SPECIAL MEETING OF THE RCWD BOARD OF MANAGERS
Wednesday, August 7, 2019
Rice Creek Watershed District Conference Room
4325 Pheasant Ridge Drive NE, Suite 611, Blaine, Minnesota

Approved Minutes

CALL TO ORDER
President Patricia Preiner called the meeting to order, a quorum being present, at 9:10 a.m.

ROLL CALL
Present: President Patricia Preiner, 1st Vice-Pres. Barbara Haake, 2nd Vice-Pres. John Waller, Treasurer Steven Wagamon and Secretary Michael Bradley.

Absent: 

Staff Present: Interim District Administrator Nick Tomczik, Project Manager Kyle Axtell, Office Manager Theresa Stasica.

Consultants: None.

Visitors: Sherry Munyon.

ITEMS REQUIRING BOARD ACTION
   Interim Administrator Tomczik informed the Board that the special meeting was scheduled to help with scheduling additional mandatory meetings/events for the approval of the plan.

   Project Manager Kyle Axtell explained the Board received a full draft copy of the WMP before the meeting. He wanted the Board to be aware that not all appendices were included because they were reports and could not be changed. He did note that Appendix F: RCWD Natural Channel Maintenance Policy and Appendix H: RCWD Member Community Projects List was included in the draft WMP sent. Project Manager Axtell stated before staff sends the draft out for the 60-day review, if the Board wished, staff could incorporate their grammatic changes.

   President Preiner commented that she liked the format and it was easy to read. Managers Haake and Wagamon agreed.
Project Manager Axtell stated the Board and Citizen Advisory Committee comments as interested citizens will be part of the required “response to comments” the District will provide in writing after the conclusion of the 60-day review period. Staff expressed the urgency to release the draft WMP for public review as soon as possible consistent with state statute.

Manager Bradley replied the draft WMP has hit the 9 management areas and same 6 sections as the previous draft versions of the WMP.

Project Manager Axtell informed the Board that a draft resolution has been provided in the packet for Board consideration.

Manager Waller commented that he was disappointed with Chapter 5-Financing. His position has not changed and today he will make that in the record. He realizes the need to send out the draft WMP to continue the process. He stated that Chapter 5 does not provide for the taxpayers of Washington County.

Project Manager Axtell summarized how the Board discussed, compiled, and wrote Chapter 5 of the WMP at the request of Interim Administrator Tomczik. The chapter summarizes avenues for funding and operations under authorities of 103D, 103B & 103E. It talks about water management districts (WMD) that are proposed; some are WMDs for specific drainage maintenance projects and some are new proposed WMDS that may or may not be utilized subject to future Board action. The point of putting these in the draft WMP is to get them out for public review/comment and have them established so that step is completed in the future if the Board decides to use the WMDs. There is also a section on funding considerations the Board takes into account when there is a request for funding projects. Chapter 5.4 Funding Considerations is essentially internal policy carried over from the previous WMP.

Manager Bradley stated the he understands Manager Waller’s ongoing concerns about how the Board funds a single watershed. Manager Bradley asked Manager Waller about Tables 4-1 & 4-2 (Approximate annual budget by implementation program), specifically, did Manager Waller have any dispute with any of those expenditures and programs.

Project Manager Axtell noted that the program and project budgets for the plan reflect recent Board budget discussions relating to the 2020 draft proposed budget; that those reductions are included here.

Manager Waller replied his general opinion has not changed. He stated that this draft WMP is not really based on where the money came from but rather on programs. Over the years Washington County taxpayers have not received the direct benefit for their tax dollars put in. They paid for maintenance, water quality and quantity issues and these
programs have been deferred which causes property values to decline. Manager Waller respects the other managers’ positions but would like to see more direct budget controls placed in the plan.

Manager Bradley stated the Board has established a specific plan for addressing each of the water management districts, addressing each of the ditch maintenance projects and district facilities and that is laid forth in this WMP. Manager Bradley questioned if Manager Waller is opposing the future plans for maintaining ditches and facilities.

Manager Waller replied he is not opposing future plans for maintenance. He believes the draft WMP doesn’t go far enough in that it doesn’t specifically layout dollars attached to geographical areas.

