

Rum River Watershed Partnership

**Rum River Watershed Partnership
JPE Board Meeting Minutes**

Coming together to identify shared goals.
Planning together to leverage unique capacity.
Working together to achieve results.

**March 23, 2023
4:30PM – 6:30PM**

Vision Statement

- Clean, abundant water for consumption, recreation and habitat
- Collaborative partnership among communities working towards a common goal
- Community members and decision makers understand the challenges and opportunities facing the watershed
- Innovative strategies to meet our goals

In-Person Meeting
 MLC Courthouse,
 lower level, Conf rm D, 635 2nd St SE,
 Milaca, MN 56353

Note taker: Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD

**Voting
Members
Present:**

Laurie Westerlund – Aitkin County
 Bob Janzen – Aitkin SWCD
 Colleen Werdien - Anoka Conservation District
 Ed Popp – Benton County
 Wade Bastian – Benton SWCD
 Al Koczur – Isanti SWCD
 Kim Johnson – Kanabec SWCD
 Jake Janski – Mille Lacs SWCD
 Dale Scholl – Morrison SWCD
 Lisa Fobbe – Sherburne County
 Chris Jurek – Sherburne SWCD

**Alternates
Present:**

Andrew Hulse – Sherburne County – (*virtual attendance*)

**Partners and
Staff Present:**

Jamie Schurbon - Anoka Conservation District
 Tiffany Determan – Isanti SWCD
 Lydia Godfrey- Isanti SWCD
 Talisha Zimmerman – Isanti County - (*virtual attendance*)
 Perry Bunting – Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe - (*virtual attendance*)
 Susan Shaw – Mille Lacs SWCD
 Francine Larson – Sherburne SWCD - (*virtual attendance*)
 Dan Cibulka – Sherburne SWCD
 Barb Peichel –BWSR - (*virtual attendance*)
 Darren Mayers –BWSR
 Gerry Maciej – Benton SWCD
 Emily Forbord – Benton SWCD - (*virtual attendance*)

**Voting
Members
Absent:**

Alan Duff – Isanti County
 Kelly Applegate - Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
 Bobby Kasper – Morrison County

1. Meeting called to order at 4:30 pm. Only members present in-person may vote.

2. Approve Agenda

Motion by Fobbe to approve the agenda; second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

3. Approve January 26, 2023 Rum River Watershed Partnership Board meeting minutes

Motion by K. Johnson to approve the January 26th, 2023, outcomes; second by Fobbe. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

4. Progress Report/ Updates

Determan gave the board a progress report. Since the board last met, staff has worked on reimbursement vouchers and submitted projects. There have been two IPC meetings where staff discussed project submissions, and at the last meeting they recommended projects for funding. Westerlund attended the most recent staff meeting and commented that it was impressive seeing the staff work together.

Schurbon gave the 1st Q Financial Report. The watershed has received the first 50% of grants funds. The only encumbered costs have been for administration due to insurance. In the future, the financial report will include the most recent bank statements.

Motion by Werdien to approve the financial report; second by Bastian. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

Determan described the Master Agreements and Statements of Work. The Master Agreements will be standing through the grant period, and the Statement of Works will be added to it. The Statement of Work provides the deliverables and more detail of how the money will be spent. A typo was pointed out in section 18 of the Master Agreement where it references the wrong statute. The lawyer will be contacted to clarify what the correct statute should be.

Motion by Koczur to approve the Statement of Work and Master Agreements pending clarification of the statues referenced in section 18; second by Popp. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

Discussion

There was a discussion about the format of the financial report. Janski is in favor of more transparency of checks and balances. Werdien asked if the Fiscal Agent's time would be on the financial report and Schurbon clarified the amount of hours worked would not be seen, but instead it would come as a reimbursement request. After a discussion, it was also decided financial reports would include the most recent snapshot of the bank statements.

Janski asked for clarification if the board approved reimbursement requests. Schurbon clarified that the board would not approve those transfer of funds unless they had doubts about Anoka CD doing it.

Bastian noticed section 18 of the Master Agreement references a statute about law enforcement. It is assumed the lawyer put in the wrong statute on accident. However, the Master Agreement needs to be approved in order to approve projects for funding. It was decided to approve the agreement under the basis the statute typo would be amended.

5. Funds Management

Schurbon suggested the partnership purchase a CD with grant dollars. It would gain interest that the partnership could use on non-grant eligible items. It also would provide safety for funds above the FDIC insured amount.

The board stressed they want security with their funding, so it is important to try and stay within the FDIC insured amount. However, they do not want to micro-manage the transfer of funds from CDs. K. Johnson proposed a resolution to grant the Fiscal Agent the authority to minimize risk and ensure liquidity for the partnership funds. The board desires the Fiscal Agent keeps funds within the FDIC insured amount unless it is known the liquid assets will be spent quickly. When able, the Fiscal Agent should also gain interest using traditional means.

