

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Comprehensive Plan Policy Advisory Committee

**Meeting Minutes
August 4, 2015**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Bob Stewart, Marvin Johnson, Marty Schneider, Scott Johnson, Linea Palmisano, Patty Acomb, Lisa Whalen, Lili McMillan, Scott Zerby, Jeff Clapp, Tom O'Conner, Sliv Carlson, Terri Yearwood, Steffanie Musich, and Gene Kay.

OTHERS PRESENT

Becky Christopher, Lead Planner and Project Manager; Sherry Davis White, MCWD Board President; Anna Brown, Planner and Project Manager; Diane Spector, Wenck Principal Water Resources Planner; Matthew Cook, Planning Assistant; Lars Erdahl, District Administrator; James Wisker, Director of Planning and Projects.

COMMITTEE MEETING

Ms. Christopher identified the main goals of the meeting were to A) provide a brief overview of information introduced at the kickoff meetings, including scope, approach, process, and schedule for the Comprehensive Plan update, and B) discuss the role of and future agenda topics for the Committee.

Summary of Kickoff Meetings

To provide context for the proposed scope and approach for the Comprehensive Plan update, Ms. Christopher reviewed the findings of an internal self-assessment conducted by the District to evaluate its progress and performance over the last plan cycle. She stated that one of the strengths of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan was its strong foundation of data, issue identification, and long-term goals to inform planning efforts.

Ms. Christopher stated that one of the primary challenges identified by staff was that the Plan lacked focus. The 2007 Plan established 17 policy goals as well as specific water quality targets for all the major lakes and streams, and laid out a series of projects and programs to address them all within the 10-year plan cycle. This resulted in a capital improvement plan with narrowly-defined projects distributed across multiple cities over the 10 years. When the time came to develop the projects, many of them failed to be implemented due to lack of landowner or municipal support.

Ms. Christopher noted the change in direction the District began taking several years ago, specifically through its work in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway of Hopkins and St. Louis Park. Here, the District has focused on integrating its work with local land use and infrastructure planning to identify intersection of efforts and respond to opportunities in real-time. She noted that, by meaningfully engaging with and understanding the goals of public and private sector

stakeholders, the District has been able to develop partnerships and projects that provide value across multiple sectors (environment, economic development, livable communities). This approach has revealed greater opportunities and allowed the District to produce large, measurable outcomes on the landscape. She underscored that the success seen through this focused, integrated approach was something that the District intended on carrying into the 2017 Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Christopher noted that the 2017 Comprehensive Plan will be an update that builds on the strong technical foundation of the 2007 Plan and focuses on improving the District's implementation model based on lessons learned over the last plan cycle. She highlighted that, where the 2007 Comprehensive Plan positioned the District largely as a regulator, the 2017 Comprehensive Plan will focus on partnering with cities, the development community, and others for better outcomes.

Ms. Christopher explained that the District's Plan will utilize a two-track approach as a means of providing focus and maximizing District effectiveness, as in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway. Through the "focus" track, the District will identify high-need areas in which to focus implementation efforts to produce significant, measurable improvements. She noted that the District's current focal geographies are the Minnehaha Creek Greenway and the Six Mile Creek Subwatershed. She noted that Ms. Brown will soon be convening stakeholders in the Six Mile Creek geography to begin gathering information on local goals, priorities, and plans to help inform the development of implementation strategies for this area.

The second track detailed was the "responsive" track. Ms. Christopher stated that the Plan would be designed to allow the District to remain responsive across the entire watershed, partnering with stakeholders as opportunities arise. Work under the responsive track would be primarily externally driven with project opportunities identified through coordination with municipalities or through the permitting review process.

Ms. Christopher detailed the public process for development of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan, listing the groups and methods of input:

- Policy Advisory Committee
- Technical Advisory Committee
- Citizen Advisory Committee
- Six Mile Creek Focal Geography Committee
- Local Subwatershed meetings
 - Including members of advisory committees and interested public (e.g. Lake Associations)
- Email distribution list and website
 - Regular updates and progress reports
- Public Opinion Survey

Ms. Christopher laid out the timeline for the development of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan:

Early 2015	Kickoff meetings Public opinion survey
Mid 2015-2016	Advisory committee meetings
Early 2016	Local subwatershed meetings
Mid 2016 – Early 2017	Plan drafting and review
June 27, 2017	Deadline for plan adoption

Committee's Role and Future Agenda Topics

Ms. Christopher stated that the primary role for the Committee was to help the District maximize the effectiveness of its new implementation model by sharing their expertise and vetting the District's ideas. She noted she would be seeking the Committee's help in understanding how the District can work more effectively with its communities to meet each other's goals.

