

46 Ms. Christopher then explained that, in 2014, the Board identified the Six Mile Creek
47 Subwatershed as a priority focal geography and reviewed the reasons why this area was selected.
48 The Six Mile Creek subwatershed – where 58% of the land is covered by open water or wetland
49 – includes six impaired lakes. The receiving waterbody, Halsted Bay, requires the largest load
50 reduction of any waterbody in the District. Ms. Christopher also noted the significant
51 development pressure in the area, which presents both a threat to the resources and an
52 opportunity to make improvements as the land-use changes. Backed by municipal, regional, and
53 lake organizations in the area, she concluded, the District saw Six Mile Creek subwatershed as a
54 prime candidate for focused planning, given its high level of need, opportunity, and cooperation
55 from stakeholders.

56
57 Ms. Brown described the planning process proposed for the Six Mile Creek subwatershed, which
58 would serve as a model for the focal geography approach. The planning process will focus on
59 integrating District work with local plans and priorities. Ms. Brown noted that success in this
60 geography will require the District to seek partnerships with private developers and public
61 agencies and ensure that plans accommodate community growth and development trajectories.

62
63 Ms. Brown then identified the process's five main tasks:

- 64
65 1. Convene stakeholders
66 2. Understand natural resource needs
67 3. Understand the work of others
68 4. Identify intersections between natural resource and local planning priorities
69 5. Develop an investment plan

70
71 Ms. Brown stated that by comparing stakeholder plans and water resource needs, the District
72 could more aptly identify opportunities to cooperate on projects and align investment. She noted
73 that the District would weigh the opportunities identified against external funding possibilities
74 from independent groups and government agencies at the state and national levels.

75
76 Ms. Brown added that the formal planning process laid out would be complemented by informal
77 planning methods. She explained that the District and Six Mile Creek stakeholders would enjoy
78 open communication to provide the District with the local context vital to remaining a responsive
79 planning partner.

80
81 Ms. Musich asked how the District intended to assess natural resource needs. Ms. Brown
82 responded that the District's E-Grade program would be the main tool used to determine
83 resource conditions and needs moving forward. She added that the District has also done both a
84 Diagnostic Study and Carp Assessment for the area.

85
86 Ms. Brown stated that District staff and Managers were continuing to meet with policy makers in
87 the Six Mile Creek area. Once this series of meetings was completed, she noted, the District
88 would be hosting a kick-off meeting in April to begin the formal planning process for the
89 subwatershed. Ms. Christopher added that a focal geography is an area that the District has

90 identified as being in need of such a formalized planning process before meaningful
91 implementation can take place.

92

93 Ms. Christopher stated that in drafting the framework for the Responsive Track, one must
94 consider three main categories of means through which the District can enabled to truly remain
95 responsive. These categories, she explained, are as follows:

96

- 97 • Formal planning – plan, policy, and ordinance changes
- 98 • Informal planning – ongoing coordination and communication with partners
- 99 • Programs – changes to procedure and practice

100

101 Ms. Christopher detailed the changes made to some of the District’s programs.

102

103 **Planning & Projects**

104 Ms. Christopher explained that the District’s CIP was being changed to not merely a prescriptive
105 list of projects, but a goal-oriented framework that incorporates partner initiatives. She noted that
106 such a CIP would allow the District to remain flexible, able to adapt to the ebb and flow of
107 development.

108

109 Mr. Blackstad asked if District staff were developing “triggers,” or special conditions which, if
110 met, would prompt capital investment or program action. He noted that the severe flooding of
111 Meadowbrook Golf Course in 2014 “triggered” the ongoing floodplain modification project at
112 the site. Ms. Christopher stated that the District’s E-Grade program would identify stressors, and
113 an exacerbated stressor – such as severe flooding in a flood-prone area – would act as a trigger.

114

115 Mr. Blackstad asked how the District’s CIP would allow for investment in or involvement with
116 partner-driven projects, such as the Southwest Light Rail Transit project. Ms. Christopher stated
117 that the level of communication between the District and its partners would, in part, determine
118 how (and how early) the District could become involved in partner projects.

119

120 Ms. Acomb asked how the District communicates with its city partners. Ms. Christopher stated
121 that the District’s relationship with each city is different. She explained that the City of Edina,
122 for instance, keeps the District well-updated on upcoming road projects. Mr. Stewart noted that
123 the communication between the District and Edina often occurred between staff at each
124 organization. He added that the City Council was typically not involved.

125

126 Ms. Christopher stated that District staff meet with city staff on an annual basis. She explained
127 that while these meetings were useful, the District’s meeting was typically with only water
128 resources staff at the cities. Ms. Christopher noted that in order to stay connected with land use
129 planning, it may be wise for cities to invite their own land use planning staff to their meetings
130 with the District.

131

132 Ms. Christopher continued presenting the changes made to the Planning & Projects program,
133 describing the District’s partnership approach. She noted that establishing MOUs with partners
134 has helped both the partners and the District to enjoy increased transparency and trust. Ms.

135 Christopher noted that the District seeks to exchange CIPs with its partners, allowing for more
136 concrete examination of potential opportunities for aligning investments. She added that regular
137 coordination and communication, as just discussed, would help the District to remain a nimble
138 partner for cities and agencies.

