

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BIG STONE COUNTY BOARD  
COUNTY DITCH #2  
March 5, 2020**

An informational meeting regarding County Ditch #2 was held by the Big Stone County Board of Commissioners on Thursday, March 5, 2020, at 1:00 PM in the Courtroom. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss landowner concerns on the weir operation plan and general drainage issues. Commissioners Athey, Backer, Klepel and Sandberg were present. Commissioner Olson was absent. Also present were Attorney Kale Van Bruggen, County Engineer Todd Larson, Drainage Inspector Darby Karsky, County Attorney Joe Glasrud, County Auditor Michelle Knutson and 63 interested parties, including DNR representatives.

Chairman Athey called the meeting to order and turned the meeting over to Engineer Larson.

Larson reviewed the current weir agreement and the landowners' concerns. DNR Hydrologist Ethan Jenzen reviewed the history of the weir as he was the area hydrologist when it was installed. Discussion followed on the water depth at County Road 75. Engineer Larson asked if the dates for the install and removal of the boards could be adjusted to allow for a longer drawdown time. Various landowners expressed their concerns with water issues they are having. Upper MN River Watershed District Board Manager Gary Haugen provided history on the reason for the Findings of Fact dated October 5, 2010, regarding their involvement with the weir. DNR Manager Jim Sehl reported that the 10-12" referred to in the UMRWD findings is only when water is flat and there is no flow in the system. He also stated that the culverts on County Road 75 are 1½' lower than the weir so the weir has no effect upstream of County Road 75. Discussion continued on water levels. Mr. Sehl presented slides on data and DNR model used. Engineer Larson asked if a bypass channel would be considered. Mr. Sehl stated that a written proposal could be submitted for consideration, but that the DNR would not pursue any further hydrology or engineering investigation into flooding solutions on its own. Mr. Sehl stated that if a by-pass for high flows was proposed, the proposal would likely trigger an EAW and possibly an EIS, which would be costly to the system.

Auditor Knutson clarified for the record that the proposal included on the agenda will not be considered. Mr. Sehl confirmed that the request to change the dates for drawdown will not be changed at this time without a formal request from landowners.

Attorney Van Bruggen asked the landowners if they want to expend funds to come up with a discovery proposal. If so, Engineer Larson could get estimates from engineering firms to review the DNR model and provide options to address the flooding concerns. Consensus was to proceed with getting quotes to review the model.

Discussion moved to the DNR Wildlife Klages WPA and their unauthorized discharge into the ditch. Engineer Larson reported that he had sent an email and spoken with DNR Area Wildlife Supervisor Curt Vacek regarding the discharge and that they were not benefited into the ditch and would need to pay an outlet fee to use it. Attorney Van Bruggen stated that formal notice for unauthorized outlet should be sent and to see if the DNR want to be included in the system.

Discussion was held on whether wetland credits could be used on this project. DNR reps stated that other steps would need to be taken before full wetland mitigation could be considered.

In summary, quotes will be obtained by the Engineer to review the DNR model and will be presented to the drainage authority for approval. Following a review of the model, a meeting will be scheduled to discuss the results and any recommendations given.

Chairman Athey adjourned the meeting at 2:50 PM.

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Wade Athey, Chairman

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Michelle R. Knutson, Auditor