Motion by K. Johnson to grant authority to the Fiscal Agent to minimize risk and ensure liquidity for partnership funds; second by Fobbe. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

Discussion

There was a discussion about how best to minimize risk. Many board members were concerned about being above the FDIC insured amount and felt more comfortable if funds were protected through a CD. There was a discussion about the different amounts and lengths of times to invest in the CDs. The board decided they want the Fiscal Agent to be agile and move money around as needed without needing regular board approvals.

A few other banking suggestions were made. Maciej shared how he uses ACH transfers, along with CDs, for secure liquid assets and interest. He offered to provide details. Werdien questioned how often transfers needed to be checked. Maciej said it was not often, but the money could be tracked on a report. Fobbe suggested Magic funds, but it is uncertain if the partnership is able to invest in them.

6. 1st Q Project Approvals

Determan prepared a summary sheet of the projects that applied for funding and how much funding the IPC recommends for them. The partnership needs to make sure it meets goals, which it accomplishes with these projects with money left over. Determan pointed out projects that had different recommendations than the ranking sheet, since the ranking sheet did not take into account some aspects. The funding request is lower than expected since one project is postponed. The IPC tried to stay within budget, but exceeded it for technical and engineering expenses. This budget can be adjusted without board and BWSR approval.

Motion by Fobbe to approve the 1st Quarter Funding Requests including the Master Agreements and their collective Statements of Work; second by Bastian. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

Discussion

Werdien asked for clarification about the outreach funding requests. The requests are for the watershed wide outreach that will be done by Mille Lacs SWCD, Isanti SWCD and Anoka CD.

Koczur and Janksi commented on the good work that has been done so far, and their excitement for getting projects on the ground.

Janksi asked if the partnership was comfortable spending a large portion of the grant right away. Determan reminded the group that planning for the next annual work plan will begin soon, so if a partner has a project they can propose it for the next work plan. The work plan was also based on projects people knew were coming, so it is logical the money has been requested quickly.

Werdien questioned how progress will be evaluated. Cibulka will be in charge of tracking

implementation, and the outreach staff can work with him to make the information presentable for the board and public.

7. Education and Outreach Plan

Godfrey provided a description of the overall outreach plan and Type A outreach tasks. The outreach and education plan spans 2023-2024 and includes Type A and Type B items. Type A items include workshops, creating videos and handouts, mailings, social media, and more. A tour of projects for the JPE board is also planned for 2024. Outreach staff will also work to make sure the board is kept in the loop about outreach accomplishments.

Shaw gave a description of Type B outreach items, and then an example of Type B outreach they have completed in Mille Lacs that they hope to mimic. Type B outreach will be accomplished by a new hire that will be housed at the Mille Lacs SWCD. They will meet with existing stakeholder groups and identify both private and public sector people that have buy-in. Both outreach types will hopefully result in more landowners implementing projects.

Motion by Westerlund to approve the FY23 Education and Outreach Plan; second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

Discussion

Popp asked if the Mille Lacs Outreach new hire is a permanent position. Shaw replied the position will be funded using the existing WBIF and LCCMR grants, so in the future they will need to find additional ways to fund the position. However, that is often the case with SWCD work.

Janksi questioned how and how often the board will be updated about watershed outreach. Godfrey replied it is up to the board. After a discussion, it was decided the board would be included in planned email updates sent to partnership staff about once a month. However, the staff would not designate extra time to keep the board updated.

8. Type B Outreach and Staff Person Committee

Shaw asked if any board members would like to be included in the hiring process for the Type B Outreach and Forestry staff person and how involved they would like to be. Staff will already be a part of the committee. There was little interest, although Werdien offered to get involved. An email will be sent to the board when Mille Lacs SWCD gets closer to hiring, so board members can decide then if they want to get involved.

Discussion

Board members expressed they trusted staff to hire a good applicant, and many were unsure if they would be available to help with the hiring as needed.

It was questioned how the interview process is done. Shaw responded they follow the Mille Lacs County's interview process which is to rank and score questions. There would also be minimal qualifications that would weed out poor candidates. Schurbon reminded the group that different people are drawn to different qualities in applicants which makes having a hiring committee beneficial.

9. Liaison: Next IPC TBD

The next IPC meeting is planned for May 8th. Determan will send an email out to the board and those that are able to attend may.

10. **Next Meeting Date:**

June 22, 2023, at 4:30 pm at the Mille Lacs County Courthouse.

11. Other Updates

No updates, except a photo was taken.

12. **Janksi called the meeting to adjourn at 6:13pm.**