

Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization  
Annual Meeting Minutes of May 1, 2018

Chair Dan Denno called the Annual Meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Present: Chair Dan Denno, Lan Tornes, Randy Bettinger, John West, Tim Harrington, Jerry Tveit, Sandy Flaherty

Absent: Scott Heaton, Ann Arcand, David Olsrud, Matt Downing

Audience: Jared Wagner, ACD, Chuck Schwartz, MSA, and Eric Thompson, MSA via video conference

3. Adopt Agenda           **Mr. West moved and Mr. Tornes seconded to approve the agenda with the addition of 4A. Review Agency Comments - URRWMO Draft Plan Implementation Issues. Motion carried.**

4. Approve Minutes           **Mr. Tveit moved and Mr. Tornes seconded to approve the March 6, 2018 meeting minutes as written. Motion carried.**

4A. Review Agency Comments URRWMO Draft Plan

From MSA's perspective, there are a couple of big picture items that must be addressed by the URRWMO before remaining details can be addressed. Basically, what MSA is hearing is that the URRWMO needs to be more active and to be more active requires a greater investment of time and resources, including money.

Implementation Issues   At the March 6, 2018 URRWMO workshop, representatives from the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) were present to participate in a discussion of comments received from review agencies regarding the URRWMO's draft 4th Generation Watershed Management Plan (Plan). The recommendation from the Metropolitan Council was to withhold approval of the plan until significant comments were addressed. At the meeting, BWSR staff presented a memorandum summarizing collective comments from review agencies; for purposes of this memo, MSA has further summarized agency concerns into three (3) simpler topics, which are listed below.

**1. Administration.** Review agencies are concerned that there is no active administration of URRWMO programs nor is there regular representation of the URRWMO at various meetings regarding water resources activities at the local and state level. Agencies have strongly recommended that the URRWMO engage professional staff - likely part time, and likely via a contractual arrangement – which will be invested with the power to represent (i.e. speak on behalf) of the board of managers.

A particular concern of review agencies is the apparent lack of engagement by member communities of the URRWMO. During the Plan development period, many invites were sent to member communities to attend the URRWMO meeting; however, attendance was limited. Having a designated URRWMO administrative staff would allow the URRWMO to proactively attend member community public meetings to present issues associated with the Plan revision process as well as other watershed management issues, which would facilitate cooperation between government agencies. Critical to this cooperation is establishing an understanding,

and securing a commitment from member communities, regarding their obligations in implementing the URRWMO's Plan.

Additionally, having a dedicated administrative staff would facilitate management of the URRWMO's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC).

The draft plan calls for several meetings of these committees early in the Plan lifespan to develop and implement new URRWMO policies.

*At this time, MSA estimates that it will require approximately 120 hours per year to provide minimum administrative services to the URRWMO. The actual cost of this service will depend on staff hourly rates but could range between \$8,000 and \$20,000 per year.*

**2. Implementation.** At the direction of the URRWMO board, the implementation of nearly all tasks identified in the draft Plan are delegated either to member communities or to the Anoka Conservation District (ACD). Of significant concern to review agencies is the lack of documentation of the understanding of these responsibilities by the member communities, as well as the lack of any kind of formal agreement with member communities (council resolutions) or ACD (contract for services).

The engagement of watershed administrative staff would provide a mechanism whereby an authorized representative could present URRWMO issues to member communities, engage in dialogue, and ultimately secure agreement for local commitments. A negotiated contract with ACD for long-term services (currently ACD operates under an annual contract) would likely alleviate regulatory concerns regarding that aspect of Plan implementation.

**3. WMO Funding.** At the WMO Plan revision open house on June 29, 2016, BWSR staff who were present led the audience in an activity whereby attendees could indicate the level of funding (expressed as a fraction of property value) that they felt was appropriate for operating the URRWMO. The result of this activity was an indicated average WMO 'assessment rate' of \$15/\$100,000 assessed property value. WMO funding at this level would result in an annual WMO budget of approximately \$325,000. Currently the URRWMO's annual budget is approximately \$14,000 or roughly \$0.61/\$100,000.

The URRWMO board has been steadfast in conveying its message that they wish to control costs and not raise taxes (via its member municipalities) to fund watershed activities. It is the regulator's position that the WMO has obligations that it is not satisfying. Part of the regulator's position is that current WMO funding levels are a partial cause of the watershed's inactivity. They require a financial analysis that demonstrates that there is no ability to increase WMO funding.