139

140 **Cost Share**

141 Ms. Christopher explained that the grant approval process for the Cost Share program had
142 changed. She noted that in addition to refining scoring criteria, staff established biannual
143 deadlines for project applications and cross-departmental application review teams. The overall
144 aim, Ms. Christopher stated, was to make the grant process more competitive and better
145 prioritize projects.

146

147 Ms. McMillan asked for District staff to present an in-depth presentation of the Cost Share
148 program and application process at the next PAC.

149

150 **Permitting**

151 Ms. Christopher noted that the Permitting program, originally tasked with issuing permits and
152 monitoring field compliance, has recently undertaken an additional programmatic focus of
153 developing partnerships with applicants. Where possible, she explained, program staff will
154 identify projects with the opportunity for more beneficial natural resource outcomes than can be
155 achieved through following permit requirements.

156

157 Ms. Christopher stated that the Permitting program provides the following value-added services
158 for applicants who engage the District as a partner:

159

- 160 • Project-specific technical and planning assistance
- 161 • Streamlined regulation for applicants through District-held general permits with the
162 Minnesota DNR and the USACE
- 163 • Flexibility – offering regional treatment instead of site-by-site treatment

164

165 Ms. Christopher mentioned that the District was exploring the possibility of establishing a
166 wetland bank for mitigation credit as a service to applicants.

167

168 **Education**

169 Ms. Christopher listed the services of the District's Education program available for cities.

170

- 171 • MS4 education requirements support
- 172 • Fee-for-service events, trainings, and materials
- 173 • Concerned citizen response
- 174 • Coordination with Lake Associations and Master Water Stewards

175

176 Ms. Musich asked if the District could provide guidance for various environmentally-focused
177 citizen groups. Ms. Christopher stated that District staff were working with Jen Kader of the
178 Fresh Water Society to explore coordination efforts between the District and groups like Master

179 Water Stewards. Ms. Yearwood noted that the DNR has materials available to help guide citizen
180 group projects.

181
182 Ms. Christopher asked the Committee what the District could do to better coordinate with cities,
183 and vice versa.

184
185 Ms. Acomb suggested that the District present annually to city Councils. Ms. Musich noted that
186 policy makers are sometimes contacted directly by developers who looking to purchase land. If
187 Councils are made aware of the Districts plans and services, she continued, Council members
188 could coordinate with the District on potential projects.

189
190 Ms. Whalen asked if District staff could send out a questionnaire to city staff to gather the info
191 needed. Ms. Christopher stated that the District does send out a questionnaire to city staff, and
192 subsequently meets with the same staff members each year. She noted that ideally, the meetings
193 would cover city and District plans further than one year out.

194
195 Mr. Wisker underscored that the goal of the meeting was to roughly outline the mechanics of
196 coordination between the District and its partner organizations. He stated that the two main
197 questions to answer in beginning to draft such an outline were:

- 198
199 1. What can the District do to be more aware of city plans?
200 2. How can cities change policy or practice to better direct info to the District?

201
202 Mr. Wisker stressed the importance of involving the District early on in city projects to
203 maximize the value the District adds as a partner. Ms. McMillan spoke to the effectiveness of the
204 District as a partner in maximizing the value for the City of Orono.

205
206 Mr. Wisker stated that the District hoped to document the formal and informal best practices for
207 coordination. Mr. Erdahl noted that the list of best practices will be different from city to city.

208
209 Mr. Blackstad stated that, in addition to meetings and presentations with city staff and policy
210 makers, District staff should consider coordinating with developers in a similar manner.

211
212 Updates

213
214 Ms. Christopher presented the District's new Vision, Mission, Goals, and Guiding Principles to
215 the Committee. She stated that the new guiding documents were meant to bring focus and clarity
216 to the District's approach of partnership and integration.

217
218 Ms. Christopher stated that the District was developing a brochure summarizing the approach of
219 the District's 2017 Comprehensive Plan. She noted that the deliverable would be sent out to
220 District partners in April. Mr. Wisker stated that the brochure would illustrate the District's
221 approach with project examples and partner testimonials. He encouraged Committee members to
222 offer their experience of working with the District for use in the brochure. Mr. Wisker noted that

223 partner testimonials were critical in supporting the new approach of the District's 2017
224 Comprehensive Plan, which would ultimately be submitted to BWSR for approval.

225
226 Mr. Wisker stated that the American Planning Association (APA) recently published a water
227 policy guide which called for, among other things, the integration of water planning with land
228 use planning. He noted that the District's shift in direction matches this call action.

229
230 Ms. Christopher stated that the District would be sending out an information request to cities on
231 the following information:

- 232
233
 - City CIPs, land use projections, and goals/priorities
 - Progress towards 2007 load reduction goals
 - Relevant ordinances

234
235
236
237 Ms. Christopher noted that at the next PAC, the Committee would be discussing the role of
238 LGUs in protecting water resources through load reductions, best management practices, and
239 ordinances.

240
241 The Committee agreed to meet on the 26th of April.

242
243 The Committee meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

244
245 Respectfully submitted,

246
247 Matthew Cook
248 Planning Assistant