

MINUTES OF MEETING
DIVERSION AUTHORITY PUBLIC OUTREACH COMMITTEE
CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
APRIL 11, 2012

The Diversion Authority Public Outreach Committee met on April 11, 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; Kevin Campbell, Clay County Commissioner; Mike Thorstad, West Fargo City Commissioner; and Gerald Van Amburg, Buffalo Red River Watershed District. Absent were Brad Wimmer, Fargo City Commissioner; and Brenda Elmer, Moorhead City Commissioner.

Also present were Tom Waters, CH2MHill; Eric Dodds and Daron Selvig, Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc.; and Brad Dahl, Moore Engineering, Inc.

Minutes

It was moved by Kevin Campbell, seconded by Mike Thorstad and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2012, meeting.

Outreach Committee update for Diversion Authority meeting

Eric Dodds went through outreach materials in the Diversion Authority packet for the April 12 meeting. He began with a report on three community meetings for the Oxbow/Hickson/Bakke/Pleasant Township areas. Mr. Dodds indicated each meeting generated good discussion.

At the meeting for Oxbow residents, people indicated they want the project done now. They are not as interested in the process of how it will happen. Residents of the other areas told Diversion Authority representatives at the meetings that they are unable to get appraisals on their properties.

At the Hickson/Bakke meeting, Mr. Dodds said there was more extensive discussion as the group asked more questions on a broader variety of topics.

Tom Waters said residents attending the meetings were professional, even though there were emotional moments. Mr. Dodds indicated there was a good exchange of questions and answers at those meetings. If people wanted specific answers, they could get them at specific information stations.

The third meeting was geared toward businesses. There were specific questions about how businesses will be appraised. Mr. Dodds said appraising businesses will be a challenge. The Outreach team was unable to provide specifics on some questions, but was able to go into detail on the process. There was discussion on relocation assistance for businesses. There is still homework to do on specifics. Mr. Olson agreed, adding that some churches had questions about how they will be moved.

Mr. Dodds indicated comment cards were available at all the public meetings. There was a running log of comments, and the Program Management Consultants will work to develop answers in streamlined fashion.

Mr. Campbell shared that John Evert, who represents southern Clay County, had high praise for how Mr. Waters handled the meetings, which went quite well, considering the subject matter.

Mr. Dodds added that there is a one-page update on the lands Q&A document in the Diversion Authority packet, and referenced two press releases issued over the past couple weeks. One on the signing of the Record of Decision, and another sent by Mr. Olson and Mr. Campbell on 100-year flood protection.

Mr. Campbell suggested adding a reference in the Diversion Authority meeting packet to the meeting with Richland/Wilkin County representatives on March 19. Mr. Dodds agreed to add the reference.

Aq/farm outreach strategy

Mr. Olson reported plans are in the works to bring 6-8 farmers into discussions on developing agriculture/farm outreach processes and strategies. The group will include those affected by staging of the water. This will, in part, be an effort to assess suggestions on how to proceed. There are questions on how the diversion project will affect township roads, etc. Mr. Dodds indicated a master plan is in the works on transportation issues. Mr. Waters reported the goal is to turn these discussions into policy in a time-efficient manner.

Business outreach strategy

Mr. Dodds talked about the need to make sure people who are benefitted inside the diversion project are informed of the benefits and to share important information with them. More business outreach is a part of this plan.

Website update

Daron Selvig reported on several additions to fmdiversion.com, including the issuing of a press release on the signing of the Record of Decision, links to comments on the signing from Senators Conrad and Hoeven, copies of the signed Record of Decision and OMB Clearance letter, and two versions of the new Land Acquisition Q&A document: one that is searchable, and one that is a pdf version.

Right of Entry Committee report

Brad Dahl offered a short report indicating 14 landowners in the impacted areas have opted to go to court with regard to access to their properties.

Other business

Mr. Dodds reported an e-newsletter is being developed to highlight key events regarding the diversion project. This will be distributed to anyone who signs up on the website; to federal, state and local legislators; media outlets; the Diversion Authority board, committee members and staff. The intention is to write short, brief articles, and then link back to more detailed information, if available. Design status updates and links to some media articles might also be included. A distribution list is being developed. The goal is to include three articles per month, and distribute the e-newsletter, in most cases, a few days after the monthly Diversion Authority meeting. Mr. Olson suggested work continue in this direction.

Mr. Waters reported the Program Management Consultants are working hard to get a hardship policy in place for property owners in the impacted areas. It still needs more review, particularly legal review. Mr. Thorstad indicated there are concerns about whether neighborhoods will be disrupted if the project does not go through.

Adjournment

There being no further business to be considered by the committee, the meeting adjourned without objection.

APPROVED:

Rodger Olson
Chairman

ATTEST:

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