A review of other metro-area WMO ten-year watershed management plans identified only two WMOs that had completed any level of financial analysis. These

included the Elm Creek WMO, which indicated that their estimated 2018 assessment was approximately \$2.59/\$100,000 assessed value and the Pioneer-Sarah WMO, which indicated that their estimated 2018 assessed rate was \$10.88 /\$100,000. Regardless of rates, all other metro area WMOs have higher annual budgets than the URRWMO. This does not count activities funded by grant programs.

Mr. Schwartz was very clear that without some type of formal administration, the Plan may not get approved. He also noted that having a part-time hire could mean having an employee.

Mr. Bettinger said he believes member cities would not go for an \$8,000 to \$20,000 administration cost, as this doubles the budget.

Mr. Tornes stated it makes sense to have a person in this position to attend meetings, advocate for the URRWMO, and speak on behalf of the URRWMO. Mr. Schwartz said the position could be filled by a consultant, member community staff member, or ACD. This person would develop a scope of work and draft a contract with the cost being based on who is hired. Chair Denno has a problem with having a city staff member devoting part-time to this position. He believes someone like Mr. Tornes who has knowledge of these things would be a much better advocate. Mr. Tveit sees the advantage of having a two-way communication on grants, etc. between the URRWMO and member cities.

The Board consensus was to hire a professional staff member at the level of ACD or MSA in lieu of a layperson. Mr. Wagner noted that Jamie Schurbon, ACD does this type of work. Chair Denno requested ACD draft a proposal to the URRWMO based on 120 hours as a benchmark. **Mr. Tornes moved and Mr. West seconded to request a draft proposal from ACD for this administrative position based on 120 hours. Motion carried.** Mr. Wagner will talk with Mr. Schurbon.

BWSR has suggested a committee comprised of personnel from BWSR, ACD, MSA, and 1-2 laypersons be formed to brainstorm what will be needed. Mr. Tornes said he is tentatively able to meet with others and will try to work with his schedule; Mr. West also volunteered to be on the committee.

Regarding URRWMO funding, it was suggested that a formal analysis/comparison be done with other WMO's to see what is in their plans. Chair Denno did not agree that the URRWMO should base its budget on what other WMOs have for their budgets. He noted that member cities are not requesting projects be done, so there is no need to budget extra money for projects that do not exist.

After a draft proposal is received from ACD, a meeting will be scheduled for Mr. Tornes, Mr. West, and ACD to meet to discuss projects. MSA will resend its project list to board members and member communities to view for potential projects.

5. Treasurer's Report      A. Financial Report  
 Chair Denno reported an April balance of \$14,744.36. A check was received from St. Francis for \$3,187.52 (which needs to be deposited). After checks were written, the balance to date is \$6,521.05. **Mr. West moved and Mr. Tornes seconded to accept the Treasurer's report as presented. Motion carried.**

B. Treasurer Update  
 Ms. Gessner reported a verbal resignation was received from Scott Heaton. A request will be made for his resignation in writing.

**Mr. Tornes moved and Mr. West seconded to approve the MSA invoice for \$220.83. Motion carried.**

**Mr. West moved and Mr. Tornes seconded to direct Ms. Gessner to submit the second budget invoice billing to member cities. Motion carried.**

6. Special Orders      A. Election of Officers

**Mr. West moved and Mr. Tornes seconded to elect Mr. West as Vice Chair with the understanding that Mr. West will be Acting Chair until an official Chair is elected. Motion carried.**

No nominations were made for Chair or for Secretary.

Elections will be revisited at the June 26 meeting.

B. Discuss whether to meet bi-month or meet quarterly  
 With the need to finish the Plan, the decision was made to continue to meet bi-monthly.

C. Confirm meeting dates – **Mr. Tveit moved and Mr. Tornes seconded to set the meeting dates of June 26, Sept. 4, October 30, 2018 and Jan. 8, 2019, March 5, and May 7. Motion carried.**

D. Hear recommended amendments to Joint Powers Agreement and/or Watershed Management Plan – No amendments were presented.

7. Unfinished Business      A. Approved ratifications for 2019 Budget  
 Written verification was received that both Ham Lake and East Bethel have ratified the 2019 budget. Chair Denno confirmed that Oak Grove also ratified the budget.