Manager Wagamon responded that he didn’t believe Manager Waller respected the other Board members because he wouldn’t have gone behind the Board’s 4-1 vote and go down to the legislature unbeknownst to the other Board members. It was Manager Wagamon’s understanding that Washington County along with Anoka and Ramsey County were praying that the watershed district be established to make decisions and to get projects done. Historically, the counties couldn’t figure out how to spend the money between the counties and then the watershed district was established to make the hard decisions that the counties could not make. Manager Wagamon stated he believed Manager Waller wants to bring the District back to where it started where the counties have the monies and are not able to get anything done. Manager Wagamon believed the whole genesis of the watershed district is to plan district-wide. He does not understand Manager Waller’s opinion.

Manager Waller replied that funding has not been provided to Washington County over the years because of the Board’s priorities. That “what’s hot is hot” and Washington county is not. It has been going on for decades and there have even been some court actions. Manager Waller stated his view that the meaning of “praying” at that historical time meant “petition”.

President Preiner stated if you look at the Districts WMP, there will be over 3 million dollars spent in Washington County in the next couple of years; it all comes around by priorities. The District annually reviews their priorities/projects because there are different priorities ever year, the Board votes on these priorities and the majority rules. She stated we should move forward with this draft plan for review.

Motion by Manager Bradley, seconded by Manager Wagamon, to adopt Resolution 2019-21: Authorizing Distribution of Draft Watershed Management Plan Update Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §103b.231, subd. 7.
Manager Waller: Madame President, I believe it is not unreasonable to assure Washington County taxpayers receive direct benefits for their tax dollars. Section 5 Watershed Financing does not provide spending and reporting requirements for ensuring Washington County residents that pay into the watershed benefit directly from its activities. Section 5 does not authorize that a minimum of 90 percent of the money collected in Washington County through special assessments and ad valorem taxes be spent on projects and programs in Washington County. Without the minimum spending and reporting requirements, Washington County taxpayers will continue to pay for maintenance, water quality and water quantity services which may have been deferred, which have been deferred for decades and decades. And deferring water quantity and water quality services results in devaluing Washington County’s tax base and therefore I do not support the adoption of the plan but I agree that it should be distributed. I will be voting no on this resolution.

President Preiner asked for clarification on Manager Waller’s vote because the resolution is approving only the distribution of the draft WMP.

Manager Waller believed the motion stated “move to adopt” the WMP.

The Board and staff clarified it was “move to adopt” the resolution which is to Authorize Distribution of Draft Watershed Management Plan Update Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §103b.231, subd. 7.

Interim Administrator Tomczik clarified the first part is to distribute the draft WMP for comment and the second part of the resolution stated that the Administrator will provide notice of a public hearing on the draft WMP update, to be held at a future date pursuant to the requirements of Minnesota Statutes §103B.231, subdivision 7

**ROLL CALL:**

- **Manager Waller** – Aye
- **Manager Haake** – Aye
- **Manager Bradley** – Aye
- **Manager Wagamon** – Aye
- **President Preiner** – Aye

*Motion carried 5-0.*

Manager Haake stated that a watershed district takes in counties and cities and knows no boundaries that is what water is about. She stated, regarding finances, when the District started out in 1972, 62-64% of the monies came from Ramsey County and now it is 52%. Ramsey County has had the largest amount/percentage. The Hansen Park Project was in Ramsey County and included additional grant funding from BWSR. Manager Haake stated we have never been able to spend all of the monies that are collected in Ramsey County exclusively in Ramsey County, or even 90% of it. Manager Haake believes the reason why
there is a watershed district is to help the whole watershed because whatever is done within the District boundaries is helping the whole watershed. She believes in how the State statute is written which states we have our finances collect on property values throughout the watershed district.

Manager Wagamon stated he doesn’t pay attention to the project’s location but to how each project has the most benefit to the whole watershed and that is what he thought his duty as a manager was.

President Preiner replied this is how the Board sets our priorities.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Manager Haake, seconded by Manager Wagamon, to adjourn the meeting at 9:38 a.m. Motion carried 5-0.