

Heron Lake Watershed District (HLWD) Advisory Committee Meeting

Tuesday, March 20, 2018 8:00 a.m.

Heron Lake Watershed District office

Heron Lake, MN

ATTENDANCE

Paul Pietz, Jerry Christopherson, Allen Jensen, Julie Lopez, Dave Dieter, Jerry Ackermann, Jan Voit, and Catherine Wegehaupt

1. Call to Order

Paul Pietz called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the December 21, 2017 HLWD Advisory Committee meeting were reviewed. A motion was made by Jerry Christopherson and seconded by Allen Jensen to approve the minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

3. HLWD Advisory Committee membership

Paul Pietz has contacted a landowner in Jackson County to fill the seat left vacant by Clarence Madsen. The person declined. Committee members were asked to notify Paul if they had any suggestions for membership.

4. HLWD Board of Managers Meeting Observations

December 2017, January and February 2018 – The meetings seem to be going smoothly. There is structure, leadership, and lack of conflicts. Meetings are run the way they should be. Things are going well.

Jean Christoffels sent an email with her observations since she could not be in attendance. Discussion was held regarding the need for introductions and providing a more welcoming environment for new members. Welcome and introductions will be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

There is a need for everyone to be aware of the purpose of the committee as described in Minnesota Statutes 103D.331 that requires that the managers must annually appoint an advisory committee to advise and assist the managers on all matters affecting the interests of the watershed district and make recommendations to the managers on all contemplated projects and improvements in the watershed district.

Discussion was held regarding meeting observations. Because things are going well, they are not needed at this time. If problems develop at the HLWD board level in the future, they can be done again.

It is possible that the public still perceives that the problems that happened in the past are still occurring. It would be beneficial for the advisory committee to have basic talking points about the HLWD for education throughout the community. The committee should be speaking a united message. Paul Pietz will work with Jan Voit to develop a draft for review at the next meeting.

5. Discussion Items

Jan Voit gave an update on HLWD activities.

HLWD

Reappointments

The Nobles County Commissioners appointed Bruce Leinen to another three-year term at their meeting on January 2, 2018. The Jackson County Commissioners appointed Harvey Kruger to another three-year term at their meeting on January 16, 2018.

Clean Water Fund (CWF) Application Review

On January 31, Doug Goodrich and Mark Hiles, BWSR; Chuck Brandel and Staci Williams, ISG; and Jan Voit met. BWSR staff provided input regarding previous grant applications and tips for improving future applications.

Summer Interns

The advertisement and job description were updated and sent to the North Heron Lake Game Producers Association; Dan Livdahl, Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District; and Catherine Wegehaupt for review. The positions were advertised with colleges on January 9, 2018. The application deadline was February 8, 2018.

On February 14, 2018, Sherry Schoewe, Catherine Wegehaupt, and Jan Voit held one interview for a summer intern position. Nick Larson accepted the position.

Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) Interview

MPR is doing a story on water quality in southwest Minnesota. On February 14, 2018, Jan Voit spoke with a reporter for MPR regarding the Fulda Lake project.

Cover Crop Workshop

The Cover Crop Workshop was held on January 24. The event consisted of a keynote speaker, Jodi DeJong-Hughes, UM Extension. She explained research on reducing tillage practices to better soil quality and infiltration. After the speaker, grant research findings were presented, followed by a four-person farmer panel. The farmer panel provided knowledge, experience, and plenty of photos of their operations. After the event, many farmers stayed and lots of discussion was held. 94 people attended the workshop-62 farmers, 27 agency personnel, and five crop consultants.

MAWD Training Committee

Emily Javens, MAWD Executive Director; Mike Kinney, Comfort Lake-Forest Lake WD; Tera Guetter, Pelican River WD; and Jan Voit met in Chanhassen on February 6. The purpose of the meeting was to begin drafting a short-term and long-term training program for MAWD managers, administrators, and staff.

Seward 29

At their meeting on February 13, 2018, the Board of Managers of the HLWD approved in lieu of a bond, a certificate of insurance with the HLWD named as insured is required. Bids must be submitted by 8:00 am on March 20, 2018 in a sealed envelope.

Legal Counsel

Mike Tow has informed HLWD that he will be retiring effective June 30, 2018. A memo was drafted and sent to four firms seeking legal counsel to begin July 1. Three firms submitted a proposal. The proposals were sent to managers on February 8.

