

TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2014

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING HELD**

**STATE OF MINNESOTA)
DODGE COUNTY)**

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
MANTORVILLE, MN**

2014-05 C.O.W.

The Dodge County Commissioners met in Committee of the Whole March 11, 2014, in the Commissioner's Room at the Dodge County Courthouse Annex, Mantorville, MN, at 9:00 a.m. CDT. Chair Rodney Peterson opened the meeting at 9:02 a.m. CDT.

Meeting Convened

The Chair acknowledged those present:

Those Present

Members present: John Allen District #1
Tim Tjosaas District #2
Rodney Peterson District #3
David Erickson District #4
Steven Gray District #5

Members absent: None

Also present: Jim Elmquist County Administrator
Becky Lubahn Deputy County Clerk
Dean Schrandt Water Program Manager
Mark Gamm Environmental Services Director

Water Program Manager Dean Schrandt discussed with the Board the Zumbro Watershed Planning Pilot Project.

Zumbro Watershed
Planning Pilot
Project Reviewed

Mr. Schrandt reported that the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) has issued a Request for Interest seeking six–eight watersheds to take part in a pilot project for the purpose of developing a comprehensive watershed management plan under their “One Watershed – One Plan” program.

BWSR has initiated “One Watershed – One Plan” as an effort to define essential watershed management services and outcomes, and as a means of packaging Clean Water Amendment funding at a watershed scale. Benefits of watershed planning include streamlining planning and grant preparation efforts, providing more complete coverage of conservation needs watershed-wide, and more stable funding for longer-term conservation efforts.

The Environmental Services Office will be requesting that the County Board approve the formation of a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with the other Zumbro counties for the sole purpose of working together to pursue being chosen as a pilot watershed in this program.

The JPA will contain language providing counties a limited level of commitment to the pilot process. They may opt out before the decision is made to proceed into an actual watershed management agreement.

The Water Program Manager presented for the Board's consideration a hard copy of a PowerPoint document outlining the pilot project proposal.

The following PowerPoint information was shared:

Zumbro Watershed
Planning Pilot
Project Reviewed -
Continued

The state has begun the process of transitioning from county water plans to watershed-based plans.

Through this transition, the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) plans to:

- 1) Improve outcomes
- 2) Reduce local/state administration costs

This action is supported by the AMC/Local Government Roundtable.

There are four major counties in the Zumbro River Watershed: Goodhue, Wabasha, Dodge and Olmsted.

Benefits of Watershed Management Plan:

- Management conducted on watershed basis; less grant-writing and reporting time for the county.
- Less county administrative time, allowing more time for landowner assistance.
- Greater leverage for financial assistance.
- Potentially more stable funding – would benefit SWCD, NRCS, and county.
- The state is now requesting proposals from counties interested in developing a watershed plan.
- A one-two year process supported with BWSR grants. (Facilitator, plan writer, technical assistance)
- Staff from the Zumbro River counties have met and verbally agreed to pursue the opportunity to be a pilot watershed.

Benefits to Dodge County of Being a Pilot Watershed:

- Watershed planning is coming state-wide:
 - Be at the forefront – a step ahead
 - Earlier funding opportunities for landowners
 - Greater flexibility in plan design
- Pilot Program includes BWSR funding for coordinator.
- Timing appropriate because of recent MPCA Zumbro watershed-wide sampling effort.

Zumbro River Watershed Pilot Grant Application

- March 2014: Board resolution to participate in Zumbro watershed management planning with partner counties.

- April 2014: Submit application to BWSR for grant funding to conduct the planning effort. (Dodge as grant applicant).
- July 2014: If grant is awarded, develop watershed management plan over one–two year period (2014 – 2015).

Zumbro Watershed
Planning Pilot
Project Reviewed -
Continued

Likely Steps in Watershed Planning Process

1. Staff meetings with other Zumbro counties.
2. Hire or contract, project coordinator.
3. Form a Joint Powers Board; members include counties & SWCD's.
4. Development of comprehensive watershed plan.
5. Escape clause; pilot projects are not binding.

Commissioner Gray wanted to know what percent of Dodge County is in the watershed district.

Mr. Schrandt reported that approximately 80% of Dodge County is in the watershed district.

The Water Program Manager informed the Board that Rice County and Steele County may both decide to participate in the watershed planning project at a later date.

Discussion took place regarding where Dodge County is at with the process.

Mr. Schrandt stated that they are in the process of completing an application to show that Dodge, Goodhue, Olmsted and Wabasha counties are interested in developing a watershed plan.

Commissioner Erickson wanted to know if other districts were competing for the grant money.

The Water Program Manager reported that other districts will be competing for the grant money.

Commissioner Erickson inquired as to whether or not the county would apply separately.

Mr. Schrandt informed the Board that they would be applying as a watershed district.

Commissioner Allen pointed out that grant money typically covers only part of the watershed projects and wanted to know where the rest of the money for the projects comes from.

Environmental Services Director Mark Gamm reported that each county has money budgeted for watershed projects.

Discussion took place on the grant application process. It was noted that it will take one-two years to develop the plan.

Zumbro Watershed
Planning Pilot
Project Reviewed -
Continued

Commissioner Erickson wanted to know if they will be hiring staff in order to develop the plan.

Mr. Gamm stated that they will use existing staff to develop the plan and then use grant money to hire someone to implement the plan. The Environmental Services Director noted that if an agreement isn't reached between the counties, they just go back to the county plan.

Commissioner Allen wanted to know whether or not the grant money was used to develop the plan only.

Mr. Gamm reported that the grant is only to develop the plan.

The Board thanked Mr. Schrandt and Mr. Gamm for the information.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:30 a.m. CDT.

Meeting Adjourned

ATTEST:

RODNEY PETERSON
CHAIR, COUNTY BOARD

BECKY LUBAHN
DEPUTY CLERK

DATED: