



Meeting Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (JPB) Meeting

Thursday, March 21, 2024, 12 p.m., in-person at the Dakota County Western Service 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

Watershed Planning Commission (WPC) Members in Attendance

Brad Blackett
James Kotz
Sandra Weber

Others in Attendance

Georg Fischer, Dakota County, Physical Development Division Director
Travis Thiel, Dakota County, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) Administrator
Melissa Bokman-Ermer, Scott County, VRWJPO Co-Administrator
Jeff Dunn, Dakota County, VRWJPO Water Resources Engineer
Brita Moore-Kutz, Dakota County, VRWJPO Communications and Outreach Specialist
Kelly Perrine, Dakota County, VRWJPO Senior Watershed Specialist
Paula Liepold, Dakota County, Water Resources Educator
Valerie Neppel, Dakota County, Groundwater Protection Unit Supervisor
Mary Jackson, Dakota County, Senior Planner
Brian Wisdorf, Dakota County, Assistant County Attorney, VRWJPO legal counsel
Bruce Johnson, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Supervisor
Anne Sawyer, Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR), Board Conservationist

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 12 p.m.



2. Roll Call

Commissioners Slavik, Droste, and Wolf were in attendance.

3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

Travis Thiel introduced Kelly Perrine to the group, who began as VRWJPO's Senior Watershed Specialist on March 4, 2024. He also introduced Brian Wisdorf, Assistant Dakota County Attorney, who began serving as legal counsel for the VRWJPO in March 2024.

4. Approval of Agenda

Res. No. VRW 24-05: Motion by Commissioner Droste to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Slavik. Motion carried on a 2-0 voice vote.

5. Approval of Minutes from the January 25, 2024 Meeting

Res. No. VRW 24-06: Motion by Commissioner Droste to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Slavik. Motion carried on a 2-0 voice vote.

6. Consent Agenda

a. Acceptance of Treasurer's Reports

Travis Thiel noted that there was a revision to the December 2023 Treasurer's Report and Expense Report to include a transaction from the City of Lakeville that was missed before.

Res. No. VRW 24-07: Motion by Commissioner Droste to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Commissioner Slavik. Motion carried on a 2-0 voice vote.

7. Approval of Expenses

Travis Thiel presented the revised December 12-December 31, 2023 Expense report, with expenses totaling \$952,301.38; the January 1-February 12, 2024 Expense report, with expenses totaling \$54,885.62; and the February 13-March 11, 2024 Expense report, with expenses totaling \$41,894.95.

Res. No. VRW 24-08: Motion by Commissioner Droste to approve the expenses, seconded by Commissioner Slavik. Motion carried on a 2-0 roll call vote.

8. Business Items

a. Strategic Planning Session



Mary Jackson led JPB and WPC members in reviewing the outcomes of the issue identification phase of the 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Plan (Plan) development. The main directions provided were:

- The JPB and WPC would like to interact with each other more often. VRWJPO could consider creating a WPC “work plan”.
- Determine which actions provide the most “impact. The lowest-hanging fruit projects have been completed, so the VRWJPO should determine where the best value is now.
- Staff should place focus on achieving high quality projects, rather than striving for quantity, and continue coordination and collaboration with local partners for the best outcomes. Implementation actions should reflect this approach.
- The VRWJPO Plan should “edge-match” well with other plans, such as the counties’ groundwater plans, SWCD comprehensive plans, and land conservation plans.
- The Plan should be as simple and clear as possible for communicating to the public and show how their tax dollars make a positive impact.
- Consideration should be given to reducing the amount of subwatersheds in the implementation plan such that plan objectives can be more generalized and pooled resources are greater. Suggested two or three subwatersheds in lieu of eight.

Issues discussed:

- Groundwater sustainability
- Pollutants – nitrates, PFAS, microplastics, biosolids
- Wetland protection and restoration

Commissioners reviewed proposed revisions to the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) between Dakota and Scott counties which established the VRWJPO. The main points from that discussion were:

- The Board expressed desire to keep membership on the JPB to three Commissioners.
- Proposed revisions address Dakota County’s practice of rotating one of the spots on the JPB between three Commissioners each year.
- Staff will draft bylaws for the organization as directed by the JPA.
- Staff asked for clarification on how the JPA delineates services provided. Dakota County is noted as the fiscal agent, but the other services currently provided by the County to the VRWJPO aren’t listed (GIS, Employee Resources, Information Technology, etc.). The Dakota SWCD has an agreement with Dakota County with more services explicitly mentioned that could serve as a model for a potential agreement between VRWJPO and the County.
- The VRWJPO is considering changes to the rules surrounding who is eligible to serve on the Watershed Planning Commission. The original JPA says WPC members must live within the watershed, but that’s not required by state statute. The JPB directed staff to get an official recommendation from the WPC and present to the JPB.



- The WPC meetings are subject to Open Meeting Law under the original JPA, which does not allow for members to participate virtually. Members have expressed that virtual options would make it easier for them to serve. Counsel Brian Wisdorf said that while it's fine to delete the line about Open Meeting Law from the JPA, that doesn't mean the WPC isn't still subject to it. State legislation may end up deciding that.

Information only.

9. Staff Reports

None

10. Adjourn

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

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, April 25, 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.

Respectfully submitted by

Brita Moore-Kutz

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

Attest

Commissioner

Secretary/ Treasurer

Date