WATERVILLE CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING April 10, 2025, 6:00 p.m. 220 Paquin Street (Former Senior Center)

There was a special meeting that the Waterville City Council held in the former Senior Center at 6:00 p.m. on April 10, 2025.

Call to Order / Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance

Present: Council members: Dave Wollin, Scott Potter, and Mayor Bill Conlin

Also Present: Administrator Teresa Hill and City Attorney Jason Moran

Absent: City Engineer Jason Femrite, Council Tim Smith

Mayor Conlin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Announced the present Council and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda/Additional Items to Agenda

Motion by Potter Seconded by Wollin approve the agenda. Motion Carried 3-0.

Rock Arch Rapids

Mayor Conlin opened the floor to the Rock Arch Rapids presenters. All the special guests will be available for questions after the presentation and the Council has asked our questions. Also, they will be available after the meeting to answer individual questions if there are any, or their business cards will be available if there are any questions that are to come up at a later time. Anna Holman the Conservation Program Manager with Clean River Partners thanked the Mayor and Council for allowing the presentation for the Cannon River Fish Passage Project. Other Special guests attending: Clean River Partner Jennifer Tonko Executive Director, with Bolton and Menk Brent Johnson Water Resources Project Manager, Roberta Cronquist Water Resource Senior Project Manager, with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Craig Soupir DNR Fisheries Southern Regional Fisheries Manager, Todd Kolander Ecological and Water Resources Division South District Manager, Howard Fullhart River Ecology Unit River Ecologist. Anna Holman relayed to the Council and Citizens that this project is being funded by a DNR grant. The grant is MN DNR Get Out MORE (Modernize Outdoor Recreation Experiences). This will involve the Lower Sakatah Lake Dam, Schmitdke Dam, Gorman Lake Dam, and Dodd Rd. culvert to facilitate fish passage in the Cannon River Watershed. This project focuses on restoring the streams and modernizing water recreation-related infrastructure. The current fish passage is blocked at the lower Sakatah Lake and Gorman Lake Dams. This has negatively impacted ecosystems causing a reduction in biodiversity and limiting fish reproductivity. These dams were originally established in the 1930s, and are due to be brought up to date. Low-head dams are also known as drowning machines due to the dangerous undertows; replacing them with rock arch rapids will make them safer recreationally and more habitable for fish. The benefits of this project are: ultimately this will connect 23 miles of stream for fish passage, assist with the passage of 28 different species of fish including a genetically rare type of walleye along with mussels which are natural filtration systems for our waterways, increase water recreational activities, an increase of climate resiliency by reducing erosion along the banks, they are not bog proof but they are less susceptible to plugging compared to the existing dams. It is very important knowledge to know the State regulations and permitting process, without getting into massive details to briefly describe the process; there can be no change in the water levels from pre and post-implementation. This project is to improve the fish passage in the Cannon River Watershed, the scope of this project is not to address flooding issues. Le Sueur Co Upper Cannon River Flood Risk Reduction Study is being completed with the County and is a completely different project. So, if this is of any interest this is where that energy can be focused. Brent Johnson expressed the importance of the project design. With the established two dams the original existing weirs are going to stay in place to provide controls of already existing water levels and elevate any additional seepage. There has been some raised concern about the existing weir on Lake Gorman. This structure integrity will be looking at this and will be reported to us from our Structural Engineer. The primary goal with Schmidtke Dam is to remove piers and walkway, also to maintain the sill to keep water at its current levels. The rock arch rapids would be established downstream from the dam. Schmidtke Dam in Lower Sakatah Lake has a drainage area of 218 square miles. The Gorman Lake

Dam has a drainage area of 69 square miles. The main goal with Gorman Lake is to keep the concrete sill to maintain the water levels, and rock arch rapids be placed after the dam, this is a similar concept to Schmidtke. The abutments will be inspected by a structural engineer to understand the integrity and we will use what is recommended and remove any unsound structures per recommendation. Downstream from Gorman Dam is Dodd Road. This road has water flowing over the top of the road with increased water levels from storms and floods. There are a few ideas of types and sizes of culverts to replace the current culvert. This is to improve current water quality and increase the ability for fish passage. This has been a diligent and continued effort to match exact water levels with all stages of water flow. Roberta Cronquist reaffirmed the message from Anna and Brent and described the graphs of water levels. The graphs shown in green are the existing water levels from the 2024 floods and the yellow is the proposed lake elevations. This is our first test for the feasibility study in how the levels change and how they may propagate when moving downstream. This is not exact as of right now it is a little lower water level and a little faster flow out at Gorman Lake specifically. This is still in the preliminary design and is still being adjusted as we move closer to the final design for each of these structures. When looking at the downstream effect from Gorman to Saber and then to Waterville for Lake Tetonka and Sakatah it becomes almost immeasurable to change in this preliminary design. This will also be tracked through the intermediate flood stages as well. There has been lots of discussion of the increasing flooding in Waterville and concerns with changes in the watershed contributing to additional flooding in Waterville. There have been climate geological changes in the watershed. The DNR did a study in 2019 for all watersheds and compiled records for rainfall. Specifically for the Cannon Watershed, there has been an increase in annual rainfall of 4 inches since 1980. The project schedule's first phase is plans and specifications this will be fine-tuned until the third phase. The second phase is the permitting and application process which will take place this summer. The third phase is to go out for bids to hopefully start a winter construction process. Once we have reached this final design phase we will move to the final phase of public outreach in November preferably before this bidding process. If there is interest in staying active in the Watershed there are three websites to follow to keep up on any updates. (Cannon River Fish Passage Project https://www.cleanriverparners.org/fishpassage, Upper Cannon River Watershed Flood Study https://www.lesueurcounty.gov/769/Upper-Cannon-River-Watershed-Flood-Risk-, Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization https://www.cannonriverwatershedmn.gov/ .) At this time Roberta has opened the floor to questions from City Council. Mayor Conlin asked how did you come up with the numbers for the waters coming out of Gorman, are you stating water will still be going over Dodd Road even with three culverts? Roberta Cronquist replied yes. Once you get into the 100-year floods it will still be going over the top of Dodd Road. Mayor Conlin stated that we do not want nor need any more water flow in speed or quantity in this direction. This project is not wanted at all. Roberta Cronquist replied this will be part of fine-tuning this project by addressing these concerns. This has to do with the culvert sizes and the geometrics of the final of the rock arch rapids. With the goal of trying to get it as close to zero as we can get. The total water volume that is contributed from the Cannon River is not going to change. It is just a matter of timing. Once it comes to Waterville the impact will be muted by the additional contributing areas of the Watershed. We are looking for an immeasurable change. We are trying to be at a good level of confidence to make sure we are not changing the levels of the watershed. Mayor Conlin stated that by measuring the 100year or 10-year flood, if the water comes faster and not leaving, then you are going to have a 10-year flood every year. Council Wollin asked if part of this was to make the Schmidtke Dam flow better. Roberta Cronquist replied the project intends to make them flow the same. There will be a minor increase in flow with the opened areas from removing the structures of the pier. Craig Soupir relayed that in 2019 there was some flooding that happened due to a large bog in front of Schmidtke Dam. This project was proposed in 2021 due to that occurrence to elevate this issue. Due to the obstructions in that Dam, it allows cattail bogs to be kept there easier. We are trying to remove this obstruction so cattails are allowed to move better within that area. Council Potter stated when the bog goes over the top of the Schmidtke Dam after the removal of the obstructions is it just going to get stuck 50 yards further on the rock arch rapids? Craig Soupir replied that it certainly could. This is currently an impingement point right now. Due to the new design of the rapids, there is a lesser chance of this occurring because it allows passage. Now what happens downstream, no matter what is there, there are still going to be issues downstream and that is the responsibility of whoever has obstructions down the river to take care of that. If it gets stuck on the DNR's trail, then the DNR will go out there and remove that. If it gets

