



**Minutes**  
**MRWCC Board Meeting**  
**September 26, 2019 – 1:30 PM**  
**Town of Milk River Office**

**Present:** William King, Ben Ellert, John Ross, Ron McNeil, Ed Sloboda, Brian Hills, Aaron Domes, Darcy Wills, Lorraine Nicol, Ross Ford, Devon Ford, Scott MacCumber, Warren Cunningham, Kandra Forbes, Tim Romanow, and Mary Lupwayi

**Absent:** Joan Hughson, Will Lindeman, Suzanne Liebelt, Ken Miller, and Stephen Kirkpatrick

**1. Welcome and introductions**

- John Ross welcomed everyone to the meeting and brought the meeting to order at 1:30pm
- Introductions were conducted and John welcomed Devon Ford to the Board as the Industry representative. Devon is with Granite Oil Corp.

**2. Approve Agenda**

**Motion:** William King moved to approve the agenda as presented. Warren Cunningham seconded. **Carried**

**3. Minutes from May 23, 2019 meeting**

**Motion:** Darcy Wills moved to accept the minutes as presented. Ed Sloboda seconded. **Carried**

**4. Financial update**

- a. Financial statements update
  - April to August 2019 Financial Statements
    - Will Lindeman was absent and Tim presented the financial statements
    - Met with Will before the meeting and went over the financial statements
    - Balance sheet as of August 2019, indicate that we have about \$288,000 remaining in the account, of which \$188,000 is deferred contributions for the WRRP program which we plan to wrap up by end of fiscal year
    - Average monthly expenses for this fiscal year is between \$25,000 and \$30,000
    - Which means we have approximately until December before depleting operational funds if core funding is not approved
    - In the past we will have an idea of approved budget by the end of the fiscal year. However, this year with the elections, the grant applications have not been reviewed as of yet
    - Just before the election was called, each WPAC received \$100,000 advance which has carried us to date
    - Not knowing what support the government will extend has left us uncertain of the future. We are being fiscally responsible to make do with the financial situation

- There is need to have an executive meeting to determine how to proceed as a Council

**Motion:** Ross Ford moved to accept the financial statements as presented. Lorraine Nichol seconded. **Carried**

- b. WPAC 2019/20 core and project grant status
  - Have received an email from Rob Harris, the Director of Community Engagement, and also responsible for Grants strategic direction for WPACs. He advised that he is working to try to accelerate grant announcement for Airsheds and Watersheds
  - Rob is not certain when they will have formal notification from the Minister but stated that we will know soon
  - There is a WPAC manager's meeting October 22 with some Government personnel and hopefully we will have clarity by then
  - Deferred issues from a couple of years ago were resolved and that is part of the funds that will help sustain the Council until December
- c. 10-year KPMG Invoice Tracking over the years
  - Request to look for competitive bids for accounting review of engagement
    - A ten-year spreadsheet tracking invoices for KPMG from 2008 to 2019 was discussed
    - It shows that there have been some substantial increments over the years and at this rate, with the funding issues, we should look into other arrangements that are more economically feasible for a review
    - Need a motion to look at other competitive bids for end of the year accounting review of engagement

**Motion:** Ben Ellert moved to explore other competitive bids including KPMG for year-end financial review of engagement. Darcy Wills seconded. **Carried**

- d. Casino Eligibility Application – not approved
  - The letter declining the Casino eligibility application was reviewed
  - There was some language in the letter that does not apply to our mandate, such as the wording of “lobbying decision-making authorities”
  - Mary read a transcript of the conversation during a call between her and Hazel Lees, Licensing Eligibility Analyst on August 9, 2019 at 9:30am as follows:
    - Mary: We understood the reasons for the decline; however, we would like to resubmit the application as we feel that in-kind contributions were not accounted for when the 94% Government funding contribution was made
    - Hazel: Resubmitting the application would not make any difference as the application was well scrutinized by a panel of 4 reviewers. The reasons given are ironclad and resubmitting doesn't change financial numbers that were submitted, which was the main reason for the decline
    - Mary: In that case then we are wondering how we were declined while our sister organizations with the same structure as us are getting Casino funding. For example, BRBC is one of the WPACs like us but are getting the Casino funding. Can you elaborate on why that is so?

