COTTONWOOD-MIDDLE MINNESOTA ONE WATERSHED, ONE PLAN
POLICY COMMITTEE – IN-PERSON & VIRTUAL**
MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 24, 2024 – 1:00 PM

Policy Committee (PC) Present: Larry Anderson-Area II, Bill Eckstein-RCRCA, Jeff Veerkamp-Brown County, Mark Wellner-Brown SWCD, Tom Appel-Cottonwood County, Daryl Tasler-Cottonwood SWCD, Rick Anderson-Lyon County, John Lanoue-Lyon SWCD, Lori Gunnink-Murray County, Mona Henkels-Murray SWCD, Rick Wakefield-Redwood County and Ed Carter-Redwood SWCD.
Steering Team (ST) Present:
Becky Buckholtz-Cottonwood SWCD/County, Allison Kletscher and Jaden Sandgren-Brown County, Melanie Krueger-Brown SWCD, and Kerry Netzke-RCRCA/Area II.
Agency Members Present: Mark Hiles and John Shea-BWSR.
Consultant: Rachel Olm, Houston Engineering Inc.

Chairman Anderson welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 1:06 PM.

Minutes from the May 15, 2024 meeting were reviewed. Motion by Eckstein, seconded by Tasler, to approve the May 15, 2024 minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Financials for month-ended May 31 were reviewed. Expenses to date include $115,597.80 for consultant services; $21,645.66 for administration, and total grant expenditure of $137,243.46. Remaining grant funds amount to $115,756.54. Motion by Wakefield, seconded by Veerkamp, to approve the financials as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was turned over to Rachel Olm, Houston Engineering.

Internal Review Comments
Two links were provided to committee members containing the main document and appendices, essentially cover to cover. The only sections not seen prior to Internal Review were the Executive Summary, Table of Contents, and Appendices. Internal Review began May 30 and ended June 14 to allow time for consideration/edits of the 163 comments received. The majority of the comments were not substantial and didn't require revising plan content. The intent is to fix any issues prior to the Formal Review.

Today's discussion will be an overview of the comments received in spreadsheet form, discuss the flagged comments, and invite additional comments not already provided. Some of the topics discussed included:
*rename Water Storage & Hydrology as Storage, Flooding & Hydrology.
*necessary inventory of septics to determine compliance
*Brown County focuses on education of manure record keeping rather than manure management plans. The Plan cannot fund required plans. MPCA is also pushing record keeping with N and P restrictions evolving. # of sites brought into compliance would be the measurable tool.
*Is bacteria or E.coli the impairment? The narrative will be changed to say E.coli is tested for, and when detected, excessive bacteria presence is the concern.
*Area II, RCRCA and the City of Springfield will not be partners in Implementation, only for Planning.

*photos in the Plan should be replaced with local photos. Please provide to Rachel by end of the day on June 26, 2024.
*Cover crops – a better understanding of all the sources of funds is needed. The Plan needs to be cautious in allocating funds. Soil health includes more than just cover crops.
*HEI staff have compared precipitation values from the older TP-40 estimates to newer NOAA Atlas 14 projections. The 50-year storm has increased 7-9%, and the 100-year storm has increased 11-13% depending on your location within the watershed.
*Chairman inquired about the Balaton DWSMA as the vast majority of it lies in the Des Moines watershed. Amanda Strommer, MDA had responded that it would be best to leave it in this plan as it could have groundwater influence, and it can be noted that it is on the edge of the watershed.

Motion by Gunnink, seconded by Wellner, to approve the plan revisions as discussed. Motion carried unanimously.

Formal Review Process
As decided in May, the 60-day Formal Review will run July 1 to August 30, with the Public Hearing to be scheduled for the morning of September 18. The hearing is hosted by the Policy Committee.
The agenda for the Public Hearing will include a 15-20 minute presentation of One Watershed, One Plan – what it is, and what it isn't. Highlights of the Cottonwood-Middle MN CWMP will be presented. An Open Forum will be held to hear comments from the public not already addressed. A Comment Response Table will be added to the appendices that lists the comment and how it was addressed. The Public Hearing will be adjourned, and a short Policy Committee will be held to approve the response table and move the CWMP forward for BWSR approval.

In October, local boards will need to adopt resolutions to submit the plan to BWSR, and to adopt the plan upon BWSR approval. Mark Hiles added that the resolution can include language to begin implementation of the plan. By including this language, it eliminates the need for that local board to adopt another resolution for implementation. Sample resolutions will be obtained.

The BWSR Southern Region Water Plan Committee will review the plan in October/November and recommend approval to the BWSR Board. Plan approval will be on the December BWSR Board agenda.

Motion by Henkels, seconded by Wakefield, to approve the Plan and set the 60-day Formal Review period as July 1st to August 30th. Motion carried unanimously.

Formal Agreements
The Policy Committee had been asked to discuss administration of the Implementation Phase with their respective boards to determine a stand-alone JPA or utilizing RCRCA's existing JPA as the umbrella organization in similar fashion to GBERBA. 1W1P would be incorporated into RCRCA's regularly scheduled meeting with all projects reviewed and recommended by the Technical Committee prior. The Chairman asked for each partner to report their wishes. The majority wishes to utilize RCRCA's JPA and allow RCRCA to make decisions knowing that some voting members may be from outside the watershed boundary and not part of this specific plan. Commissioner Appel added that there are only two GBERBA counties in the Watonwan watershed. Discussion followed concerning the 50/40/10 WBIF funding with the 50% and 40% of the grants paid in advance, while the remaining 10% is reimbursed after the final report is approved. GBERBA has a dues system to cover the last 10%. Most WBIF grants are now structured to overlap to eliminate the funding gap presented by the 10% reimbursable.

Next Steps

With the formal review period ongoing, there is no need for the Steering Team or Policy Committee to meet in July.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:02 PM.

Larry Anderson, Secretary
Cottonwood-Middle Minnesota Partnership

Future Meetings

August 21, 2024	Steering Team and Policy Committee will meet in person. ***Policy Committee will meet at 1:00 PM instead of 2:00 PM.***
Early September	Steering Team will meet virtually to discuss/approve revisions from Formal Review
September 18, 2024	Public Hearing at Springfield, MN (morning) The Policy Committee will meet immediately following the hearing.