

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Managers
Of the Two Rivers Watershed District
Held: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 @ 3:00 p.m.**

The Board of Managers of the Two River Watershed District held a special meeting beginning at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 26, 2021. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the meeting was held in the upstairs meeting room of the Kittson County Courthouse in Hallock, MN with social distancing guidelines in place. The meeting was also held via “GoTo Meeting” to allow for the public to attend electronically either by phone or by computer.

Managers present in person included President Paul Olsonawski, Secretary Daryl Klegstad, Treasurer Joel Muir, Bruce Anderson, Rick Sikorski, and Scott Klein. Vice President Roger Anderson attended electronically. None were absent.

Others present in person included District Administrator Dan Money, Head Technician Matt Thompson, Eric Ristad, and Matt Vig. Those attending electronically were Attorney Jeff Hane (Brink, Sobolik, Severson, Malm & Albright, P.A), Engineer Blake Carlson (WSN Engineering), and Ryan Schwenzefier.

The meeting was called to order by President Olsonawski. The main purpose of the meeting is to review a permit violation that had occurred in the summer of 2020 in the vicinity of sections 16 and 17 of Hazelton Township and also to review administrative reports.

Pay Equity Report:

Administrator Money handed out and discussed the District’s Pay Equity Report. This report is required to be submitted to the State of Minnesota once every 3 years and is now due. It is a method of eliminating salary discrimination based on gender. Upon a **motion** by B. Anderson, **second** by Sikorski and **unanimous vote**, the report was **approved** by the Board and the Administrator was directed to file it as required by state statute.

Hazelton 16-17 permit issues:

During the extreme summer rainfall in June of 2020, a permit violation was reported to the District. Upon investigation by District staff, it was discovered that approximately 1,200 feet of a north-south township road had been raised up to one foot to act as a dike. This road prior to the work normally overtopped in two locations. The road raise/dike eliminated road overtopping in the southerly location however allegedly caused more water to overtop in the northerly location, adding to flooding problems.

Technician M. Thompson reviewed the permit issue and the investigation that was done. He noted the location, entities involved, and generally described the work. His investigation included meeting with all parties involved, reviewing culvert data, field inspections, and performing survey work. The work that was done requires a permit from the District, however none was applied for nor was one approved.

Engineer Blake Carlson discussed the effects of the work that was done, and potential alternatives, mitigation, and projects.

- The north-south road was raised to elevation 912 and holds water back east of the road in section 16, Hazelton Township during large runoff events. The work completed reduces flood damages downstream to the west of the road, however increases damages to the east of the road and potential north of the location of the work that was done.
- There is a farmstead located east of the road, however elevations that were surveyed indicate there would be no impact to the home as a result of the road raise. Any future work needs to take this house elevation of 915.2 into consideration.
- Several alternatives were discussed including the following:

- outlet ditches to carry water away from the area, located in the north, middle and south part of the section to the west.
- Diking to the east, setback alongside the river, to prevent breakouts
- Raising the road for the entire mile, incorporating two separate overflow sections, and with an option of installing culverts through the road. To keep conditions similar to pre-project, the north overflow would be 0.4 feet higher than the southern overflow. At least 2 overflow sections are needed to protect the integrity of the road and prevent washouts.
- Impounding and/or detaining water to the east in section 16 until floodwaters subside and then releasing it. Impoundments in other upstream locations could also be looked at.

In any of the alternatives, consideration must be given not to increase flows on the Middle Branch Two Rivers so as not to transfer the problem to downstream areas.

Carlson also mentioned the Two Rivers Watershed District's proposed project, Klondike Clean Water Retention Project. This project if constructed would hold up to 37,000 acre feet of water. Engineering data was analyzed and Carlson noted that the project would in most cases solve the problems that now occur with the river breaking out and flooding overland. This project is currently in the permitting phase and funding is being sought. The earliest that it would be built would be 2022 or 2023, but it could be later depending on several factors.

Meeting attendees were asked if they had any questions or had any input into the alternatives put forth:

- Concern was expressed regarding downstream areas and where the water from this area eventually goes.
- Eric Ristad noted that there are several places where the water breaks out of the Middle Branch Two Rivers. He inquired about the Two Rivers Watershed District's "Middle Branch Project" that was constructed in the late 1960's. This project straightened a portion of the river, and also constructed an interceptor ditch.
 - Could the south road ditch of MN Hwy 175 in sections 15 and 16 be improved to be able to carry excessive overflow water when the Middle Branch is flowing full. This would be designed to prevent the water from breaking out and over land flooding like it currently does.
- Olsonawski discussed the possibility of a flood storage easement, whereby landowners are paid to store floodwater on their lands when necessary.
- Questions were asked about the option of outlet ditches to the west. Erosion was a concern, as it was noted there is a lot of fall and erosive velocities could occur.
- Questions were raised regarding the amount of flood storage that could be achieved in section 16, depending upon how high the road is raised.
- Questions were also raised to the effectiveness of an overflow channel along Hwy 175. What would be the effect of this, would it need to be extended further to the west, and would it cause impacts elsewhere?
- It was generally accepted that the road raise for the whole mile could be used to store some water in section 16, but that an outlet channel would be desirable. The middle outlet was not favorable, but a north, south, or both channels should be considered.
- Ryan Schwenzefier indicated that raising of the road needs to be kept equitable. Either keep the road at 1968 elevations or raise it the entire length. The work done to only raise the south portion of the road pushes more water to the north and unfairly harms those lands while protecting the south.
- Ristad suggested that the road should not be lower than 912 and that it could be raised to that elevation for the entire mile.

Several items need to be investigated further. Watershed District staff and engineer were directed to research the following:

- The storage created by raising the road to 912 and also to 913 needs to be calculated and an opinion formed on the effect it would have on the Middle Branch Two Rivers.
- Investigate further the idea of an overflow ditch along the south side of Hwy 175 in section 15-16-17 Hazelton. What would the design criteria need to be including elevations of when it would begin to flow, downstream effects, and other considerations.
- If the road raise is allowed, what would the acceptable level be, and what would the overflow section elevations be? Would additional center line culverts be needed on either the north or south ends of the road?
- Are there any farmsteads located downstream that would be impacted?
- The "Middle Branch Project" records should be reviewed to look at the road elevations, the ditch designs, the purpose of the project and what goals and objectives it was designed to address.

The Board of Managers discussed the permit violation fees. Olsonawski suggested waiving the fees and noted that Ristad had paid all costs of fill, gravel, labor and equipment to do the work. It was also noted that when the flooding was occurring, local consideration was given to raising the road and saving it was a better option than letting it overtop and wash out.

Schwenzefier questioned the Board regarding the work that was done and damage that it caused others. While it protected the Ristad lands, he feels it caused his land to flood at a higher level and so he was damaged. He asked why the fee would be waived when the project caused him damage.

The Board deliberated all information and discussion that was presented at the meeting. A motion was made by Klein, seconded by Sikorski, and passed unanimously to suspend any action regarding the permit violation until all facts are examined, as noted above. District staff and the engineer were directed to report back to the Board once the information has been collected and analyzed.

With no other matters to come before the Board of Managers, the meeting was adjourned.

Attest:


Daryl Klegstad, Secretary


Paul Olsonawski, President

