



Minutes

MRWCC Board Meeting

November 26, 2020 – 1:30 PM

Zoom Meeting

Present:

In person: Brian Hills, Suzanne Liebelt, Ken Miller, Darcy Wills, Ross Ford, Will Lindeman, Scott MacCumber, Warren Cunningham, Ben Ellert, Ron McNeil, Lorraine Nicol, Aaron Domes, Tim Romanow, and Mary Lupwayi

Absent: Devon Ford, John Ross, William King, Joan Hughson, Ed Sloboda, Stephen Kirkpatrick

1. Welcome and introductions

- Ron McNeil chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone to the zoom meeting
- He brought the meeting to order at 1:36pm

2. Approve Agenda

- The following items were to be added to the agenda:
 - Update on WPAC/Municipal study
 - Page 6 and 7 Milk River Aquifer Ground Water Study to be added to Team updates under Research and Monitoring
- The following correction was noted on the agenda:
 - Next meeting date should read January 28, 2021

Motion: Lorraine Nicol moved to approve the agenda as amended. Ross Ford seconded. **Carried**

3. Minutes from September 24, 2020 meeting

- The following amendments should be noted in the minutes:
 - It should be noted that the video call quality was poor which caused a few members to leave the meeting early
 - Page 4, the spelling of Sherburne
 - Page 5, Item 10 states that *Tim will circulate the project summary to Council with the minutes for more clarity* but was not circulated

Action: Tim to circulate the project summary

- Page 9, the wording between the Milk River lagoons and the river states that there is a great deal of erosion, should be modified to read “there are erosion issues between the river and the lagoon
- Page 7, Milk River Aquifer groundwater study delete the last sentence as it states Dr. Yokochi’s words

Motion: Lorraine Nicol moved to accept the minutes as amended. Ross Ford seconded.
Carried

4. Financial update

- Financial statements updates
 - September and October, 2020 Financial Statements
 - Issues regarding showing WRRP2 revenue for the fiscal year and total Core funding recorded as an accounts receivable were corrected for October books
 - There was a suggestion to present some of the financial records in landscape because the font was too small and difficult to read

Motion: Will Lindeman moved to accept the financial statements as presented.
Suzanne Liebelt seconded. **Carried**

- Employee benefit rates update
 - A couple of pooling opportunities were investigated with the MRCBA and Town of Milk River
 - Not successful with the MRCBA
 - The Town of Milk River is willing to pool their benefits with MRWCC
 - They have a better benefit package with Sunlife

Motion: Ross Ford moved that the MRWCC pool their employee benefits with the Town of Milk River and thank the Town Council for this. Ben Ellert seconded. **Carried**

5. WPAC Core/Project grant status update

- We received the balance of \$165,000 for the 2020/2021 fiscal year grant from the Government of Alberta first week of November

6. Other grants

- CAP
 - Have not received feedback for this grant
 - This is the joint application that was made between SAEWA, OWC, and MRWCC
 - There is a new administrator and they will be reviewing the application some time in November or December
- Alberta Ecotrust
 - Got an approval for a grant of \$20,000
 - The project will help to promote the education and outreach efforts by putting the focus on the lessons learned in 2020 water shortage year and developing a water shortage strategy to be used in the future in the event of the same water shortage challenges
 - The grant is for the next fiscal year, April 2021/2022
 - There is interest by AEP to help put together a proactive water shortage management plan to build on what was started this year

- The grant spending logistics will be discussed at the next strategic planning session

Action: Tim to circulate the grant agreement once available

- WRRP wrap-up
 - Just submitted the interim report
 - Over \$6,000 left
 - The project outcomes were discussed
 - There was some interest from land owners to build cages to protect young trees from domestic and wildlife. The balance of the grant will be used to build these tree protection cages
 - Priority for the cages will go to producer cooperators
 - Red Deer Watershed Alliance hosted a science forum. The RDWA and NSWA used their WRRP funding to contract a specialist to assess the intactness of the riparian areas. This was presented at the science forum and the amount of work done was very interesting

Action: Tim to circulate RDWA project link to the Board

- Meeting with County of Warner ASB staff to see if there is a possibility of collaboration of the WRRP applications
- Future project ideas are welcome
- Could submit another application for funding due in early January, if there is a suitable project idea

7. St Mary Diversion update

- Diversion repairs are complete
- Water arrived in Alberta late October
- There was some localized flooding when the ice came out with no significant damage
- Have placed an article in the Meander newsletter with updated imagery and some costing on repair work

Action: Tim to circulate the latest reservoir and snow park conditions to the Board

8. WPACs Manager's report

- Had a zoom conference on November 23, 2020
- There are some new directors and some employee turnover
- There is renewed interest in project collaborating such as joint funding application, monitoring, watershed restoration work, and other projects
- Working on logistics to setup a process to have feedback on policies with issues that would be of benefit to all WPACs. If there is such a policy, Tim will bring to Council for a comment or motion
- Still waiting for revisions on the draft material before conducting the Train the Trainer for the drought resilience program. No dates set yet but will likely be a webinar format

- Bow River Basin Council put out a notice every week on upcoming events. It is extremely valuable to get information especially during this time of virtual meetings
- Looking to have a collective WPAC portal to have a platform to host forums or share information

Action: Tim to circulate the Bow River Basin Council notice link to the Board

9. Strategic Planning review (3-year plan) – Winter 2020/21

- At the last meeting the following motion was passed:
 - *Motion: Ross Ford moved to hold a facilitated day and half strategic planning session late January in person if covid19 restrictions are easing. Combine with the Board meeting at Waterton or elsewhere close by. Ed Sloboda Seconded. Carried*
- At their meeting, the Executive requested that the motion be rescinded due to increase in Covid19 cases
- Proposed having a one-year bridge strategic plan and build on the work that was done at the last February Strategic plan session

