

Board of Directors Meeting West Tennessee River Basin Authority October 11, 2024

The Board of Directors Meeting of the West Tennessee River Basin Authority was held at 12:30 a.m. on Friday, October 11, 2024, in the West Tennessee River Basin Authority conference room. Board members in attendance included Mayor Mark Ward, Mayor Joseph Butler, Mayor Gary Reasons, Mayor David Quick, Mayor Robbie McCready, Mayor AJ Massey, Dr. Jim Byford, Mr. Joe McKinnon, and Sen. Ed Jackson. Advisory Board members and other guests in attendance were Brad Wheat, Tyler Lock, Rudy Collins, Malcolm Burchfiel, Jake Rogers, Melinda Goode, Mike Butler, and Patrick Parker (OGC). Both Mayor Mike Creasy and Commissioner David Salyers joined via TEAMS. A quorum was verified, Mayor Gary Reasons gave the invocation, and Chairman AJ Massey called the meeting to order.

The following agenda items were discussed:

Public Comment

Chairman Massey asked if there was anyone to offer public comment. There was no response from members of the public. No action was taken during the public comment period.

July 2024 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Director Blackwood presented the July 2024 WTRBA Board of Director meeting minutes. With no questions, Chairman Massey asked for a motion to approve the July 2024 Board of Directors meeting minutes. A motion was made by Mayor Gary Reasons and seconded by Mayor David Quick. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

WTRBA Financials

Director Blackwood reviewed the financial reports and graphs with the board, stating that as of June 2024, expenses were **\$5,325,868** of the **\$6,842,300** annual budget for **Operating Funds (327.26)**. The **Maintenance Account (327.24)** began the year with **\$27,259,235** and actual expenses through July 2024 were **\$1,765,017**. Year-to-date county funds for **FY24/25** are **\$530,515**. Copies of the financial reports were attached to the minutes. A motion to accept the financial reports was made by Mayor Joseph Butler and seconded by Mayor Gary Reasons. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Fiscal Updates

- FY '26 Budget Requests

Director Blackwood informed the board, WTRBA will be requesting the establishment of three full-time WET Center employment positions. Blackwood stated the funding of the positions were included, but in order for them to be established a request must be made, adding that Alison Franklin, the WET Center Executive Director, is working on the overlap and adding the positions will aid in her establishing a regular position and regular operations. Without any further discussion Chairman Massey asked for a motion to be made to approve the establishment of the three positions. Mayor Maurice Gaines made a motion with Mr. Joe McKinnon seconding. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

- EPA Community Change Grant

Director Blackwood spoke of the EPA Community Change Grant in which WTRBA is helping to collaborate on with UTM, Northwest Tennessee Development District, ETSU, and UTIA. Blackwood stated the purpose of applying for the grant will be to aid in developing an infrastructure scorecard for the rural West Tennessee counties and establishing an inventory of culverts and roadways, which will aid in determining their vulnerability. Blackwood added the funding would also assist in establishing science needed in each county, with mesonet stations. Blackwood also added that an educational aspect would also be available with WET Center courses, as well as public and professional items. Blackwood also stated that pilot projects would come from the infrastructure study as well, adding that when a vulnerable issue is found it may be addressed or turned into a valid case study to share. Blackwood concluded the discussion by stating if awarded the grant, work must be completed in a three-year time period and no fiscal commitment will be needed from WTRBA.

Engineer Update

Kris Gordon presented the engineer's update highlighting outreach opportunities by the WTRBA Technical Team, one being a mussel display at the Tipton County Museum in support of the Hatchie River Conservancy. Gordon stated the team has been in discussion with TDOT regarding stream crossings and how WTRBA and TDOT can work together if future projects overlap with one another. Kris Gordon spoke of the Tennessee Floodplain Task Force, stating this is an effort by The Nature Conservancy to look into how WTRBA has been established in West Tennessee and how to support the entire state. Gordon updated the board on Cub Creek (Phase 1B), stating design work is almost complete and plan to move forward with construction in the upcoming months. Gordon stated once Phase 1B is fully completed, work on Phase 2 will begin. This project, like Phase 1, will be another 20,000 feet of stream restoration. Gordon spoke of WTREC, on Airways Blvd in Madison County, and the potential to develop stream restoration and mitigation along the property. Gordon informed the board of a meeting with TDOT to discuss partnering projects that have been slated for 2025, adding the projects are as followed: Atoka, Lake Page, Clifty, Big Muddy, and Reedy. Gordon also stated work on Dyer Creek, in Madison County is moving forward with continued design. Gordon touched on the Cypress Creek project, in which WTRBA is partnering with USACE, stating the entities are looking into improving the creek system and how to aid with flood mitigation. Gordon touched on the ARP Grants, stating everything with the three grants are moving forward and things are on track. Gordon took a moment to speak on Fine Resolution Stream Network, a project the tech team has been working on to generate data to derive the location of where head cuts are happening to aid in developing a better approach. Kris Gordon provided a Watershed update, stating a new riser installation has taken place at LuRey, repairs have taken place at North Fork Forked Deer #2, Hico, and Spencer, and the new riser will be installed at Claybrooke within the upcoming weeks, as weather permits. Gordon gave a brief amphibious update, stating the team has started using Survey123, a system that will assist in giving a better visualization of where the crews have been working and the timelines of progress made each day at each location.

