

**Minutes Hennepin Conservation District and Ramsey Conservation District
Special Planning Meeting October 26th, 2009
6:00 P.M.**

**1425 Paul Kirkwood Drive
Highway 96 & Hamline Avenue
Arden Hills, MN 55112**

HCD Supervisors Present:

Kim Boyce, Chair
James Wisker, Secretary

RCD Supervisors Present:

Karen Eckman, Chair
Nick Quade, PR and I Officer
Mara Humphrey, Treasurer

Absent With Notice:

Phil Willkie, Vice Chair
Stephen Jenkins, Treasurer
Jeffrey Beck, Public Relations Representative

Absent With Notice:

Margaret Behrens, Vice Chair
Carrie Wasely, Secretary

Also Present:

Jim Haertel, BWSR
Melissa Lewis, BWSR
Tom Petersen, RCD Staff
Geoffrey Nash, RCD Staff
Joel Settles, HES Staff
Stacey Lijewski, HES Staff
Margeurite Pettus, HES Staff

1. Call to Order: RCD Chair Eckman and HCD Chair Boyce called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

2. Introductions of Board Members, Staff, and Visitors: Brief Introductions of the Boards' of Supervisors, staff, and visitors was made. Each board member gave a brief synopsis of their service to their District and what their hopes are for their implement District. Common themes were to set priorities for their District programs.

4. Brief Synopsis of HCD Operations/Programs: Lijewski shared statutory obligations of HCD. They include: administering the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), the Cost-Share Program, and Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM). HCD is also involved with the DNR Obwell program and the Children's Water Festival.

Recently HCD began hosting conservation forums. There have been three conservation forums to date. The intent of the conservation forums is to bring people together to discuss conservation issues in Hennepin County. The last two forums focused on grant funding stemming from the Clean Water Legacy dollars. Boyce stated that through the conservation forums we are trying to encourage all of the watershed organizations and municipalities to think big, but also to think strategically.

Lijewski also stated that in November 2006 HCD signed a cooperative agreement with Hennepin County Environmental Services. All assets and material property of HCD became property of Hennepin County. All programs and administrative duties were delegated to Hennepin County staff at that time.

Boyce briefly discussed the defunding of HCD in 2003 and gave a summary of HCD operations since the defunding. Boyce stated that the cooperative agreement has allowed the HCD Board to focus on policy and direction rather than administrative tasks.

5. Brief Synopsis of RCD Operations/Programs: Petersen distributed a synopsis of RCD. It outlined the Board members and staff names, respective titles, and length of service. It also gave a brief description of the RCD budget, revenue sources, and current programs. Petersen outlined a brief history of RCD revenue sources. Petersen spoke of developing fees for services programs as an important revenue source for RCD. RCD works with watershed districts and other local units of governments that have common goals and objectives to work with private landowners that have erosion or storm water management problems. RCD does a lot of stream bank and shoreline work.

Petersen stated that another important item for RCD is groundwater protection. Ramsey County has an adopted County Groundwater Protection Plan. RCD started to implement the plan, but ran out of funds. RCD just completed an 18 month effort of revising the County groundwater plan. The County Board is currently reviewing the plan to determine the best course of action. Another possibility is that the County Board could delegate the decision to RCD for their adoption.

6. Discussion of Commonalities between Agencies: Eckman stated she does not know a lot about how groundwater connects the two counties. Nash stated that we are in the same big hydrogeologic basin like a bathtub; we share the same bedrock aquifers. Some of the shallower aquifers discharge into the Mississippi River, so there is that divide, but the deeper aquifers certainly are shared completely. Petersen stated that we also share several miles of the Mississippi River.

Petersen stated that between the two counties we may have 50 percent of the State's population and at least 50 percent of the State legislative delegation. Between our two districts, we could have an influence regarding natural resource public policy substantially. Boyce stated the other piece is that we have a lot of highly visible venues of public waters and so if a change is made, there are a lot of people to have the opportunity see that positive change.

Boyce stated that the transaction cost for cost-share contracts is essentially the same for contracts totaling \$2,000.00 and contracts totaling \$11,000.00. It is in HCD's interest to enter into agreements for contracts for larger amounts because of the costs associated with the administration of each contract, when giving the funds out in smaller amounts might be a better practice. Boyce stated that maybe there is an opportunity to partner here to help simplify the transaction costs.

Eckman asked what gets in the way of accomplishing our missions besides money. Petersen stated that turf issues are one example. He stated that RCD is finding walls being erected, especially in terms of the Clean Water Legacy Act dollars. The funds provide twenty five years of opportunity; let's not kill one another the first year. Petersen stated that he admires that HCD has started the conservation forums centered on Clean

Water Legacy funding and that maybe RCD can get something similar started in Ramsey County.

Petersen stated that Nash has told him there is an interest in groundwater protection in Hennepin County. Nash stated that this started because of his growing awareness, working at RCD as a groundwater specialist and rewriting the old plan, of the fact that the best way to manage groundwater is from the largest area extent as possible. That was not being done in Hennepin County; the attempt for a groundwater protection plan had failed in the mid 1990s. Nash stated that a conversation about the interest in Hennepin County has been started, but that he doesn't know where it has gone. Settles stated that he has had a casual conversation about groundwater protection but that it had little detail about how things would be structured. Settles stated there has been an internal discussion of how quickly Hennepin County can get a groundwater protection plan together that would be adopted by the County Board. Eckman stated that as a regular citizen she finds it surprising that there isn't a groundwater protection plan in place. Quade and Humphrey agreed.

Eckman asked Lewis and Haertel of BWSR what opportunities they see for HCD and RCD to work together. Haertel deferred to Lewis. Lewis suggested looking at each organization's comprehensive plans to see what resources one has that the other is lacking. What does each organization have that would complement the other?

Settles stated that Doug Snyder, the administrator for Mississippi WMO, has land in his jurisdiction on both sides of the river. It would be interesting to see what his thoughts are on a joint effort for protection of shared areas.

Eckman asked what would be a first step to explore; it seems that groundwater is such a tough issue. Petersen responded that one is to look at the kind of tech services and direction that these inter-county WMOs have and their needs and see if between our two agencies we can combine forces to provide that level of service that they need. Petersen would also like to see HCD and RCD join together to effect public policy for natural resource conservation both in the metro area and in the State of Minnesota.

7. Discussion of Future Meetings: Petersen volunteered to attend one of HCD's Board Meetings to update the Board on the Metro Conservation Districts. Petersen and Lijewski agreed to meet and discuss what the next steps are for RCD and HCD. They will produce a draft agenda and at that time a future meeting date will be proposed for RCD and HCD.

8. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 P.M.