

Metro Flood Study Work Group Meeting
Thursday, November 18, 2010
3:30 p.m.
Fargo City Commission Room

A meeting of the Metro Flood Study Work Group was held at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 18, 2010 in the Fargo City Commission Room.

Work Group Members present: Fargo City Commissioners Tim Mahoney and Brad Wimmer, Moorhead Council Members Nancy Otto, Diane Wray-Williams, and Dan Hunt, Cass County Commissioners Darrell Vanyo and 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.

Staff Members present: Fargo City Administrator Pat Zavoral, Fargo City Engineer Mark Bittner, Fargo Senior Engineer April Walker, Moorhead City Manager Mike Redlinger, Moorhead City Engineer Bob Zimmerman, Cass County Administrator Bonnie Johnson, Cass County Engineer Keith Berndt, West Fargo City Administrator Jim Brownlee, Clay County Administrator Brian Berg.

Others present: Fargo Mayor Dennis Walaker, West Fargo Mayor Rich Mattern, Dilworth Mayor Chad Olson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project Manager Aaron Snyder, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Brett Coleman and Terry Williams, Red River Basin Commission Executive Director Lance Yohe.

Approval of October 7, 2010 Minutes

Tom Fischer moved the minutes from the October 7, 2010 Metro Flood Study Work Group meeting be approved. Nancy Otto seconded the motion. All members voted aye and the motion was declared carried.

Update from Corps of Engineers

Aaron Snyder distributed a handout outlining updated information on the feasibility study. The Corps has been studying different computer models to locate a zero impact point downstream; however, the initial model showed no zero impact point, which was not anticipated. He said the Corps is looking at concepts to reduce downstream impacts, which include storage cells along the diversion to the south and upstream staging. The exact location of the controlled storage has not been definitely identified, but the anticipation is there will be five miles of impact to the south. The Corps intends to quantify both downstream and upstream impacts; analyze non-structural solutions downstream; and analyze non-structural solutions such as buyouts, relocations and ring levees upstream.

Mr. Snyder discussed the diversion alignment and said the northern alignment was changed, which shortened the diversion channel. Also, he discussed the eastern alignment and said the Corps determined there is not a good technical reason to move it further to the west by about 1½ miles.

Mr. Snyder discussed the feasibility study timeline. He said meetings will be held with impacted areas upstream and downstream in February and March of next year. Project design may begin in August 2011 after the division engineer's transmittal is received.

Mr. Vanyo asked about the shift in alignment to the north. Mr. Snyder said the change took less area out of the floodplain. Mr. Vanyo asked why the western alignment was not considered since it provides a straighter path through the county. Mayor Mattern said he will be very disappointed if the western alignment is no longer an option. Mr. Snyder said the western alignment would be more expensive because the diversion would have to be dug deeper, and there are less environmental and floodplain impacts with the eastern alignment. Also, Mr. Snyder said the policy of the Corps is not to take land out of the floodplain in order for future development. The objective is to maintain and leave existing areas in the condition they were found or to leave the area "as is".

Mr. Berndt expressed concern that the decision regarding the east versus west alignment seemed to be driven by several environmental agencies and based on inaccurate information. Mr. Berndt also noted that FEMA chose not to have anyone present at the agency meeting held earlier in the day where the issues regarding Executive Order 11988 could have been discussed and clarified. He indicated with the eastern alignment, the water surface in the channel would be below the surrounding ground surface. The inlets are designed to a 100-year event; therefore, the one and a half mile strip of land between the two alignments may not be acting as a flood plain regardless of which alignment is chosen.

Mr. Vanyo said he hopes the western alignment has not been completely ruled out by the Corps of Engineers and that they will continue to look at different options for both upstream and downstream impacts.

Technical Committee Update

Mark Bittner said the technical committee consists of city staff, county staff, water resource district staff, and local consultants from Moore Engineering and Houston Engineering. The committee developed a model to quantify downstream impacts from flood protection alternatives. Preliminary mitigation concepts include protected/interior storage, upstream staging, ring dikes and community levees, transportation improvements, buyouts, flowage easements and upstream storage.

Mr. Fischer briefly discussed the Red River Retention Authority Board, whose objective is to look for retention projects within the basin that will benefit and protect the involved parties.

Mr. Bittner discussed costs associated with the feasibility study and said so far about \$5 million has been spent. He discussed timelines and said he anticipates basin models to be completed in March 2011.

Red River Basin Commission Meeting Update

Lance Yohe said a meeting with downstream communities will be held tonight at 6:30 p.m. in Perley, Minnesota.

Next Meeting Date

The committee agreed to meet sometime in January after the technical committee completes additional work.

Other Business

Ms. Otto said a meeting was held with Brigadier General Michael Walsh on November 8, 2010, in which the entire study committee was not invited to attend. Mr. Snyder said in the future when General Walsh is in town, the Corps will issue a press release. Mr. Snyder said no decisions were made at the meeting on November 8th.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.