

AMENDED MINUTES
FALSE RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL
May 17, 2017

The False River Watershed Council met in a regular session at 3:00 p.m. on May 17, 2017 at the Courthouse Annex Building in New Roads, Louisiana.

Chairman Ricky Moses called the meeting to order and directed Ms. Jeanne Hendrix to call the roll:

Present: Messrs. Major Thibaut, Arthur Ewing, Cy D'Aquila, Jerry Hix, Kyle Olinde, Stephen Tassin, Jimmy Lyles, Ron Pourciau, Bijan Sharafkhani, Thomas Van Biersel

Absent: Messrs. Brad Spicer, Jimmy Chustz, Rick Ward, L.J. Grezaffi

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion to approve the agenda by Mr. Van Biersel. Second by Mr. Olinde.
No opposition.

Resolved, That the agenda of the meeting of May 17, 2017 is accepted.

Unanimously carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion by Mr. Thibaut to approve and second by Mr. D'Aquila.

Resolved, That the minutes of the March 8, 20117 are accepted for approval.

Unanimously carried.

UPDATE PROPOSED FALSE RIVER ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT - PHASE II

Kevin Gravois gave an update on behalf of Gerald Babin. ELOS will do permitting for sediment disposal. He provided information regarding the permitting process and permits required for the project. Permitting is currently in process.

Mr. Thibaut informed the council that he has met with Congressman Graves regarding this project. Congressman Graves will be looking for additional funding. Additionally, they spoke about making a permanent structure for future dredging. Congressman asked for additional information regarding future dredging.

UPDATE FALSE RIVER NITROGEN IMPACT MITIGATION PROJECT:

Mr. Gravois gave an M1 and M2 update. The bid was awarded on March 28, 2017 to Neal Construction of Morganza, LA. High water has delayed the rocks from coming down the Mississippi River. Contract end date is September 28, 2017. They have met with NRG to map access agreements which will release 3 of 5 weirs. Still need approval from two other landowners. After meeting with NRG they will use Highway 10 as access to NRG property as opposed to having to go through plant. As soon as the river goes down and rocks can be offloaded then the project will start.

Mr. Thibaut asked if company has started getting permits and will they be blanket for future dredging. Mr. Gravois stated it would.

Mr. Ewing asked if it would delay the project if the permits were changed. Mr. Gravois stated it depended on the situation. Permitting process does include the USACE permitting process.

Mr. Hix questioned change order on M1 and M2. Mr. Gravois stated that since it is the same scope of work, they don't have to rebid.

Winning bid was \$87,900. M2 even with the change order should be about the same amount. Mr. Gravois stated that money will be left over for maintenance. Engineering costs are done for the most part.

Mr. Ewing asked about leftover funds for maintenance. Mr. Gravois stated it could be as much as \$300,000 for maintenance. Mr. Van Biersel. Stated to be cautious about this amount because it would have to be determined if maintenance is part of EPA agreement. Maintenance funds were included in EPA proposal.

Mr. Pourciau mentioned a maintenance schedule.

Mr. D'Aquila asked about the parish providing this. Mr. Olinde stated that parish does it now but schedule/inspections may have to be adjusted once project is finished.

Mr. Van Biersel stated that inspections will be vital every year.

NRCS contacted Mr. Thibaut and they are looking for funds including work around Chenal bayou and if any of their programs could fit issues around False River.

Mr. Van Biersel stated they have been discussing buffer zones along canals.

Mr. D'Aquila asked about an ordinance allowing access to maintain the areas.

Mr. Thibaut suggested seeing what funding is available and meet with landowners before we pass ordinances to see who will participate.

Mr. Van Biersel stated in his conversations with NRCS he did bring up needs along M3 and Bayou Grosse Tete. NRCS is looking at issues with Bayou Grosse Tete and they could help with back flow issues in False River.

SHORELINE IMPROVEMENTS:

Mr. Ewing presented information on possible ordinance on shoreline improvement/bulkhead permitting. This would define what a bulkhead is and provides an ordinance for construction along the shoreline. It provides that an application/permit will be required for any shoreline work along False River. Permit would require engineer designed drawings for anything outside of natural shoreline. Would also relieve parish of any liability for design/build.

Mr. Van Biersel suggested speaking to Mr. Jimmy Chustz about defining normal pool stage of False River.

Mr. Ewing stated the issue of adjacent landowners came up. Mr. Olinde stated that as of now there is no permitting process.

Mr. Ewing asked about what state engineers would have to be licensed in. Mr. D'Aquila stated they would have to be Louisiana licensed.

Mr. Olinde stated he would have the parish attorney look at the ordinance before introducing it to the jury.

Mr. D'Aquila said once issue was what is the legal shoreline of False River. Mr. Thibaut stated they needed to reach out to Mr. Jimmy Chustz. There is a map that is going to be filed establishing the shoreline. Before this map was introduced, 80% of all bulkheads were on state property. These are all now grand-fathered in.

Motion by Mr. Thibaut to recommend to the police jury to put in place a shoreline/bulkhead ordinance. Second by Mr. Van Biersel.

Unanimously carried.

2017 DRAWDOWN UPDATE:

Mr. Brian Heimann gave a presentation on invasive species and vegetation in False River. He recommended another drawdown for 2017/18 starting day after Labor Day and closed gate on Jan 15th. Then a schedule of ever 3 years with possible alteration based on nature. Level would be as low as river can do during the time period (5-5 ½ feet).

Dates are set based on not disturbing spawning.

Mr. Ewing stated he looked at sale tax data to try and gage economic impact if any. He stated it was minimal over time with future drawdowns we can study more of an economic impact.

Mr. Olinde stated that he will make the drawdown presentation to the police jury. Mr. Van Biersel will make a presentation to the jury and Mr. Heimann will speak in support of the project to the police jury.

Mr. Ewing asked about going ahead and getting approval for the drawdown schedule.

Mr. Van Biersel recommended making a motion approving WLF drawdown schedule.

After brief discussion on the motion wording. Mr. D'Aquila presented the following motion:

“Recommend lake level management for 2017-2018 then every three years thereafter, beginning the day after Labor Day reducing the lake level by a maximum of 1 ½ inches per day with the gates to be closed on January 15th the following year. The LDWF has the authority to change the rotation of the drawdowns depending upon mother nature and any fisheries conditions/considerations.”

Motion by Mr. D'Aquila. Second by Mr. Ewing.

Unanimously carried.

Mr. Thibaut asked WLF to provide advanced notification in Banner to notify public. WLF has offered to put out the word to the public.

Mr. Heimann also informed the council that fish stocking has been requested and lakes that go through drawdowns have priority on stocking.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Van Biersel stated the watershed maintenance plan should be looked at and revised to show what has been done.

Mr. Thibaut offered to put in resolution. Showing what has been done and what is coming up could assist in obtaining funding from other sources.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Thibaut stated he, Mr. D'Aquila, and Mr. Ewing are thinking after bulkhead is addressed, they will begin working on sewer system issues.

Mr. Lyles mentioned having another open house before the next drawdown in July.

The next meeting date is July 12, 2017 at 3:00 p.m. The open house will follow from 5-7 p.m. with the 19th as a backup date if the Cottonport Center is not available.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Tommy Bryant
Keith Robillard

Motion to Adjourn by Mr. Hix and second by Mr. Ewing.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.