Meeting Minutes: Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

Date: August 13, 2025

Minutes prepared by: Brita Moore-Kutz

Location: In-person at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, Farmington, MN, and virtual via Microsoft Teams

CAC Members in Attendance

- Brad Blackett
- Josh Borton
- Steve Hamrick
- Andy Riesgraf
- John Nicolai

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) Staff in Attendance

- Travis Thiel, Administrator
- Kelly Perrine, Senior Watershed Specialist
- Jeff Dunn, Water Resources Engineer
- Brita Moore-Kutz, Communications and Outreach Specialist

Agenda Items

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:40 p.m. by Chair Josh Borton.

2. **Roll Call**

Brad Blackett, Josh Borton, Steve Hamrick, John Nicolai, and Andy Riesgraf were present. Kevin Chamberlain, Jim Kotz, and Sandy Weber were absent.

3. **Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda**

None.

4. **Approval of Agenda**

Motion by Brad Blackett to approve the agenda, seconded by Andy Riesgraf. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

5. **Approval of Minutes from the May 14, 2025, Meeting**

Motion by Brad Blackett to approve the minutes, seconded by Andy Riesgraf. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

6. **Business Items**

    a. Recommend Adoption of the Draft Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2026 Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

Travis Thiel presented the draft budget and levy. Based on direction from the Joint Powers Board (JPB), staff proposed raising the levy by 5 percent from the 2025 levy, which is collected through the Dakota and Scott County property tax levy processes. However, the projected expenses are set to match a 3.5 percent levy increase. This is to allow flexibility for financial changes between August and December, when the final budget and levy must be approved. The JPB may not increase the levy in the final budget from what they approve in the draft, but they may lower it.

Brad Blackett said he appreciated the hard work staff have put in to drafting the 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan and significantly adjusting budget targets after unforeseen expenses arose. He said he strongly encourages approving a 5 percent levy increase in the final budget.

Motion by Steve Hamrick to recommend adoption of the draft budget and levy as presented, seconded by Andy Riesgraf. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

    b. Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Draft Watershed Partner Project Maintenance and Repair Financial Assistance Policy Presentation

Jeff Dunn presented the draft policy, which is intended to allow the VRWJPO's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project partners to receive financial assistance from VRWJPO to maintain the effectiveness of their projects. State grant agreements often require recipients to make commitments for project operation and maintenance. Frequently, this falls to the local government unit (LGU) which partnered with the VRWJPO on the grant and project.

The policy includes criteria for eligibility and how to apply. Staff reviewed the policy with the VRWJPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) prior to sharing with the CAC and have included the estimated expenses for it in the draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan. It is subject to JPB approval before partners can apply for funding.

Committee members responded positively to the proposal. Jeff noted that the program could help strengthen relationships with project partners and generate more ideas for future initiatives.

Information only.

7. **Updates**

    a. Chairperson's Report

Josh said he enjoyed visiting the VRWJPO table at the Dakota County Fair and attending a Landscaping for Clean Water introduction class in Farmington earlier in the summer.

b. Staff Updates

Travis Thiel

- The Minnesota Open Meeting Law has been revised to allow virtual attendance at all public meetings, including ones where members make formal recommendations and other required votes. The CAC is required to follow Open Meeting Law, but there are no other provisions restricting virtual attendance. Staff hope that more virtual options could help with recruiting new members. Virtual attendees must have their cameras turned on and reliable microphone access. At least one person is required to be on-site. All votes must be conducted by roll call, and meeting minutes must reflect who attended virtually and the reason for their virtual participation. Travis asked that if the CAC decides to move forward with adopting this meeting format, members decide amongst themselves who will be at the meeting in-person.

  The CAC agreed to move forward with open meeting law allowing for virtual attendance at business meetings with a formal motion.

Motion by Steve Hamrick to adopt virtual attendance in accordance with Minnesota Open Meeting Law, seconded by Andy Riesgraf. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

- Travis reminded members to RSVP for all meetings, regardless of whether they are attending in-person or virtually. This is necessary to ensure a quorum of five members will be present for the meeting to take place.

Kelly Perrine

- The draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan is nearly complete. Staff plan to release it for the official 60-day comment period to state review agencies, LGUs in the watershed, counties, and soil and water conservation districts at the end of August.

8. Adjournment

Motion by John Nicolai to adjourn, seconded by Brad Blackett. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

Next Meeting

Date: November 19, 2025

Time: 4:30 p.m.

Location: In-person at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center and virtually via Microsoft Teams