

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AT A MEETING OF REEVES AND MAYORS HELD IN MORRIS MAY 23, 1974

Reeve Harold Earl, R. M. of Morris, called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. He started with an explanation of why the meeting had been called. He explained that he had recently attended a meeting of an organization of the Prairie Flood Control Organization and he indicated that he had not been previously aware of this organization but that with its claims of having been instrumental in the implementation of several flood prevention measures in the past (such as Portage Diversion), he wondered if this organization could not be of use in flood prevention in the area. He suggested that some type of organization was essential to deal with water-related problems in view of the flooding experienced in all of the areas represented in this past spring. He wondered if the organization should be the Prairie Flood Control Organization or if it should be the Lower Red River Water Commission or if it should be Watershed Districts or if it should be some other organization. This was the purpose of the meeting - to discuss water-related problems and the possibilities of organizing to prevent and combat these problems.

The drainage system which we now have is an extremely efficient system but it works too well at times as it carries more water than it can possibly hold. This water must overflow in the spring, and when it does overflow it creates flooding problems in areas which have never experienced flood problems before. The question is "How do we control water as it runs toward the Red River?" Is a watershed district a possibility?

Question: What would be the possible alternatives? How can the present system be improved?

Mr. Newton said that this year they have had more water than they have experienced in a very long time. We have had record flows in many places. He suggested that if this year's conditions had occurred fifteen or twenty years ago the flood would have been much more serious than it was and that the flood waters would have lain for considerably longer period of time. Estimates were that without the drainage system as it exists now costs could have been as high as two hundred and fifty million dollars for flood damages. Since 1948 many structures have been put in place. These are doing their job as they were meant to do. These include the ring dykes, the major diversions, the Floodway channels, and local drainage systems. These things have prevented the occurrence of the situation which would naturally have occurred, that is, the reversion of the area to a marshy water storage area. This type of work helps to:

- 1: minimize the actual flood situation;
- 2: minimize the time that the water lays around.

He said that we must remember there is always the possibility of a situation occurring where no permanent work could have been done to prevent it and that in these cases we must respond when the situation arises.

The question then becomes - "What still has to be done and how does it get done?" We must keep in mind that in a farm area such as this a drainage system is essential to the livelihood of the area and that it is a physical impossibility to store all this water in the hills. This water must flow toward the Red River. Our objective then becomes to minimize the adverse affects of excess water. Keep in mind also that some flooding will be experienced under any affordable drainage system.

WATERSHED CONSERVATION DISTRICT

A district is an extension of the municipalities. It does things which the Rural Municipalities or the province cannot now do. Its responsibility is management of resources to the best advantage of the people in the district. It encompasses a wide range of program activities including flood control, land management programs and water management. Land management programs are essential in that they prevent serious erosion problems and slow down the rate of movement of the water toward lower areas.

Mr. Fletcher commented that he feels and has always felt that the concept of a "watershed" is sound. A single municipality can't cope with the amount of water coming down. There must be concern for everyone affected rather than individual municipality reacting to solve its own problem to the detriment of other areas.

Mr. Newton: the Whitemud Watershed has been operational for over two years now and two more districts have been requested, one on the Turtle River and one including the area draining into the west side of Lake Dauphin. More and more you can see the Whitemud board being concerned about the over-all district. They try to find the cause of problems and rectify that situation rather than reacting to the problem itself.

QUESTIONS ASKED IN DISCUSSION:

1: Question: If an R.M. is in a District - how much control does local councillor lose or maintain?

Answer: Initially Board members are appointed by the municipalities. Some responsibilities are transferred to the Board. Board acquires responsibilities for natural waterways plus drainage systems - makes decisions regarding these and carries them out on a cost-share arrangement with the province. The cost-share agreement varies depending on the order of drain involved.

2: Comment: A watershed encourages municipal co-operation in solving common problems. Municipalities know what is going on in other municipalities.

3: Question: When there is "just too much water" - would a watershed district affect flooding situation? What more could a watershed do?

Answer: The Board would develop a long-range program. At the beginning this would have no noticeable affect but would be a start toward positive measures which would have an affect. The board would be concerned with minimizing the adverse effects of the water in all parts of the district.

4: Question: How does the Board operate?

Answer: 1: Initial step is to develop long-term objectives for the district.
2: Next, find out what is stopping the attainment of these objectives. (Is it money, education, a policy? etc.)
3: Decide upon programs which will overcome these constraints.
4: Priorize these programs.
5: Set shorter term goals based upon priority programs and set about doing it.

5: Question: Where does a town such as Morden fit into a watershed?

Answer: It is part of the watershed community. The town is only as rich as the surrounding area. The objective of watershed is to enrich the whole area. Water is necessary for service to the town. It is also necessary for recreation for the town. Recreation is one of the concerns of the watershed district. The specific problems of the town become a part of the problems for resolution by the board.

6: A Diversion at Carman was mentioned in discussions. This has already been proven to be practical. It would not increase the flows downstream as there would be the same amount of water; it would just be going by a different route. It might tend to level out peaks downstream as a diversion would take water around faster than the rest of the water would go through the natural channel.

Suggestions from the meeting:

1: A representative committee be struck from this meeting to look at problems throughout the whole area, to go to the Whitemud Watershed to observe what is going on there and to come back to individual councils with information and recommendations.

2: Another meeting of reeves and mayors - bring in Whitemud Watershed manager, two or three sub-district members, people developing the long-range plan for the district. In this way local people would get a feeling for the type of things going on from the people doing them.

3: This meeting would be better with all councillors of the municipalities involved. Then the general meeting could be followed by meeting in each district watershed.

4: Numbers for a large general meeting would be unwieldy - why not start with a general meeting in each watershed involving councillors of municipalities in that watershed.

Decision

Mr. Newton - will block out five to six potential watershed districts and arrange a meeting in each district. He will arrange to have the people from the Whitemud District attend these meetings.

The meeting should look at two aspects:

- 1: Is the watershed concept sound?
- 2: Do the mechanics (the Act, cost-share agreements, etc.) suit the area or should efforts be made to alter them?

The meetings might strike committees to investigate the formation of a Watershed District and prepare a brief on behalf of the municipalities involved.

Recorded by

G. R. Coutts.

ATTENDANCE

G. M. Cretton	R. M. of Morris
✓ L. Magarrell	R. M. of Macdonald
✓ C. Pattle	Town of Morris
✓ G. R. Coutts	Ag. Rep., Morris
✓ John E. Wieler	R. M. of Rhineland
✓ George J. Froese	R. M. of Stanley
✓ John W. Giesbrecht	R. M. of Roland
✓ J. Hunter	R. M. of Franklin
✓ B. G. Morden	Town of Morden
✓ D. L. Fletcher	Town of Carman
✓ L. Roth	R. M. of Dufferin
✓ R. Hink	R. M. of Thompson
✓ Art Vermette	R. M. of Montcalm
✓ Dave Brown	Province of Manitoba, Water Resources
✓ Bill Newton	Province of Manitoba, Water Resources
✓ H. D. Earl	R. M. of Morris
✓ H. W. Shearer	R. M. of Grey (Elm Creek)

June 11 - Dufferin Reservoir

Mailed May 30, 1914