



**Diversion Authority Public Outreach Committee  
Focus Group Meeting Minutes  
2:00 P.M. - Wednesday, March 11, 2020  
City of Fargo River Room  
Fargo, North Dakota**

Permanent, Reliable Flood Protection

The Diversion Authority Public Outreach Committee met Wednesday, March 11, 2020, at Fargo City Hall. The following committee members were present: Rodger Olson, Cass County Joint Water Resource District; Kevin Campbell, Clay County Commissioner; Mike Thorstad, West Fargo City Commissioner; Jake Gust, Cass County Joint Water Resource District; John Stand, Fargo City Commissioner; and Shelly Carlson, Moorhead City Council Member.

The following committee members were absent: Rick Steen, Cass County Commissioner; and Ken Pawluk, Cass County Commissioner.

Others Present where: Katie Mastel, and Mark Nisbet, Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber; Rep. Shannon Roers Jones, and Sen. Jim Roers, North Dakota Legislators; Matt Stamness; Assistant Cass County Engineer; Tammy Jo Taft, Rocky Schneider, Eric Dodds, and Sadie Moen, Advanced Engineering and Environmental Service, Inc.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Olson at 2:00p.m.

#### REVIEW OF SCHEDULE FOR COMMUNICATIONS PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Schneider explained the purpose of the meeting. This is a special meeting to provide ideas for updating the communications plan. Mr. Schneider noted the other focus groups meetings held previously. Mr. Schneider said the questions asked are the same for every focus group. By doing this, it provides a better understanding of the goals for the new communications plan.

Mr. Schneider discussed the surveys being sent out. Surveys will be going out to residents in in Fargo, West Fargo, Moorhead, and five townships upstream.

#### HISTORICAL REVIEW OF COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

Mr. Olson said the organization should not set deadlines that can't be met. There has been times of frustration when objectives were not met by a previously given deadline.

Mr. Gust discussed a presentation given to entrepreneurs every year, and more of those need to be done to educate about the project. Mr. Gust said regular updates to the project flyover video would be helpful to show that the project is changing. This could be done once a year or every six months.

Ms. Roers Jones explained the need for proactive messaging. The Diversion Authority needs to provide correct information to the media quickly. Mr. Roers said rumors can negatively affect the Project. He said having facts available is helpful. He also said hearing experts speak, along with elected officials, was a good method. Ms. Roers Johns said legislators receive numerous emails from the Richland Wilkin group. There was additional discussion about providing accurate information quickly.

Mr. Strand said there are times the Diversion Authority struggles with being perceived as honest and that providing information in a clear, honest way should be a high priority.

Mr. Nisbet asked about what farmland will be impacted. Mr. Olson discussed that it takes time to discover issues, and help farmers upstream the mitigation plan. Mr. Olson noted the fair, flexible and friendly approach taken to purchase necessary lands and said many landowners have offered more land for purchase.

Mr. Roers explained there was a lot of discussion about an audit. He explained this can be a way to get information out to the public. Mr. Dodds explained that they have had some meetings about the audit and communication.

#### EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION

Mr. Strand expressed that the Diversion Authority should pursue immediate settlements for lawsuits.

Ms. Roers Johns explained there are many people from outside of Fargo, working for companies based in Fargo and would like to see that information presented.

Mr. Gust said being able to show part of the Diversion channel finished will be great to show external stakeholders progress and gain momentum.

Ms. Mastel explained that the Diversion Authority needs to have clear information for forward. There was discussion about what stakeholders are looking for from the Diversion Authority and balancing the data and emotional parts. Mr. Gust brought up that the Diversion Authority could have a thermometer and each year have it go up by showing what the Diversion Authority has accomplished.

#### ADDITIONAL IDEAS

Mr. Roers said form of mediations could be discussed.

Mr. Strand talked about how showing the success of the West Fargo Diversion might be helpful. Ms. Roers Jones it might be good to show the process and talk with people who are benefiting from flood protection.

There was so continued discussion on what different social media platforms should be used and what is the best way to make sure accurate information is provided correctly.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m..