Action: Tim to bring back a draft Strategic plan to January 28 Board meeting for discussion and look at having the long-term plan when it is safe to do so

- Ron, Will, and Ross offered to help with the draft strategic plan
 - *Request to Rescind this Motion and New Motion*

Motion: Ross Ford moved to rescind the above motion as it is unsafe to meet due to increase in Covid19 cases and postpone the long-term strategic plan session until it's safe to do so. Meanwhile, have a one-year bridge strategic plan during the Board meeting on January 28, 2021 and build on the work that was done during last February Strategic plan. Will Lindeman seconded. **Carried.**

10. Municipal Appointments on MRWCC Board

- The following members were reappointed:
 - County of Warner - Ross Ford
 - County of Forty Mile – Joan Hughson
 - Town of Milk River – Suzanne Liebelt
 - Village of Coutts - Scott MacCumber

11. Industry Representation on the Board

- A letter was sent to Granite Oil Corp. to request Industry representation but there has not been any response
- Granite Oil Corp. was purchased by International Petroleum Corporation (IPC)
- There is a new administration
- A new letter should be sent again to the new company

Action: Tim to call the IPC management and let them know the history between the two organizations and the role of industry seat to MRWCC

- If IPC does not work, contact other consultants and service companies that can be valuable partners

12. Proposed 2021 Board meeting dates

- Board Meeting dates:
 - January 28
 - March 25
 - May 27 (after the AGM)
 - September 23
 - November 25
- Other Important Dates:
 - March 25 - Community Appreciation Forum
 - May 27 – AGM
- The Town Council has suspended use of meeting rooms until further notice due to Covid19 restrictions
- All meetings will be conducted through zoom until further notice

13. Team updates

- Community Awareness and Involvement Team (CAIT)
 - Meander newsletter is in production and will be out by December 4, 2020
 - Planning to do online auction again
 - Looking for community nominations for the Heritage Tree program and the Environmental Stewardship Awards program
- YRDs
 - Looking to do 2-day camps next year
 - Likely in Cardston County
 - Might separate the older and younger youths into two groups
 - Putting together a TOR to help normalize expectations
- Research and Monitoring Team (R&M Team)
 - Planning a meeting in the new year
 - Water monitoring
 - Concluded the 2020 water sampling program on October 28
 - Since Wendell Koning is retired, staff will continue to work with Brian and his staff
 - River Observations
 - Compiled natural flow observations submitted from community and other stakeholders. Planning to do a more complete writeup of the observations
 - Also, have imagery from the time-lapse cameras
 - Interesting observation is the conductivity even during zero flow
 - Shane Petry is summarizing the fisheries data that was collected during the natural flow
 - HWY 880 site scoping study
 - A scoping study to investigate why there is poor water quality at 880
 - Sampled various drainages feeding into the Milk upstream of HWY 880 in August and November

- Two locations at Deadhorse creek and Masinasin creek had high TDS, high pH, and high EC
- The results seem to indicate that the input comes into the river in winter and when there are low flow events in the winter, it degrades the water quality
- AEP would be interested in seeing the results
- AEP planning a risk assessment workshops for high conductivity water during the natural flow period. The workshops are scheduled January to March
- Would request that RandM Team assist with the risk assessment
- Milk River Aquifer groundwater study
 - We linked Dr. Reika Yokochi up with Jeff Gutsell, the District Hydrogeologist with Alberta Environment and Parks
 - Since Dr. Yokochi was seeking a letter of support mostly with well identification and seeing that most of the study area is actually in SEAWA basin, we linked her up with SEAWA instead and did not provide the letter of support
- Water Supply and Management Team (WSM Team)
 - Scheduling a debrief meeting in the new year
 - Commitment by the credited officers to expand on recommendations and look at options to expand supply of water in the Milk River basin. It's been two years with no update

Action: Brian to check with Carmen on the details

Action: Tim to plan a contingency plan to be discussed at the next WSM Team meeting

- Transboundary Watershed Team (TWT)
 - Montana folks to put together a Transboundary Grassland Partnership meeting in the summer next year
 - Planning to try and do a better job in sharing information
 - MRWA are hiring a new Director

14. Round table discussions

- Lorraine:
 - Gave an update to WPAC Managers
 - Study going well
 - Surveys are done and all eleven WPACs have seen the results
 - Have received ethics approval
 - There will be three email lists per Municipality
 - Original study was not intended to include First Nations. Will put it as potential for future study which could be done by someone studying in the field of First Nations
 - Planning to finish December and January
 - Found it enjoyable working with the four WPACs

- Ben:
 - Would like to share a project – a Soil Biodiversity Book for kids’ contest
 - Winners will be announced by the UN - FAO in Vienna on World Soil Day
 - Looking to see if the link to the occasion can be included in the Meander Newsletter
 - Talked about a presentation he prepared on Biogeochemical perspective on greenhouse gasses which will be presented in Saskatoon next week
- Tim:
 - WOSPP having a zoom community meeting December 10, 2020
 - The Book “River of Dreams” by Liz Bryan, about a journey through the Milk River Country has been published and the MRWCC has been mentioned in the book. There are a couple of copies in the office if anyone would like to borrow
- Warren:
 - During low flow there was an orange substance in the river, wondering what it was

15. Other items

16. Meeting adjournment

Motion: Suzanne Liebelt moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:24pm.

17. Next meeting date

- Will be January 28, 2021