Maintenance Update

In Dustin Bennett's absence Kris Gordon provided a brief maintenance update stating that a majority of big projects are being put off until this winter and the crew is looking into changing over to an amphibious drive chain system this upcoming winter, which will aid in having more readily available parts and will allow for a more efficient response to amphibious and maintenance needs, especially when out in the field.

Special Projects/ Programs

- WET CENTER

Director Blackwood provided a progress update on the WET Center, stating the project has officially entered the design development phase and design should be completed January 1, 2025. Blackwood presented the schematic design to the board, highlighting the updated “Y” shaped facility which will include various features for flood management and water education.

- Restoration Property

Director Blackwood discussed the potential acquisition of property adjacent to the Middle Fork Bottoms, stating the property features an acre of greenhouse which would benefit WTRBA’s stream restoration program efforts and establishing the agency’s own backfill for projects. Blackwood added that the potential purchase would eventually aid in partnering with other agencies and provide additional office space for the WTRBA Technical Team. Blackwood concluded by stating this item was brought before the Executive Committee and a recommendation was made to move forward with the appraisal and asked for the approval of the board to advance with the appraisal process. With no further discussion Chairman Massey asked for a motion to be made for approval. A motion to approve the appraisal process for the property was made by Mayor Gary Reasons and seconded by Mayor Maurice Gaines. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Outreach and Regional Leadership

Director Blackwood outlined regional outreach efforts, including a South Fork Forked Deer site review with different community leaders and members of the Walton Foundation to look at different challenges through the center of Jackson leading to just west of Airways Blvd and how to address stream mitigation growth in areas, and to discuss the opportunity of reconnecting the floodplain and managing the sediment and flows correctly. Director Blackwood also spoke of presenting on the WET Center at the American Council of Engineering Companies in Franklin, TN which hosted 650 engineers from across the state of Tennessee. Blackwood made mention of the TNC board meeting taking place on October 18, 2024, at Middle Fork Bottoms and of his attending an upcoming Silver Jackets meeting on October 25, 2024 where he will also be presenting on the WET Center.

Director Blackwood spoke of the upcoming 89th Annual Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association meeting, taking place December 4-7, 2024, in New Orleans. Blackwood stated he is seeking approval to attend, as this would be his last year as the engineering committee chair. Blackwood concluded by stating the total cost asked to attend is \$2500. With no further discussion Chairman Massey asked for a motion to approve. A motion of approval was made by Mayor Gary Reason, seconded by Mayor Maurice Gaines. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Director Blackwood by way of an update, informed the Board of WTRBA’s emergency assistance efforts during the aftermath of Hurricane Helene in Unicoi County, Tennessee. Blackwood spoke of him and six WTRBA team members assisting with search and recovery needs during a four-day period. Blackwood highlighted the extensive debris by providing photos and descriptions of the damage caused by the hurricane and emphasized the need for long-term recovery support.

Other Business/Adjourn

- 2025 WTWR Symposium

Director Blackwood spoke of the upcoming 2025 West Tennessee Water Resources Symposium, which is set for February 2025. Blackwood requested approval for a \$10,000 budget for the event,

emphasizing its growth and success over the past couple of years. With no further discussion a motion to approve the symposium budget was made by Mayor Joseph Butler, seconded by Mayor Gary Reasons. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

With no further business, Chairman Massey called for a motion to adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made by Mayor Gary Reasons and seconded by Mayor Maurice Gaines.

Mayor AJ Massey, Chairman

Mr. Joe McKinnon, Secretary

Upcoming meetings:

Executive Committee on Tuesday, November 19, 2024 @ 9:30am

Executive Committee on Tuesday, December 17, 2024 @ 9:30am

Board of Directors on TBD @ 11:30 a.m.