

MINUTES OF MEETING
DIVERSION AUTHORITY PUBLIC OUTREACH COMMITTEE
CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
MARCH 21, 2012

The Diversion Authority Public Outreach Committee met on March 21, 2012, at 8:30 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department, West Fargo, North Dakota.

The following Committee members were present: Rodger Olson, Cass County Joint Water Resource District, Chairman; Mike Thorstad, West Fargo City Commissioner; Kevin Campbell, Clay County Commissioner; Brad Wimmer, Fargo City Commissioner; Brenda Elmer, Moorhead City Commissioner; and Gerald VanAmburg, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District. Kevin Campbell, Clay County Commissioner, was absent.

Also present were Tom Waters, CH2MHill; Eric Dodds and Daron Selvig, Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc., Jason Benson, Cass County Engineer; Michael R. Buringrud, North Cass Water Resource District; Brad Dahl, Moore Engineering, Inc.; and Carol Harbeke Lewis, Cass County Joint Water Resource District Secretary-Treasurer.

Minutes

It was moved by Mike Thorstad, seconded by Brad Wimmer and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2012, meeting.

Public outreach

Eric Dodds outlined upcoming public outreach meetings and encouraged committee members to attend. They are working with townships to have future meetings for agricultural interests. Brenda Warren suggested they also contact Commodity Groups.

Rodger Olson said the Corps of Engineers did a nice job laying out the project plan and impacts at the meeting with Richland and Wilkin Counties. They are not opposed to the Diversion, but are opposed to water backing up on them from the staging and storage area. Mr. Dodds said they did not hear any new concerns, but they are real. In the small group discussion there was a spirit of working together. There is a good group of leadership that wants to see it through and the committee needs to continue working with them. Lance Yohe did an excellent job presenting the Long Term Flood Solutions plan.

The group was also informed that the Red River Retention Authority has been formed and it is committed to building retention. An Executive Director is being hired and there are agreements with the Corps of Engineers and Natural Resources Conservation

Service to help with permitting and building retention. There is a strong commitment from North Dakota and Minnesota for long term retention in the valley.

Mr. Olson said there needs to be a stronger message that the Diversion is still needed, along with building retention. The committee is also working on a letter to the editor of *The Forum* setting out that the Diversion will provide 100-year protection and will provide the ability to fight a 500-year flood with other protective measures.

A message needs to get out to the agricultural community that they will still be able to farm the land. The crop insurance issue is still a concern also. Tom Waters said they are working with the Diversion Authority on a plan for land management and land acquisition and a lot of emphasis will be placed on the ag portion of this from a policy standpoint. They need to get some policies out there that property owners can count on.

Jason Benson said as you move further south out of the immediate metro area, the 100-year event has changed and there is some confusion about that. He said they need to be sure to clear up those misconceptions and to continue emphasizing retention.

Mr. Olson said people want to build retention on what they consider to be less valuable land. He pointed out the land they consider less valuable is just as important to that owner as they are both trying to make a living from it.

Brad Wimmer said the operation of the staging and storage area was questioned. He said they need to be informed that the Diversion Authority will control operation and maintenance. Mr. Waters said they are beginning to look at operation and maintenance with the design.

Website update

Mr. Olson said Mark Brodshaug, Southeast Cass Water Resource District, submitted a list of comments heard at the meeting with Richland and Wilkin Counties that could be addressed on the website.

Daron Selvig said more meeting agendas and minutes have been added to the website. They are also working on a question and answer document on the land acquisition process. Mr. Dodds said the Corps of Engineers has started putting together a question and answer document that they will merge with what they already have on the website.

Record of Decision

The Record of Decision is possible sometime in April. A press release will be coordinated after it is signed.

Outreach advertising option

Various options for getting information out to the protected community were discussed. The Diversion Authority authorized the committee to proceed with spending some dollars to do so. Mr. Dodds said they also need to discuss the project with businesses.

Right of Entry Committee report

Brad Dahl reported that letters are being sent out to another group of property owners for access to conduct surveys and testing needed for bridge design for the project.

Other business

Mr. Wimmer said the Fargo City Commission authorized sending the half-cent sales tax to a public vote in June. The sales tax is intended towards infrastructure, flood protection and the Diversion. He added that this would not be an increase in sales tax, but it would stay the same. He said they want to put the city effort forward for the state and Federal levels. He hopes citizens see the importance of staying ahead of infrastructure needs and the Diversion.

Adjournment

There being no further business to be considered by the committee, it was moved by Ms. Elmer, seconded by Mr. Wimmer and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

APPROVED:

Rodger Olson
Chairman

ATTEST:

Carol Harbeke Lewis
Cass County Joint Water Resource District
Secretary-Treasurer