

NEWS

## Closed meeting held on diversion

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A top U.S. Army Corps of Engineers official met with local leaders behind closed doors on Monday to discuss the latest on the proposed Fargo-Moorhead Red River diversion.

Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh invited Fargo Mayor Dennis Walaker and Moorhead Mayor Mark Voxland, along with county officials and technical staff, for an update on work being done on the local and corps levels.

Walsh, who commands the Mississippi Valley Division of the corps, assured local interests that the project is moving forward, Walaker said.

"They're still going as fast as they possibly can," Walaker said Tuesday.

One of the primary reasons for Walsh's visit was to discuss the half-cent Cass County sales tax approved last week by voters, Walaker said.

"On all of these projects, when there's a local share, the support of that is a big issue. (Walsh) was happy to hear the sales tax had passed," Walaker said.

The corps was also looking for reaffirmed commitment to the North Dakota-side alignment from local leaders, Voxland said.

"I think they heard it - from Dennis and myself - loud and clear that we want to be moving forward on it," Voxland said.

Others attending Monday's meeting were Cass County Commissioner Scott Wagner, Clay County Commissioner Kevin Campbell, engineers and administrators from both cities and counties, Fargo City Commissioner Tim Mahoney, and state Sens. Tony Grindberg, R-Fargo, and Tom Fischer, R-Fargo, Voxland said.

The corps talked with many of the same local officials during an Aug. 19 closed-door conference call on a possible delay of the diversion's timeline.

About a month later, the corps announced that the project's feasibility study, originally expected to wrap up in December, would be delayed by about a year.

The current plan is to complete the study by Aug. 1 for internal corps review and have the final report ready for Congress by November 2011, Voxland said.

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