



Meeting Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (JPB) Meeting

Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024, 1 p.m., in-person at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center and virtual via Microsoft Teams

Board Members in Attendance

Dakota County Commissioner Mike Slavik
Dakota County Commissioner Bill Droste
Scott County Commissioner Tom Wolf

Others in Attendance

Nikki Stewart, Dakota County, Environmental Resources Department Director
Travis Thiel, Dakota County, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) Administrator
Melissa Bokman-Ermer, Scott County, VRWJPO Co-Administrator
Brita Moore-Kutz, Dakota County, VRWJPO Communications and Outreach Specialist
Jeff Dunn, Dakota County, VRWJPO Water Resources Engineer
Bruce Johnson, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Supervisor
Jessica Schaum, City of Apple Valley, Natural Resources Coordinator (virtual)
Steve Johnston, Elan Design Lab, representing Kasprzyk, LLC (virtual)
Josh Kasprzyk, Kasprzyk, LLC (virtual)

Agenda

1. Election of Officers

Commissioner Droste nominated Commissioner Slavik as Chair of the VRWJPB, seconded by Commissioner Wolf. No other nominations. Commissioner Slavik was elected chair on a 3-0 voice vote.

Commissioner Slavik nominated Commissioner Wolf as Vice Chair, seconded by Commissioner Droste. No other nominations. Commissioner Wolf was elected Vice Chair on a 3-0 voice vote.

Commissioner Wolf nominated Commissioner Droste as Secretary-Treasurer, seconded by Commissioner Slavik. No other nominations. Commissioner Droste was elected Secretary-Treasurer on a 3-0 voice vote.



2. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 1 p.m.

3. Roll Call

Commissioners Slavik, Droste, and Wolf were in attendance.

4. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

No comments.

5. Approval of Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Slavik mentioned that the Treasurer's Report and Expense Report for December were added to the meeting packet, though they were not included when the packet was initially posted.

There was an item added to the agenda, 7d, to discuss scheduling a strategic planning session meeting date.

b. Approval of Minutes from the December 7, 2023, Meeting

c. Acceptance of Treasurer's Reports

d. Delegation of a Limited Authority for Contracts and Purchase Agreements to the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Administrator and Co-administrator

e. Authorization to Release a Request for Qualification for Professional Services in 2024-2025

Res. No. VRW 24-01: Motion by Commissioner Wolf to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Commissioner Droste. Motion carried on a 3-0 vote.

6. Approval of Expenses

Travis Thiel presented expenses incurred between November 15 and December 11, 2023, totaling \$401,426.46.

Travis also presented expenses incurred between December 12-31, 2023, totaling \$596,700.88.

Commissioner Slavik asked if the expenses for the Watershed Plan development were paid from sources outside the watershed tax levy. Travis responded that Plan development is funded entirely by the watershed.



Res. No. VRW 24-02: Motion by Commissioner Wolf to approve expenses, seconded by Commissioner Droste. Motion carried on a 3-0 vote.

7. Business Items

a. Authorization to Execute a Grant Agreement with the Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) for a FY24 Clean Water Fund Grant for the Alimagnet Lake Alum Treatment Project

Travis presented the Grant Agreement and reasoning for pursuing the alum treatment, which is to reduce internal-load phosphorus in Alimagnet Lake.

Commissioner Droste asked if Alimagnet Lake is evenly split between the cities of Apple Valley and Burnsville and if VRWJPO is responsible for the water levels in the lake. Travis said that there is a pump outlet on the Apple Valley side of the lake that the City is responsible for operating.

Res. No. VRW 24-03: Motion by Commissioner Droste to authorize executing the Grant Agreement, seconded by Commissioner Wolf. Motion carried on a 3-0 vote.

b. Presentation of the Draft Vermillion River Watershed “Brand” Awareness Plan

Travis opened discussion of brand awareness by sharing an example of a highly recognizable business in the Twin Cities area. The VRWJPO is similarly looking to make itself and its work more visible in its communities and with stakeholders.

Brita Moore-Kutz shared her process and ideas for the VRWJPO awareness campaign. The objective is to make the organization recognizable by its logo and give people a basic idea of what VRWJPO does. At this point, she is focused on identifying organic (non-paid) avenues for promotion, but paid promotions are not off the table. Part of the campaign is what is said, part is who hears the messages.

Commissioner Droste suggested contacting individual cities as well for ideas for their resident newsletters. It’s a way to get into every household. Brita agreed this is a good idea.

