

Washington Parish Reservoir Commission

Minutes of May 24, 2017 Meeting

Members present:

Y Bob Bateman - Treasurer

Y Jim Beatty

N Charles Mizell

N Jason M. Creel

Y John Nichols - Secretary

N Mike Garic

Y Cliff Roberts

Y Bill Jenkins - Chairman

Y Beryl Schilling

N Mike Melancon

y Jerry Thomas - Vice-Chairman

Members present 6 Quorum present? YES # Guests present _____

1. Place of Meeting: Bogalusa WEDF Office

2. Called to order by Chairman

3. Prayer by Bill Jenkins

4. Pledge led by Bill Jenkins

5. Minutes of the last meeting read and approved .

Changes/additions? None

Motion to accept by Bob Bateman 2nd by Beryl Schilling

6. Motion to dispense with two agenda items 1. Executive Session and 2. Hire CPA. Motion by Bob Bateman and seconded by Jim Beatty. The commission voted unanimously to approve.

7. Discussion of current status of Permit Application and negotiations with the COE provided by Keith Turner.

- Held a meeting with the corps of engineers (COE) to discuss the path forward considering that our appeal was upheld. Stated that the environmental impact statement (EIS) is the best path, to move the project forward. The COE requested supplemental information before determining if EIS is the right path which in turn led to the agenda item to hire an experienced environmental contractor, Mike Goff, as WPRC agent on environmental matters with the COE. It is estimated 30 days will be required to reach an agreement on the path forward with the COE. A written agreement will then be required between the commission, the COE, and any contractors that may be involved.
- Commissioner question: *“Does this mean we will have to start all over.”* If the path forward is determined to be an EIS, considerable data has already been collected that can be used toward an EIS.
- Commissioner question: *“Is this permit which you are seeking for the full size reservoir or can the permit be amended for a smaller size that will not cover cemeteries and people’s houses? Does the Commission have to tell you the size reservoir that we want?”* The actual footprint of the reservoir is not set yet. It is a process by which we will determine the feasibility by looking at various shapes, various sizes, locations, the environmental impact, the socio-economic impact which will impact the footprint in the draft EIS at the end. The draft EIS then will be fine-tuned using input from various sources from engineering questions to public input from letters, emails, and public hearings.
- Commissioner question: *“So you’re saying that the work that you’re doing , the money that are spending now, for the existing permit application will be applicable to a smaller reservoir falling within the original Oak Grove site?”* Yes, the screening, environmental components, concepts that can achieve the stated purpose; a lot of this work has already been done and is applicable to a smaller footprint.
- Commissioner question: *“Will there be a dollar cap on the contract for Mike Goff, the environmental engineer?”* There is no estimate at this time. Would need him to participate in developing a budget. The commission has the hourly rates from which one could be prepared.

8. Motion by Bob Bateman to employ Headwaters Incorporated (Mike Goff) as environmental contractor.

Motion seconded by Jim Beatty.

Commissioner question: *“Does this mean that in the future The COE will use a second contractor to do the actual EIS?”* Yes. It will be a totally separate firm for the EIS per the three way agreement between WPRC, Contractor and the COE in which WPRC will pay the COE who will be directing the Environmental firm’s work to produce the EIS.

Public Question : *“Since WPRC will be spending tax payer money to prepare environmental impact statement and the COE has a list of acceptable environmental contractors, shouldn’t WPRC be*

requesting competitive bids to do this work. Secondly, who is going to control or provide oversight of this work to protect the taxpayers' interests. Denmon Engineering apparently has no idea of the rates of this firm and has no idea how much they will charge the project. I don't think that this is the most efficient way to spend the taxpayers' money."

The primary reason that will we are recommending this firm is because they have more knowledge and experience as specific to this project than any other company in the business. They have already walked this site in making previous wetlands jurisdiction determinations. If a new firm has brought in, they will incur more cost getting up to speed than any savings potential with a lower rate contractor. WPRC vetted a number of companies years ago and chose this company.

All commissioners present voted unanimously to **approve** the **motion** on the table to contract with Headwaters Incorporated to be our environmental contractor interfacing with the COE.

9. Public Participation -

Public participation three members of the public discussed the following subjects:

Question was asked if the apparent discrepancy in Bogue Lusa Creek flow that was raised last meeting had been resolved. A response is planned but has not yet been prepared.

Certain private properties are not for sale at any price and is likely that any footprint of a practical size for a reservoir will cover one of these properties. So why waste tax payors money continuing to study Oak Grove site and developing an expensive EIS when it is so well known that the required property cannot be purchased under the current amended law. It was suggested to the commission to make a motion to withdraw the existing permit application and focus the remaining funds and energy on finding a site where the property can be purchased?

Information was presented on 1000 acres of available land on the Bogue Chitto State Park already owned by the state and 800 acres of available privately owned land adjacent to the park. The Commission was encouraged to investigate the feasibility of this as an alternative to the Oak Grove site.

10. Commissioner's Comments -

Commissioners were encouraged to be transparent and discuss freely with the public the progress being made by the Commission but to be careful to not give the impression that alternatives just being studied are in fact the chosen path. Much effort is being made now to better define our path forward but many questions and hurdles remain.

11. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Bob Bateman, seconded by Beryl Schilling passed unanimously at 5:45 p.m.

The above minutes prepared by:

John Nichols

Secretary, WPRC