stuck on a bridge abutment that is the responsibility of the County or whoever. Council Potter stated that it seems like the rocks will give it more to get caught up on. What fish are going to migrate through there that is going to get over the Morristown Dam? Craig Soupir replied there are tributaries between Morristown and Schmidtke Dam that allow fish passage as well. There are wetlands and other connections there that allow migration for all fish species. Once fish are below Schmidtke Dam if the hydraulic conditions are such as now there is not a passage for them to get back up. Now most of the time you will see common carp, and undesirable fish species because they have the ability to jump, unlike Species of pike or walleye which get stuck. With the proposed project that is what we are trying to avoid. Mayor Conlin stated there is a lot of time over the year when you can't even see the Schmidtke Dam because of the water levels being the same or higher than the Dam itself. How are we going to get rid of the water faster? Todd Kolander replied this river has an extremely flat slope with little to no grade between Waterville and Morristown. After Morristown, there is a little bit more grade. You can not increase the slope of this river due to statutes. This is why you would see the water level at the Morristown Dam because it is a static flow. With this project when the cattail bogs come through, if they were to get stuck on the rocks, the water levels will fluctuate which will roll the bogs breaking them up and pushing them through. If the water levels are low and the cattails happen to get stuck and sit there, they will dry out and when water levels rise, they will pass through very easily. Rock arch rapids historically pass debris easily. Mayor Conlin stated that in the diagram it appears to have rock mounds at the shore. This shows that at the weir the water flowing over it is being restricted so it is not going to be within 100 feet to get to the dam, is it going to be less? Is the height of the dam at Sakatah going to be higher? Brent Johnson replied that the intent is not to have it higher. The weir section is intended to leave it as it is. Downstream the boulders will be at that level or lower. The idea is to keep it open as it presently is. Boulders will be placed on both sides particularly on the South side at Schmidtke because it is kind of a bog area. The North side is good having the hillside at the river bank where rocks can get tied into. **Council Potter** asked what is stopping sediment from filling in these breaks in the rock rapids in the next 8 to 10 years. Brent Johnson replied that it is possible, but from the practical side of things, it does not just fill up with sand and sediment. Rivers carry sediment, debris, and leaves. The thought is if the river can bring it there it can also flush it out. Todd Kolander stated that they do not fill with sediment the structure of the dam is a self-cleaning structure. When the velocity of the water increases it creates a swirling motion that moves most if not all debris along. Craig Soupir, you do want to see sand and gravel deposited here this is what keeps the structure. In past practice this was not added, now it is. This is called chinking stone to fill gaps between stones to improve stability. Mayor Conlin asked when will this project will have updated data with the culverts that are being put in at Gorman. Brent Johnson replied we're going to continue to work on the designs through the summer and this will be available this fall. We will host another public meeting with hydrology reports and other supporting data to be reviewed. Roberta Cronquist emphasized these projects are not to change the water level, only to keep within state Statues. It is understood that this system is displeasing. The upland storage that the County is working on will be beneficial for the whole watershed system. This study will help with the flood mitigation. Council Potter stated his concern about large trees getting lodged with the ability of more and more debris piling up. Craig Soupir replied that if this were to happen then the DNR would have to come in to remove all that debris. This risk is reduced by this new system versus what is in place right now. The discussion was opened to the public at 6:52 pm. Gary Schott 18855 Tetonka Lake Lane N asked, do you feel like speed is an issue? It seems that with the additional culverts, this is a possibility, even with Saber Lake having the ability to slow the water flow down. But how does this stop erosion? Will the speed of the water increase be contributing to erosion on the Cannon River moving to Lake Tetonka? Roberta Cronquist responded, immediately at the outlet on Dodd Road will be different when it gets to Saber moving down the Cannon River to Tetonka and Sakatah. It is dependent on the rainfall event which indicates the stream flows. The current situation of Dodd Road only has one culvert, we are seeing higher velocities of water in the smaller storms than what we want to see. The goal of slowing down those smaller storms is to obtain a more predictable velocity staying consistent with the streams up and down. When it is a moderate storm event there may be more volume and it may overtop Dodd Road. If a large storm event, it will overtop the road, there will be no difference than what it is. Todd Kolander added that when you are looking at a structure in a stream typically the distance downstream is where there might be an impact. Generally, the testing is 5-7 times the width and length of the stream you will see it dissipate. Jennifer Grobe 409 Harmon St.