- Hazel: Organizations like BRBC funding were accepted before reclassification of application guidelines. The rules have now become more stringent and refined due to the increased number applications AGLC gets. With 1500 charities applying each year it was mandatory to refine the eligibility guidelines. Organizations like BRBC are currently being reviewed to be dropped from eligible groups

Discussion:

- This is good in demonstrating how difficult financial decisions are made
- The transcript should be filed with the letter of decline
- Everyone who helped put together the application was thanked as it was not an easy task

## 5. Strategic review of WPACs future

- In light of all the funding uncertainty, we would like to get some feedback on some of the strategic interests moving forward
- Conduct review when clarity is provided around operational grant and future direction should be discussed with ED and executive Council then presented back to entire Board when appropriate

## 6. Response letter from Alberta's Minister of Environment and Parks, Hon. Jason Nixon

- It is a positive letter
- A meeting was requested but the Minister indicated that he is not able to meet with MRWCC reps at the moment
- There is no need to respond to the letter until there is more clarity on the future of WPACs

## 7. Invitation from UCP Government Caucus

- MRWCC was invited to present to the UCP South Caucus
- 13 local MLAs from Red Deer – South were present
- The presentation centered on who we are as a WPAC, opportunities to continue to develop/deliver UCP conservation platform, grass roots voluntary stewardship, municipal partnerships and community value
- There was some interest in water security project
  - 2 main things of interests that were raised at the meeting with MLA Hunter:
    - Would like to see mostly economic development. Need to see a one pager on economics of the Milk River 2 project site and feasibility work
    - Would like to have an elected official's tour with all 3 levels of Government in spring 2020. Tour the Milk River/St Mary headworks and Milk River 2 potential dam site include MT officials and discuss an agreement or framework to support a joint storage project

## 8. Southern WPACs Manager's report

- Had a discussion with other WPACs during a conference call
- All WPACs have reached out to their elected officials and have done their best to ensure that everyone is informed of the work we are doing

- Financially, other WPACs are cutting down on human resources and delaying projects due to unavailability of GOA staff time (technical teams) and limitations to financial resources
- Many WRRP project applications received approval in the spring and have not yet been committed to with grant agreements or funds to proceed
- WPACs roles and responsibilities, a review that was initiated in 2015 and presented by Ernie Hui is currently being finalized; detailing the planning and reporting framework expectations of WPACs in terms of deliverables and expectations on behalf of the GOA
- The idea was that once finalized, the document will make the basis for briefing when requested to meet the Minister
- There is need for a new ToR to specify what is expected of WPACs
- Would be valuable to have 11 WPACs come up with wish lists and project timelines done locally in each WPAC to help identify some of the priorities. This could assist with multi-year project planning across the province as part of a new operational agreement
- Finished wrapping up the AWC Multi-year Drought Resiliency Program pilot workshop to be held in Camrose end of November. There will be a Train the Trainer session sometime in 2020 for all 11 WPAC's staff to familiarize and deliver the program to rural and small urban municipalities within their basins

#### **9. Strategic Planning review – October 24, 2019**

- Request to postpone the October 24, 2019 Strategic Planning review until there is more clarity on the future of WPAC operational grants
- We can have the strategic session in the morning of November Board meeting scheduled on 28 or earlier, about 2 weeks before the release of the budget
- An email will be circulated later with the actual date

#### **10. Team updates:**

- A report on Team updates was circulated earlier with the agenda package
- a. Community Awareness and Involvement Team (CAIT)
  - Youth Engagement Program
  - Summer intern partnership project with WOSPP report
    - Went really well
    - Robin did a fantastic job and Kandra did a good job keeping her organized
    - Some lessons learned and also good opportunities to build capacity and tell a watershed story
    - Her education background and know-how of the community was an asset
  - Youth Range Days report
  - Fall Hike Tour – September 27, 2019
    - Still on as scheduled
    - About 30 people registered
    - Everyone who was part of the organizing committee was thanked for their input