On February 15, 2018, Jan Voit contacted Mike Tow regarding potential part-time work and the interview process. He will no longer be able to practice law once he retires because he will no longer be carrying insurance. The date will probably be May 1, rather than June 1. He can attend the interviews. They are scheduled for March 20 at 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 12:00 p.m.

Biennial Budget Request (BBR)

The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) requires the submission of a BBR every two years. This is an opportunity for local governments throughout the state to identify conservation programs, projects and practices prioritized in local water management plans for implementation during fiscal years 2020-2021. This data informs upcoming budget discussions among state agencies, the Governor, and Legislature. The HLWD's BBR was submitted on March 6, 2018.

Minnesota Association of Watershed Administrators (MAWA) Meeting

The MAWA met on March 7, 2018 at the Embassy Suites in St. Paul. The minutes of the November 29 meeting were approved. The Education Committee gave an update on the Training Framework they developed. The By-Laws Committee was dissolved. Emily Javens gave an update on behalf of the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD). Kevin Bigalke gave an update on behalf of BWSR. Discussion was held regarding the MAWD Summer Tour, website, dues, and necessary accomplishments. Each watershed district is requested to submit the top three things that MAWD must accomplish in 2018 and in the next three years.

MAWD Legislative Reception

The MAWD Legislative Reception was held on March 7, 2018. Senator Bill Weber attended. Dan Livdahl, Harvey Kruger, and Jan Voit spoke with him regarding MAWD priorities and the need for an increased general operating levy.

MAWD Legislative Breakfast

The MAWD Legislative Breakfast was held on March 8, 2018. Brief presentations were given by several legislators. Following the breakfast, Dan Livdahl, Harvey Kruger, and Jan Voit met with Representative Rod Hamilton. We spoke with him regarding MAWD priorities and the need for an increased general operating levy.

Grants

WFDNR Targeting and Prioritizing Endeavor

The mid-project review for the WFDNR Targeting and Prioritizing Endeavor was done by MPCA staff from St. Paul and Willmar on February 5. The purpose was to review the process used for tracking project expenditures, grant cash, local match, and in-kind contributions. A form summarizing the review will be submitted in the near future.

On February 15, 2018, Drew Kessler and Rachel Olm, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI), Catherine Wegehaupt, and Jan Voit met via conference call. Discussion was held about the training events required as part of the grant work plan. March 28 was chosen as the date to hold the events. On February 18, 2018, the save-the-date notices for managers and county staff were drafted. Catherine sent the notice to county staff on February 21.

On March 8, 2018, Jan Voit met with Houston Engineering, Inc. staff at their office in Maple Grove. The purpose of the meeting was to review the PTMApp for the West Fork Des Moines River (WFDNR) watershed and prepare for the upcoming training workshops.

WFDMR Major Watershed Project

The Local Work Group (LWG) meeting was held on January 3, 2018. Katherine Pekarek-Scott, MPCA gave an update on the WRAPS. LWG completed the draft survey and made suggestions. The suggested changes will be incorporated and the revised document will be distributed to the LWG for review. Discussion was held regarding education needs and how to proceed with promotion. Following the LWG, a meeting was held with Jeb Malone, City of Currie. Plans were discussed for an education event to be held on February 12, 2018.

On January 23, Katherine Pekarek-Scott and Jan Voit met via conference call to discuss the MWP poster. Draft information was compiled and distributed by email. The draft document was sent to the Livewire for formatting. The posters were completed on February 12.

The Facebook page for the project was developed on January 23. Information will be added as necessary.

On January 25, Toby Spanier and Karen Terry, UM Extension, Katherine Pekarek-Scott, Ross Behrends, and Jan Voit (Band of 5) met via conference call. The purpose was to develop the agenda for the education meeting scheduled for February 12. Discussion was also held regarding the Shared Leadership Sessions that are included in the grant work plan.

February 12 Event at Key Largo

Over 50 people, representing cities, counties, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Watershed Districts, rural water associations, US Department of Agriculture, and state and federal legislators assembled at Key Largo on February 12, 2018. Ross Behrends, West Fork Des Moines River (WFDMR) Watershed Coordinator welcomed the attendees. He explained that the meeting would focus on the crisis small towns in Minnesota are experiencing in regard to failing sewer and water infrastructure and lack of funding to address those issues.

This meeting was part of the WFDMR Major Watershed Project which is made possible through a contract with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) with funds from the Clean Water Legacy Act. The primary goal of the Major Watershed Project is develop a comprehensive Watershed Restoration and Project Strategies Report (WRAPS). Achieving the WRAPS goal is only possible through partnerships between local units of government, watershed citizens, and state government.

