration of a pilot project to the Projects & Practices Committee for Tadd and Upper Lake in Atwater, MN to demonstrate proof of concept for nanobubble technology in Minnesota. This potential pilot project has sparked interest from a local news channel and the scientific data generated from this project can hopefully demonstrate results that could be seen in the Mill Pond or other bodies of water. Project costs total approximately \$69,675.90, with the assumption that City of Atwater will continue to pay their average from Xcel Energy, and

the District will pay the difference for electric. The 2023 end-of-year fund transfers resulted in a one-time \$90,000 transfer into general fund from past closed funds. President Schaefer suggested that Atwater provide volunteer monitoring for Tadd/Upper Lakes to increase their involvement and investment in the project.

Chris Stephan with Moleaer Inc. suggested that something as simple as having local residents / stakeholders take secchi disk readings could help foster local buy-in with the efforts. The timeline from Moleaer is approximately 8 weeks out to build the trailer unit which would run for 3 months (July, August and September). Collaboration was offered from the DNR for pre and post monitoring of this shallow lake. **A motion to move forward with the proposed project and budget, not to exceed \$70,000, was made by Manager Gertgen, seconded by Manager Hedtke, motion passed unanimously.**

c. Project Updates

i. Calhoun Dam & Bridge Projects – Dan Coughlin / Chris Meehan

Josh Kavanaugh from the DNR reported that they have received project approval at all levels and a proposal has been drafted. The funding for this project is a result of a combination of: Get Out MORE (Modernize Outdoor Recreation Experiences) funding through Ecological and Water Resources Division (EWR) for materials and engineering; \$125,000 from Acquisition and Betterment of Lands bonding for engineering and survey; \$1,325,000 of Get out MORE funding for engineering, survey, design and construction; \$450,000 of Natural Resources Asset Preservation (NRAP) bonding money for asset preservation used specifically for replacing the bridge; in total, \$1,900,000 to complete the project.

Currently he is waiting for a completed contract, which will include phase 1 and 2 combined, and will be reimbursable (quarterly at first, then more frequently once construction begins). The DNR's fiscal year ends June 30th, 2024, which means beginning with engineering / survey / design this May or June will encumber monies this fiscal year and ensure it for the next fiscal year. Anything billed FY24 will need to be billed by June 30th, 2024, then reimbursements can resume for the new quarter. County permits may need to be acquired due to the county drainage ditch.

A recommendation was presented to authorize President Schaefer, District Administrator Coughlin and District Attorney Kolb to review and sign the Fiscal Agency Agreement with the DNR for Engineering Services on behalf of the organization. **Motion made by Manager Gertgen to authorize execution of the contract upon legal review, seconded by Manager Braegelman. Motion passed unanimously.**

ii. New London Nanobubble / H2S Mitigation – Dan Coughlin / Jon Morales:

District Administrator Dan Coughlin submitted funding requests to U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, as well as U.S. Congresswoman Michelle Fischbach at the federal level. Program Manager Jon Morales reported that May 15th, 2024 will be the monitoring buoy deployment with Professor Miki Hondzo.

The West Central Tribune and the Lakes Area Review will come out and do short news articles on the event. A total of 8 monitoring sites have been identified, 2 being river sites, along the chain of lakes. The boat is equipped to use the BioBase mapping software to complete the sediment hardness mapping. Morales also met with Ethan Jenzen (DNR) regarding no water appropriation permit is needed since water is just passing through and being returned to lake. Jenzen will issue a letter confirming that no permit is necessary. Morales will work with Durel Carstensen (DNR) on the aeration permit.

iii. Diamond Sub-Watershed – Andy Johnson:

Project Manager Andy Johnson updated on 4 potential additional monitoring sites of private ditch systems of water exiting Hubbard, Schultz and Wheeler lakes before entering Diamond Lake.

d. Overview of 2024 Monitoring Sites (Continued) – Jon Morales:

Program Manager Jon Morales reviewed a map of all the District's monitoring sites for the 2024 season, including the new additional sites added this year, starting in Belgrade and heading south throughout the watershed ending at Diamond Lake. With addition of Tadd and Upper Lakes, JD-17 and Manannah, all river, ditch, and lake sites there are a total of 32 sites (including the occasional Paynesville site for WPLMN).

e. Aquatic Robotics Demonstration Workshop – Jon Morales:

Program Manager Jon Morales reported on a demonstration he attended for a low-cost underwater drone costing approximately \$4000 and a possible partnership with the local NL-S robotics team (Tool Cats) to build the drone for us.

f. Agenda Additions / Other Matters: None.

6. Reports & Updates

a. Administration – Dan Coughlin:

Coughlin reported that he anticipates the solar panels will be installed next week. The building permit and Xcel Energy Interconnect Agreement are both secured for the project.

b. Program Manager – Jon Morales:

The WPLMN contract is underway and currently working on determining staff billing rates. Gavin Radabaugh will be the Westby Intern this summer

that is shared with the DNR. The Earth Day event at PWELC was successful and the Paddle the Crow event is coming up on June 1st, 2024.

c. Project Manager – Andy Johnson:

Project Manager Andy Johnson reported that he is still working on the permitting for CD-47 with frustration at multiple unanswered emails to Army Corp of Engineers. They are still investigating and going through discussions with the permitting for CD-47.

June 22nd, 2024 is the Kandiyohi County Lakes Seminar put on by the SWCD that he would like to attend and represent the District at.

d. Finance Manager – Leah Melges:

Finance Manger Leah Melges reported that a letter of confirmation was received that the Chase Ink Business Credit Card has been officially closed, as well as the Liberty Mutual Commercial Crime Policy cancelled. In-house payroll processing has successfully been set up with direct deposit through Home State Bank. The on-site audit was April 30th, 2024 and they will complete the rest of their work remotely from their offices.

There have been a few inquiries in the last month regarding the septic loan program that we offer. It had previously been discussed late 2023 / early 2024 to possibly discontinue this program due to duplication by several counties and internal costs to the District.

A motion was made by Manager Schaefer to end the septic loan program, seconded by Manager Gertgen. Motion passed unanimously.

e. District Engineer – Chris Meehan:

District Engineer Chris Meehan updated on the Diamond Lake Subwatershed and the process of going back and looking at the TMDL and where those loads are coming from.

f. District Attorney – John Kolb:

District Attorney John Kolb reported that on April 25th, 2024 the governor signed the omnibus environmental policy bill. The impact on the District's operations are negligible except that it will be easier for the administrator to manage the small projects the District has going on by managing funding for small projects as budget line items.

g. Other Reports from Managers / Staff:

Manager Gertgen reported that the Minnesota Lakes and Rivers: Water Connects Us All Annual Leadership Gathering is at the St. Anthony Falls Laboratory on Friday, May 17th, 2024, which he and his wife will be attending. Manager Hedtke reported that the Meeker County SWDC farm show at his farm will be held on August 13th, 2024.

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

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

The meeting declared adjourned by President Schaefer at 8:40 pm.

Submitted by,

Leah Melges
Recording Secretary
Office & Finance Manager