B. Watershed Based Funding (WBF) April meeting update  
 The WBF has \$840,000 earmarked for Anoka County, of which the URRWMO could have received \$189,000; unfortunately, the URRWMO is ineligible for any funds due to not having an approved Watershed Management Plan. Next year will be the earliest that the URRWMO can apply for funding.

Mr. Tornes reported that of that \$840,000, \$100,000 has been set up for water improvement outreach in Anoka County. A subcommittee will determine the scope of work to be considered from the Anoka County Watershed Based Funding Activity List. A majority vote decision will be made on how the \$100,000 will be spent.

There was discussion on hiring staff to coordinate an outreach project. If someone is hired, will there be funding available next year to cover employment costs? No hard decision was made whether staff will be hired and if so, will the position be full-time or part-time.

The next WBF meeting is scheduled for May 16<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Bettinger asked why the URRWMO was not told about the WBF prior to December/January, someone should have notified the URRWMO that an approved Plan was needed to be eligible; that information would have been useful. Ms. Gessner shared that an email was sent from Mr. Schurbon to board members on 11/17/17 which introduced the WBF, which at that time was called “Fund the Plan”

Mr. Tviet asked how can the URRWMO include several projects in the Plan if funds may not be available in the future. This is a good reason for the WBF to be offered on an annual basis.

#### C. Water Resources Almanac Presentation

Jared Wagner, ACD, reviewed and reported on the 2017 Water Monitoring report for the URRWMO. This Almanac report can be found on the ACD website.

The main recommendations for the URRWMO are:

- Integrate the Rum River WRAPP (Watershed Restoration and Protection Plan) into the URRWMO’s activity plans. This WRAPP is an assessment of the entire Rum River watershed, including recommended management strategies, that was produced by the MPCA and local water managers.
- Update the URRWMO’s water monitoring plan, which expired in 2017. The current draft plan lacks a monitoring schedule, which should be developed. Projects identified in an approved plan are eligible for Watershed Based Funding from the State.
- Install projects identified in the St. Francis stormwater assessment that is aimed at improving Rum River water quality. The study identified numerous stormwater treatment opportunities and ranking them by cost effectiveness. It lays the groundwork for project installations.
- Collaborate in county-wide efforts to allocate Watershed Based Funding to deserving projects. This funding is a new, non-competitive way of distributing Clean Water Funds as of 2018. \$826,000 is available throughout Anoka County. Projects must be in the WMO plan.
- Collaborate on efforts to diagnose declining water quality in Lake George and fix it. The Lake George Improvement District and the Anoka Conservation District have begun study. Results are anticipated in 2018.

- Periodically monitor chlorides in streams to verify if observed baseflow conductivity increases are due to salts. Every 3 years minimum is recommended.
- Promote practices that limit road deicing salt applications while keeping roads safe. Streams throughout the URRWMO have increasing conductivity.
- Protect streams from phosphorus increases. Streams throughout the URRWMO have phosphorus that is near or exceeding State water quality thresholds. Yet none are on the State impaired waters list for this problem. Projects that reduce nutrient loads and prevent additional nutrient loading as the area develops are advised.
- Monitor Lake George water quality at least every other year. The lake has a declining trend. The Lake Improvement District has taken up monitoring every other year when the URRWMO has not funded that work but would prefer to put their dollars into projects.
- Promote groundwater conservation. Metropolitan Council models predict 3+ft drawdown of surface waters in parts of the URRWMO by 2030, and 5+ft by 2050.

8. New Business            A. Wellhead Protection Plan for the City of East Bethel, Part II  
 Mr. Schwartz will review this plan on behalf of the URRWMO.

9. Mail                    A. MSA invoice for \$220.83  
 B. Check from St. Francis for \$3,187.52

10. Other                None

11. Invoice Approval    A. Recording Secretary May 2018 invoice for \$200 (\$175 + \$25 draft budget ratification)  
 B. ACD Invoice #2018036 2018 Water Monitoring and Management payment 1 of 3 for \$3,663.34

**Mr. West moved and Mr. Tornes seconded to approve the recording secretary May 2018 invoice for \$200 and the ACD Invoice #2018036 payment 1 of 3 for \$3,663.34. Motion carried.**

12. Adjourn            **Mr. West moved and Mr. Ronning seconded to adjourn at 9:28 pm. Motion carried.**

Gail Gessner  
 Submitted on 5/6/18