

SAND HILL RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT
REDETERMINATION OF BENEFITS FOR PROJECT # 5
INFORMATIONAL MEETING
March 13, 2017

1. **Attendance:** Managers present were Scott Balstad, JJ Hamre, Roger Hanson and Phillip Swenson. Phillip Swenson recused himself as a board manager for the topic of today's discussion. Two staff members were present: Daniel Wilkens – Administrator and April Swenby – Administrative Assistant. Others in attendance: Zach Herrmann – Houston Engineering. Landowners in attendance were: Ross Lindberg, Troy Lindberg, Janice Lindberg, Matt Sirjord, Denise Sirjord, Mark Sirjord, Steve Gullickson, Charles Lewis, Aaron Graber, Paul Swenson and Jeff Gullickson.
2. **Purpose of meeting:** Wilkens gave a history of Project #5. The district notified all landowners in the benefited area and all lands adjacent to the benefited area. The district wanted landowner input to explore the possibility of re-determining benefits on project # 5 to bring the project up to date on benefits and to re-evaluate the current hydrology (boundary) of the benefited area. The pending MN buffer strip law requires landowners along the Project # 5 channel need to be in compliance with the 16 ½' (1 rod) buffer strip requirement by 2018. Redetermination of benefits on the Project # 5 ditch system would also require a 16 ½' buffer strip to be established, and would allow for landowners to be compensated for land taken to establish the buffer strip. Herrmann also explained that in developing the cost estimates for acquiring the buffer strips that the district felt that the necessary Right of Way (ROW) should be purchased as well as the one rod buffer strip at this time. In the future, as work becomes necessary, the ROW would have already been acquired. These ROW calculations include the bottom width, 4-1 side slopes, and the one rod buffer on each side of the ditch where necessary. Everyone agreed that this was a good idea.

Herrmann presented a map highlighting the current benefit area done in 1980 and the proposed benefit area map based on LiDAR to show the differences.

With land acquisition, administrative costs, and legal costs, it is estimated that the cost is approximately \$85,000. Currently, there is approximately \$30,000 in the Project # 5 Fund Account which can be used to cover some of the redetermination cost potentially leaving about \$16 per acre or less remaining to complete the process. This process does not include any costs for construction at this time.

The steps to proceed involve board authorization, assigning viewers and a final hearing followed by the board order approving the new viewers report.

3. **Questions/Comments:**
 - a. Troy Lindberg: Is there any work planned for this ditch at this time?
 - i. Answer: Herrmann stated that at this moment there isn't. Ditch maintenance can be performed as needed at any time. MN State law is requiring a one rod buffer strip to be established by the landowner or the ditch system.
 - b. Mark Sirjord: When is the timeline for the required buffers?
 - i. Answer: Herrmann stated it is currently in 2018.
 - c. Steve Gullickson: Who maintains the buffer?
 - i. Answer: The ditch authority.
 - d. Mark Sirjord: Is there a certain type of grass required?

- i. Answer: If this process goes through, the Watershed District, acting on behalf of the ditch system, will ensure that seeding is completed and meets the requirements.
 - e. Matt Sirjord: How are the people taxed?
 - i. Answer: Everyone assessed pays according to the viewer's report. If they re-determine the benefits, some new people can be added to the system, and at the same token, some who are currently assessed could be removed, depending on if they are using the drainage system or plan on using it in the future. You must be part of the system to use it. Future taxes would be proportioned to assessed lands based on how benefits are proportioned by the Viewers.
 - f. Troy Lindberg: Will there be a chance for input after the viewers report their findings?
 - i. Answer: Yes. Wilkens gave examples of some of the changes that have taken place on other assessments. Prior to the Final Hearing, everyone will get a print out of their parcels showing what their new benefits and damages would be.
 - g. Troy Lindberg: How many more acres are added based on the new proposed assessed area map?
 - i. Answer: There are about 240 acres added using Lidar. This may change as the viewers look at some of the questionable areas.
 - h. Paul Swenson: If we proceed should we refrain from planting this year?
 - i. Answer: The final hearing will likely be the end of the summer. It was agreed that the landowners should proceed with planting as planned.
 - i. Aaron Graber: Half of my property drains in and half drains out, will I be assessed accordingly?
 - i. Answer: Yes, the viewers will assess according to which parcels drain to the area and which areas do not. The areas are generally broken down by 40 acre tracts. This is not an exact breakdown by acre but the viewers try to make it as fair as possible.
 - j. Steve Gullickson: In referencing the outlet, how could we establish a 4-1 slope?
 - i. Answer: Wilkens stated that this is something that can be reviewed and the district can help with this.
4. **Action:** There was no opposition from the attendees to proceed with the redetermination. The board will be reviewing the decision to proceed at the April 4, 2017 board meeting.
5. **Adjournment:** The meeting ended at 3:00 PM.