- Route plans have changed due to some safety concerns on river crossing with the initial proposed route. Now visiting Haffner Coulees and Poverty Rock
  - There was a pre-tour on September 24 to scout the route
  - The reason we have these tours and trips is to have a better understanding of the watershed and also a great opportunity to extend the knowledge on information on the watershed
  - Canoe Trip report
  - Bonanza day report
  - Women Grazing School Workshop report
  - 2019 Fall Meander Newsletter production timeline
    - The Meander Newsletter deadline for article submission is November 21, 2019
    - Looking at extensive writeup on the storage investigation project, and a focus on Milk River 2 economics
- b. Research and Monitoring Team (R&M Team)
- Surface Water Monitoring
    - Last sampling date is October 10, 2019
    - Worked cooperatively with AEP and EMSD
    - Thanked Wendell Koning and Brian Hills for their assistance
    - This collaboration helped serve the Council approximately \$5,000
    - Not sure if we will have funding available to contract out the annual WQ report project due to funding uncertainty. In that case we will do up the report ourselves and ask AEP for any necessary analytical review
  - WRRP Phase 2 Project update
    - Close to \$100,000 in funds remaining
    - Have a few other applications in progress and we continue to solicit for some additional projects that can be finalized this winter
    - Have already hit the milestones for our projected outcomes; over anticipated budget thanks to producers that have bought into the program and provided larger in-kind support than anticipated
- c. Water Supply and Management Team (WSM Team)
- Milk River Water Storage Investigation Study Summary Project
  - Fall public meeting update
    - We had a conference call meeting on September 23, 2019
    - About 60 copies of the Water Storage Investigation Summary were distributed
    - Met with all 3 local MLAs
    - MRWCC was invited to present to the UCP South Caucus
    - Have met with 2 of the 4 Municipal Councils
    - Commissionaires are doing a tour of the diversion work in Mt. and across the border next week looking at the St Mary reservoir in Alberta as well. Would be great to have a couple of MRWCC officials as well to talk about the local story

- Feedback
  - There was some interest in water security issues
  - The IJC commissioners were supposed to have a tour this upcoming weekend but has been cancelled because of the snow and would like to reschedule for the spring
  - Would like to extend an invitation for the IJC commissioners to join the elected officials tour in spring and have an opportunity to tell the local story
  
- d. Transboundary Watershed Team
  - 2020 Transboundary Grassland Partnership Workshop
  - A Milk River Watershed Alliance Film Project was shown at: <https://youtu.be/Vg2srtp14x4>
  - The Grasslands partnership work, everything is handed over to the Saskatchewan counterparts. SPCAP is leading the work this year. Tim has offered to help with the transition work
  - Meantime we have been offering to provide feedback in terms of the agenda and feedback and main core outcomes of improving communication between the three jurisdictions

## 11. Upcoming Events

- a. Fall Hike Tour – September 27, 2019
- b. Strategic Planning review – October 24, 2019
- c. Science Forum November 7, 2019
  - Will confirm with County of Warner ASB if it's a go by next week
- d. Transboundary Grassland Partnership Workshop – February 25-27, 2020, Regina, Saskatchewan

## 12. Round table discussions

- John Ross:
  - Had a phone interview with Western Producers which attracted interest of investors who are willing to partner with the Water Users, Provincial, and Federal government in funding the water reservoir project
  - Talked to Kevin Reese, Chairman of the Milk River Water Users Association (MRWUA) about being asked by the MLAs why the AIDA did not mention the Milk River reservoir project. The MRWUA is not an irrigation district yet and would like them to look into opportunities to become a district
- Tim:
  - The Actions are:
    - To internally draft a two-page note on water security. Tim to circulate the draft to the Board for feedback by November Board meeting
    - Put out a condensed summary in the November Fall Meander newsletter and continue to discuss water security needs with elected officials
  - The presentation that was scheduled for November on the Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve management planning to be pushed back and invite Margo instead to come and present on water user's association and irrigation districts
- William:

- The contract work for fencing at the Natural Area and Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve has been partially completed, most work postponed to next year as they are waiting for funding
- Brian:
  - AEP is going through restructuring. To be finalized by mid-October
  - EMSD will be dissolved into Resource Stewardship
  - Operations Division will now be called the Regulatory Division
  - Climate Change into Policy Division
  - More changes likely to come
- Ed:
  - New Director for Devils Coulee Dinosaur Museum is interested in seeking the First Nations seat on the MRWCC Board, encouraged to come and talk with Tim and Mary

**13. Other items**

**14. Meeting Adjournment**

**Motion:** Ed Sloboda moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:05pm

**15. Next Meeting Date**

- Next meeting will be on November 28, 2019

**Signatures:**

**Chairman:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Secretary:** \_\_\_\_\_