Ms. Christopher outlined a proposed schedule of future agenda topics for the Committee:

- September [2015]
 - Strategic planning framework:
 - Mission and Vision
 - Goals
 - Strategies and Tactics
 - Stakeholder goals
 - Plan structure
 - Executive Summary
 - Technical information / data
 - Implementation framework
- November [2015]
 - Implementation Framework:
 - Process for planning in focal geographies
 - Process for remaining responsive District-wide
 - Improving integration of land use and water planning
 - Aligning resources, reducing duplication, streamlining regulation
- January [2016]
 - Partnering with LGUs to support Plan goals:
 - Load reductions
 - Best management practices
 - Model ordinances

- March [2016]
 - District's role regarding specific management topics:
 - Climate change adaptation
 - Chloride management
 - Aquatic invasive species control
 - Groundwater management
 - Agriculture
 - Long-term maintenance of best management practices

It was noted that by mid-2016, the District would be primarily focused on Plan drafting and that additional committee meetings would be scheduled for review and discussion of draft materials.

Ms. Christopher then opened up the meeting to discussion, asking the Committee for any policy topics that members would like to discuss in future meetings.

Committee members identified a few specific areas of interest for potential discussion. Ms. Carlson noted the need for policies related to the use of pervious pavers and other best management practices. Mr. Zerby highlighted promotion of pollinator habitat. Ms. Musich noted aquatic chemical use and the need for education about how to use chemicals responsibly.

Mr. Schneider recommended inclusion of a discussion about metrics that would be used to measure success of the District's programs. Ms. Christopher agreed and stated that a discussion of metrics would be tied into the next meeting regarding strategic planning framework. She continued the topic of measuring success by inviting Ms. Spector to summarize the development of the District's Ecosystem Evaluation Program (E-grade).

Ms. Spector began by explaining the District's current lake grades which are determined based on phosphorus levels, chlorophyll, and water clarity. She noted that a given waterbody's ecological health is impacted by more than phosphorus content. She stated that the E-grade monitoring program would incorporate several additional parameters, and produce reports on the system's ecological health based on the measured parameters. The additional parameters included fish populations, vegetation, shoreline condition, soil chemistry, and others. Ms. Spector underscored that the use of the E-grade program would not simply be to classify waterbodies or subwatersheds; rather, it would also be used to guide and measure the effect of the District's implementation efforts.

Ms. Musich asked if the presence of garbage in a waterbody was measured in the E-grade program. Ms. Spector noted that there is a parameter for debris. Ms. Spector then noted that the E-grade program was still being developed, and that the program would be reviewed and augmented after the first round of monitoring in the Six Mile Creek focal geography was completed.

Mr. Schneider asked if there were other instances of similar programs. Ms. Spector mentioned that there was a similar monitoring program for the Humber River in Ontario. She pointed out that many of the individual metrics the District would be using have already been developed by

other agencies, but that the E-grade program was groundbreaking in that it incorporated many more parameters than other similar programs.

Ms. McMillan offered her support of the E-grade program, expressing that the holistic approach to ecological health was both admirable and useful as an educational tool.

Ms. Musich asked if District's monitoring program included any community engagement, to which Ms. Christopher replied with details about the District's volunteer monitoring program.

Ms. Acomb asked how cities should plug in under the District's responsive track. Ms. Christopher noted that some cities have already begun bringing project opportunities to the District, and that the District is interested in promoting such partnerships with all stakeholders. Mr. Zerby expressed concern, stating that smaller cities on Lake Minnetonka like Shorewood did not have the resources to develop their own projects to bring to the District.

Ms. Yearwood expressed her support of the two-track approach. She emphasized the dynamic nature of the policy, which would prevent the District from being too narrowly focused or overextended.

Mr. Schneider asked about fishery management, to which Ms. Christopher noted the carp study that is currently underway in Six Mile Creek and how fish community will be assessed District-wide as part of the E-grade program. Mr. Schneider then expressed that he would like to see the District and / or its partners help to create an outlet by which interested residents can contribute to District and stakeholder goals. Ms. Christopher highlighted Mr. Schneider's suggestion as a good topic for further discussion by this and the other advisory committees.

Mr. Clapp stated that many of the beaches in Tonka Bay have been closed due to the presence of bacteria. He asked if there were known best management practices that could be used to keep the beaches safe enough to stay open. Ms. Musich offered her experience with attempting to persuade residents to not feed ducks and geese. Ms. Musich noted that creative education materials were the only tools that garnered any notable success in modifying the public's behavior.

Mr. Clapp then asked if the District had any grant funding available for restoration projects on Lake Minnetonka. Ms. Christopher confirmed that the District's cost-share program still accepts project applications. Committee members also noted available reference tools for restoration, highlighting a book developed in part by the District, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' web tool.

Updates

Ms. Christopher noted that she had sent out requests for stakeholder information as required under Minnesota Rule 8410. She stated that she had received many responses, and that a meeting notice would soon be sent out stating when the information would be reviewed by the Board of Managers.

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Ms. Christopher noted that the Six Mile Creek subwatershed planning process would be beginning soon, and that a subwatershed committee would be arranged and lead by Ms. Brown.

Ms. Christopher mentioned that the District would be in contact with the Committee members to conduct a phone survey as part of the District's self-assessment. It was noted that the feedback from this survey would be used to further direct the development of the 2017 Comprehensive plan.

The Committee then discussed scheduling future meetings, with most members supporting Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m.

The Committee Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Cook
Planning Assistant

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