

Metro Flood Study Work Group Meeting

Sunday, April 25, 2010

5:00 p.m.

Fargo City Commission Room

A meeting of the Metro Flood Study Work Group was held at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 25, 2010 in the Fargo City Commission Room

Work Group Members Present: Fargo City Commissioner Tim Mahoney, Moorhead Council Members Nancy Otto and Diane Wray-Williams, Cass County Commissioner Scott Wagner, Clay County Commissioners Kevin Campbell and Grant Weyland, Cass County Water Resource District Manager Tom Fischer, Buffalo Red River Watershed District Manager Gerald VanAmburg.

Work Group Members Absent: Fargo City Commissioner Brad Wimmer, Moorhead Council Member Dan Hunt, Cass County Commissioner Darrel Vanyo.

Staff Members Present: Fargo City Administrator Pat Zavoral, Fargo City Engineer Mark Bittner, Moorhead City Manager Michael Redlinger, Moorhead City Engineer Bob Zimmerman, Cass County Administrator Bonnie Johnson, Clay County Administrator Vijay Sethi.

Others Present: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project Manager Aaron Snyder, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District Engineer and Commander Col. Jon Christensen, Fargo Mayor Dennis Walaker, North Dakota Governor John Hoeven, U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan of North Dakota, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy, Judy DesHarnais, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Elizabeth Killian, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fargo Senior Engineer April Walker, Fargo City Attorney Erik Johnson, Moorhead City Attorney Brian Neugebauer, Assistant Clay County Attorney Michelle Winkis, Southeast Cass Water Resource District Attorney Sean Fredricks, Buffalo-Red River Watershed Attorney Tami Norgard.

Senator Byron Dorgan opened the meeting by welcoming all guests and thanking them for attending. He provided a brief overview of the flooding issues and outlined the process for obtaining the necessary federal funds. He stated that a local authority needed to be created to act as fiscal agent for any funds.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project Manager Aaron Snyder led a detailed USACE presentation of the flooding problems in the Red River Valley and provided information on current and future actions needed as well as a projected F-M Metro Study timeline.

Fargo Mayor Dennis Walaker presented Jo-Ellen Darcy with a copy of Bruce Crummy's book, *2009 Red River Historic Flooding*. He discussed some of Winnipeg, Manitoba's flood mitigation projects, such as their retention pond system, and mentioned that perhaps the USACE team would be interested in touring the site. Col. Jon Christensen stated they had visited Winnipeg and had seen the system.

Governor John Hoeven thanked Secretary Jo-Ellen Darcy for her presence and explained that the number of people in attendance at the meeting was indicative of the measure of cooperation between all the entities involved in this far-reaching project.

Fargo Senior Engineer April Walker gave a presentation on behalf of the Task Force regarding past floods in Fargo Moorhead metropolitan area, explaining some of the issues contributing to the severity of the floods and the area's flood-fighting responses.

Clay County Commissioner Kevin Campbell also welcomed Secretary Darcy. He then explained the reasons for choosing the North Dakota diversion plan.

Cass County Commissioner Scott Wagner added that the Minnesota diversion did not provide as much protection as the North Dakota diversion. He stated the Coast Guard and National Guard completed 75 rescues in 2009, complicated by sub-zero temperatures, snow, ice, and wind.

Moorhead City Council Member Nancy Otto expressed the City of Moorhead's gratitude for Secretary Darcy's presence at the meeting. She explained the harrowing evacuation of MeritCare hospital patients as well as many nursing home patients during the 2009 flood. Stating the diversion is necessary to prevent such an ordeal for patients in years to come, she asked Secretary Darcy to partner with the Task Force to ensure the North Dakota diversion is built to provide safety and assurance of protection to all area residents.

North Dakota Governor Hoeven reiterated the need for the North Dakota diversion plan and explained that a higher NED would make local funding more feasible. He asked Secretary Darcy if there was anything else that needed to be done to support the Task Force position.

Senator Dorgan explained how the NED would affect local shares and stated the cost/benefit ratio needed to be compared to the potential for loss of life in the area should there be another flood like the 2009 flood. He said that while the USACE budget was \$4.5 billion per year for the entire country, through the media, the rest of the country understood the need for flood protection here.

Secretary Jo-Ellen Darcy stated that she had been concerned there would be a problem with competition between Minnesota and North Dakota for the diversion and that one side would win and one side would lose. She said she was impressed with the spirit of cooperation between all the entities involved and the commitment to finding a viable solution to the flooding problem. It is a unique situation with a unique plan and that everyone should be proud of it.

North Dakota Governor Hoeven said he was already working with Minnesota Governor Pawlenty to arrange meetings to discuss funding options. He said the point to be made today is to set the proper NED and cost/benefit ratio. While the cost/benefit ratio would look better if the area hadn't done such a good job of protection, he asked that the area not be penalized for these accomplishments.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.