Katherine Pekarek-Scott, MPCA provided an overview of the watershed approach. She described some of the monitoring and assessment work that has been done in the WFDMR Watershed, as well as a timeline for completion of the WRAPS report.

Tobias Spanier, University of Minnesota (UM) Extension led the group in a discussion focused on three key questions: What would you like to see happen with your water infrastructure and stormwater management? What do you need to make what you want happen? And what can you do to make it happen?

Chuck Ackman from US Representative Amy Klobachar's office told the group he appreciated the invitation and would provide Representative Klobachar with information regarding this meeting.

Gene Short, City of Currie moderated a panel discussion with State Representatives Joe Schomacher, Erin Murphy, Dean Urdahl, and Paul Torkelson and State Senator Bill Weber. They responded to: What are the main areas of water infrastructure and stormwater management you want to see more work done on? What opportunities do you see that exist for this work to happen? And what part(s) of this are you willing to help with?

During the meal, Karen Terry, UM Extension provided water education regarding water, watersheds, stormwater, and practices to slow down runoff. Karen Cavet, S.E.H. Engineering gave an overview of the water and sewer infrastructure needs within the WFDNR Watershed. Heidi Peper, S.E.H. Engineering described potential funding options available at the federal and state levels.

The WFDNR watershed covers 1333 square miles in portions of seven counties. Those being Murray, Cottonwood, Jackson, Nobles, Lyon, Pipestone, and Martin counties. The meeting included representation from just about all of the 18 cities and seven counties in the watershed.

On February 13, 2018, a conference call was held regarding the upcoming Shared Leadership event that is required as part of the grant work plan. Participants included Julie Westerlund, Board of Water and Soil Resources; Katherine Pekarek-Scott, Toby Spanier and Karen Terry, Ross Behrends, and me.

On February 15, 2018, Katherine Pekarek-Scott, Ross Behrends, and Jan Voit met to discuss the Shared Leadership event. The date was set for March 26. Ross Behrends contacted Butch Kruger to determine availability of the Fulda Legion Hall. He drafted a meeting invitation and agenda.

Grant Applications

- On February 5, 2018, the HLWD was informed that the grant application for Clean Water Funds to utilize the services of Conservation Corps Minnesota crews was approved.
- The HLWD was awarded a CPL grant for the Tow WMA Wetland Restoration on February 8.
- The Ackermanns were notified on February 13 that the Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant through the MDA was awarded \$19,078. This grant is for research on cover crop effects on soil temperature and soil moisture. On March 13, 2018, Jerry and Nancy Ackermann and Jan Voit participated in a conference call for the MDA grant. The purpose of the call was to provide an overview of the grant project, discuss outreach efforts, and receive information about reporting requirements.
- An EPA 319 grant application was submitted for implementation efforts in the Jackson JD 3 subwatershed. The application was submitted on March 2, 2018.

Public Drainage Systems

Jackson County JD 14

The mailing for the Jackson County JD 14 preliminary hearing was completed on January 3, 2018. The preliminary hearing was held on January 25. The Board approved findings that the proposal as stated in the petition, is feasible, and there is a necessity for it; that the public benefit is greater than the environmental impact of the drainage project and that the outlet is adequate; and that it is appropriate for the Board to direct the engineer to proceed with a detailed survey and to issue its order appointing viewers.

Jackson County Ditch (CD) 3

Chuck Brandel contacted Jan Voit regarding the possibility of holding an informational meeting for Jackson CD 3. This meeting was scheduled for March 22, 2018. The hearing notice and property owners' reports were mailed to landowners on March 5, 2018. The meeting notice was posted on the HLWD website. The agenda and script for the hearing were drafted and sent to Mike Tow for review.

Jackson County JD 19

The memo for the Jackson County JD 19 preconstruction meeting was reviewed on March 6, 2018. It was revised on March 7. Catherine Wegehaupt sent the memo to the JD 19 landowners.

Jackson County Judicial Ditch (JD) 3

On March 9, 2018, Jan Voit contacted Mike Tow regarding questions that she received regarding viewing for Jackson County JD 3. After receiving his response, a letter was drafted regarding this subject. The approved correspondence was included as an agenda item for the March board meeting.

Jerry Christopherson reported that there were trumpeter swans in the field south of Heron Lake.

6. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Jerry Ackermann and seconded by Julie Lopez. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted
Allen Jensen
Secretary