Commissioner Slavik said that a challenge is that people understand what the Vermillion River is, but they don’t understand the watershed aspect of it. Communities that have the main stem of the river in them have a different relationship to it than those that don’t, as in, they see the river itself without the perspective of the work the VRWJPO does and the tributaries. People who have the Vermillion River running through their property might wonder why an alum treatment in a lake seemingly disconnected from them is using their tax dollars. Commissioner Droste added that it’s important for residents to know that what they do affects the river. Brita hopes to address this with a dot board map to help people recognize that they live in the watershed.



Slavik said he liked the overall concepts. He asked if there was an overall timeline for the campaign. Brita said there's no end point on it, but she plans to go at least through the year 2024.

Droste suggested seasonal video ideas on different reaches of the river with the Commissioners.

Slavik suggested prioritizing ideas creating a high-level, timeline-based communications plan.

Travis said he wanted to make sure the Board could provide input on expenditures for paid media. Commissioner Droste said he was fine with it. Commissioner Slavik said he wanted to see what we could do in the next year and consider it for the next budget process.

Information only.

c. Authorization to Approve Kasprzyk Agricultural Buildings

Jeff Dunn presented the permit application and map for Kasprzyk, LLC to construct three greenhouses in Eureka Township. VRWJPO maintains water resources permitting authority in Eureka Township since 2017. This permit application came before the VRWJPB because it has more than one acre of new impervious surface. The project is planned to disturb about 4.5 acres. The property owner will construct a best management practice (infiltration basin) to reduce stormwater discharge rates, the stormwater runoff volume from the new impervious surface area and enhance water quality per VRWJPO Rules.

Commissioner Wolf asked what the buildings are being used for and the applicant, Josh Kasprzyk, replied that they are for indoor hemp production.

Commissioner Slavik commended Kasprzyk, LLC for going above and beyond the watershed's standards in its plans, and staff for handling this rare instance of permitting.

Res. No. VRW 24-04: Motion by Commissioner Wolf to approve the permit, seconded by Commissioner Droste. Motion carried on a 3-0 vote.

d. Item added via agenda amendment - Discussion of meeting schedules and strategic planning session

Commissioners suggested moving the February meeting date, originally scheduled for Feb. 22, to Feb. 29 due to an Association of Minnesota Counties event, if it is necessary to hold a February meeting at all. Travis said staff do not have any agenda items for February but can meet on the 29th if something comes up.

The Board also suggested holding the March meeting on Thursday, March 21, 2024, 12-3 p.m. to hold a strategic planning session. This is a week earlier than the originally scheduled March meeting date, March 28, and starting an hour earlier than usual.



Information only.

8. Staff Reports

Melissa Bokman-Ermer

The Niagara Bottling Company water bottling project proposed in the City of Elko New Market is seeking to use municipal water. This would require the City to increase its water appropriations permit from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, which it applied for in 2023 and was asked to complete pump testing of its aquifers. The City ran pump tests in the fall and submitted the data to the DNR, which indicated that they would contact the city by Feb. 1 if they noticed anything alarming. The City also monitored private wells.

Travis asked if they put monitoring equipment on the Vermillion to ask about impacts to the river itself. Melissa said she didn't think so.

Brita Moore-Kutz

Phase 1 of the 2026-2035 Watershed Plan development is wrapping up, after the two Community Conversations in January. All Commissioners, plus alternate Commissioner Holberg, attended a Community Conversation. Brita didn't notice any hot-button issues popping up, other than people's specific property issues. The survey response has been higher than in past years.

Travis Thiel

Travis participated in a DNR roundtable the previous Friday, along with the Executive Director of Minnesota Trout Unlimited, a staff member from Friends of the Mississippi River, and Janssen Hang, Executive Director of the Hmong American Farmers Association. The discussion surrounded stream restorations and watershed improvement project partnerships. There were questions about hurdles to getting projects done.

VRWJPO is in the final stages of hiring a new Senior Watershed Specialist and made an offer.

9. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Wolf, seconded by Commissioner Droste. Motion carried on a 3-0 vote.

Next Meeting Dates (both changed from original schedule):

January 2024 minutes



If need be: Thursday, February 29, 2024, at 1 p.m. in Conference Room A at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, 4100 220th Street West, Farmington, MN and via teleconference on the web-based application, Microsoft Teams.

Thursday, March 21, 2024, at 12 p.m., location TBD and on Microsoft Teams.

Respectfully submitted by

Brita Moore-Kutz

Communications & Outreach Specialist for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Attest

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be "Brita Moore-Kutz", is written over a horizontal line.

Commissioner

Secretary/ Treasurer

Date