W. If you are replacing one culvert with three new culverts are they going 3 times larger? Brent Johnson replied that the present design is a larger opening than what is currently there. Not 3 times the size of it. They would be smaller on the road larger culverts on the channel and a few smaller ones in the flood plains outside of the regular river channel to carry some extra flow. Jennifer Grobe 409 Harmon St. W. How wide is that river? Brent Johnson replied about 25 feet wide with cattail growing along the sides, with wetland extending out to 100 feet in some areas. Sue Mariska 450 Cedar Circle expressed her concern with the cleanup of bogs, trees, and or piled up debris and the lack of promptness to get the debris cleaned up. With her history of reporting these types of obstructions in the waterways, it has been inconsistent on what entity would be taking care of these obstructions. It went back and forth between the DNR and the Core of Engineers. Expressing her concern about the trees still in Cannon River from the tornado event in 2018, these being removed would increase the water flow. Brent Johnson replied that debris can get hung up at the rock arch rapid, in this scenario the DNR is responsible. The DNR is not responsible for the whole river. If debris is stuck on a road embankment the city, township, or county would be responsible. There is not one sole entity that is responsible for the river unless it is touching a man-made structure that was established by the governing body or DNR. Mariska asked well who is responsible then? Removal of the downed tree in the river would help the flow. Craig Soupir replied that those downed trees in the river probably provided resistance when they were submersed during the flood event. Are you asking us to clear and cut all of the trees in the floodplain? Mariska replied no, only the ones that are down. Craig Soupir replied that those are natural. Council Potter asked to circle back to the culverts on Dodd Road, one culvert will be replaced with a larger culvert? Brent Johnson replied with several culverts that would be larger than that. Council Potter asked did you say additional culverts were going in further down for when it floods? Brent Johnson replied these would be further out to the side. Council Potter, would this increase the water that comes to Waterville when it is flooding? We do not need water any faster. Brent **Johnson** replied yes, a little bit. We are trying to match that to be no change to what you currently have. **Roberta Cronquist** stated that we will carry forward in the modeling process to address the velocity. The current model shows that the speed slows down and has less impact once it passes through Gorman, down to Dodd Road, then Saber Lake, and then Cannon River before Waterville. Mayor Conlin stated that we still want to know the impact of any storm coming through, with faster water coming down the river at our normal elevation. Todd Kolander asked where the city was at with their hydro monitoring system. Administrator Hill replied that one had been installed. Roberta is working on upland storage with Commissioner Preisler. Todd Kolander stated this gauge is a key part of knowing what the water is doing. It will give you some baring on what It means at different elevations. Collecting years of data is the most beneficial. Craig Soupir stated we hear you but understand we can't change the amount of water coming at you. We are going to get you guys the information once the models are zeroed into specifications. Mayor Conlin stated we do not want any more water in volume or velocity. Is this what it is going to do? Craig Soupir this is the state statute to have no change. Roberta Cronquist, we will do what you are asking by tracking the different rain events. We intend to modify the Gorman Dam to control the flux from the culverts at Dodd Road. The ultimate goal is to keep the water levels the same. We are not restricting the flow out of Schmidtke Dam. John Hamer 912 Tetonka Blvd has been a Waterville resident since 2016 and has spent lots of time fishing these areas. I have had communication with the DNR for some time on Schmidtke Dam, bogs, and flow in these waters. In my experience fishing at rock arch rapids, is beneficial for fish habitats and for water flow. Commissioner David Preisler 455 North State Avenue Le Center, asked how old are some of the rock arch rapids that are within the State. Todd Kolander replied, that in the early 2000's different designs were being looked at. At the beginning of implementing these dams, it started at a 5% slope; it is now at a 3% slope. During flood events, the 5% slopes needed some repairs, but the 3% slopes have held up very well. Commissioner David Preisler asked if they have other cities with a similar dam design. If so, can these be shared with the project-impacted Citizens and Council? This way they can ask what they have had for experiences before and during flood events, or if there are changes that they think would help this type of project. The County is looking at projects for storing water. There was a meeting for the Cannon and White Water watershed landowners last Tuesday. There was a good turnout; with some interest in the projects. The biggest challenge for most is coming up with the funding. This is years in the making. If we can store the water, we can slow the flow. Allowing some of the sediment to drop out and allows for better water quality. Anna Holman agreed with Commissioner Preisler on

land storage and how it will help with long-term issues. Todd Kolander noted that those who would like to see a comparison of rock arch rapids suggested looking at Morehouse Dam in Owatonna. This can give you a sideby-side comparison of rock arch rapids. Valerie Vail 722 Reed St. North Emergency Management team and Park Board member thanked everyone that did the presentation. When I was up at Gorman the other day there was a high flow going through that culvert, and when moving down to the next four crossing before the Cannon River it was a normal slow flow. This is relative to the explanation of the flow slowing down as it moves downstream. Going through the flood last year when conversating with the victims and FEMA flood waters were within 1 inch or less of their homes. We also agree with not changing the elevation. It is concerning if another bog goes over the rock arch rapid. There is a lot of wetland area with no inland outlet. What if it crosses and we cannot access the bog and it gets stuck as it has in the past? When you are in the river prior to Sakatah Lake, it is full of muck and mud. How will all that filter down, and will it help clean up the river? Craig Soupir replied most likely we will not see this large bog happen due to the removal of the restrictions that are currently in place. With a rock arch rapid, we could get down there with an excavator to do that. Valerie Vail asked what happens if it moves down further and it is not accessible to reach. Craig Soupir replied we would try to access where we can, but most of this is privately owned land. We cannot get away from the cattails and possible bogs, the rock arch rapids will minimize the risk of buildup versus having the structures.

Ādjourn

Motion by Smith Seconded by Wollin to adjourn the meeting. Motion Carried 3-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:44 PM.

William Conlin, Mayor

Teresa Hill, Administrator-Clerk