

1 **MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT**

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3 **MINUTES OF THE**  
4 **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

5  
6 **February 24, 2016**

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8 **COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

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10 Terry Jeffery, Jessica Vanderwerff Wilson, Liz Stout, Tom Dietrich, Bob Bean, Derek Asche,  
11 Erick Francis, Cara Geheren, Mike Kelly, Kristin Larson, Mike Wanous, Randy Anhorn, Steve  
12 Christopher, Jennie Skancke, Rachael Crabb, Chris Zadak, and Rich Brasch.

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14 **OTHERS PRESENT**

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16 James Wisker, Director of Planning & Projects; Becky Christopher, Lead Planner & Project  
17 Manager; Anna Brown, Planner & Project Manager; Katherine Sylvia, Permitting Program Lead;  
18 and Matthew Cook, Planning Assistant.

19  
20 **COMMITTEE MEETING**

21  
22 Ms. Christopher briefly summarized the topics discussed at the December TAC meeting. She  
23 reiterated that a central theme of the new Plan is the integration of land-use and water planning.  
24 She added that the District's two-track approach is an implementation model intended to  
25 improve integration and that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss how the approach will  
26 work.

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28 **Two-Track Approach & Partnership Framework**

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30 **Focus Track**

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32 Ms. Christopher provided a handout which detailed a draft list of factors the District will  
33 consider when selecting a focal geography:

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- 36 • Water resource issues and impairments
  - 37 • Public value of resources
  - 38 • Local partnerships and support
  - 39 • Known opportunities
  - 40 • System scale and complexity
  - 41 • Development / redevelopment pressure
  - 42 • Probability of success
  - 43 • Past investment by District or others

44 Ms. Christopher then explained that, in 2014, the Board identified the Six Mile Creek  
45 Subwatershed as a priority focal geography and reviewed the reasons why this area was  
46 selected..The Six Mile Creek subwatershed – where 58% of the land is covered by open water or

47 wetland – includes six impaired lakes. The receiving waterbody, Halsteds Bay, requires the  
48 largest load reduction of any waterbody in the District. Ms. Christopher also noted the significant  
49 development pressure in the area, which presents both a threat to the resources and an  
50 opportunity to make improvements as the land-use changes. Backed by municipal, regional, and  
51 lake organizations in the area, she concluded, the District saw Six Mile Creek subwatershed as a  
52 prime candidate for focused planning, given its high level of need, opportunity, and cooperation  
53 from stakeholders.

54  
55 Ms. Skancke asked how many focal geographies the District would engage in at a time, and how  
56 long each geography would remain a focus. Ms. Christopher stated that the District would select  
57 one to two focal areas at a time, staying in each area as long as is needed to organize projects and  
58 relationships – a time period, she noted, which would differ from geography to geography.

59  
60 Mr. Wisker stated that focal geographies are to be District-led ventures, in the sense that the  
61 District convenes stakeholders and helps to align overlapping investment and implementation. In  
62 contrast, he noted, responsive geographies are meant to be partner-led; it is up to the District's  
63 partners to identify potential areas for cooperation.

64  
65 Ms. Vanderwerff Wilson stated that anti-degradation or degradation prevention ought to be a  
66 criterion for selecting a focal geography. She asked if the criteria were ranked, and Ms.  
67 Christopher clarified that they were not. Mr. Wisker noted that the criteria were not meant for  
68 value-based scoring, but rather as policy-level guidelines for the District's Board. He explained  
69 that the focal geography criteria were best looked at as a whole for each subwatershed  
70 considered, rather than one criterion at a time. Ms. Vanderwerff Wilson stated that the list of  
71 criteria implies an order and ranking. She suggested that District staff include clarifying language  
72 in a narrative which would accompany the list of criteria.

73  
74 Ms. Brown described the planning process for Six Mile Creek subwatershed, the District's focal  
75 geography. The planning process will focus on integrating District work with local plans and  
76 priorities. Ms. Brown noted that success in this geography will require the District to seek  
77 partnerships with private developers and public agencies and ensure that plans accommodate  
78 community growth and development trajectories.

79  
80 Ms. Brown then identified the process's five main tasks:

- 81
- 82 1. Convene stakeholders
  - 83 2. Understand natural resource needs
  - 84 3. Understand the work of others
  - 85 4. Identify intersections between natural resource and local planning priorities
  - 86 5. Develop an investment plan
- 87

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

92

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

97

98 Ms. Brown stated that District staff and Managers were continuing to meet with policy makers in  
99 the Six Mile Creek area. Once this series of meetings was completed, she noted, the District  
100 would be hosting a kick-off meeting in April to begin the formal planning process for the  
101 subwatershed.

102

103 Mr. Bean suggested that much of the model for planning and implementing in a focal geography  
104 would be developed through executing the process for Six Mile Creek subwatershed. He stated  
105 that once the District had experienced its first formally-adopted focal geography process, the  
106 Committee would like to receive a report on lessons learned. Mr. Wisker agreed, noting that  
107 many of the lessons learned through this process will be incorporated into the District's 2017  
108 Plan.

109

110 Mr. Wanous asked how long the District intended to not only plan, but implement in a focal  
111 geography. Mr. Wisker clarified that in formally planning for a focal geography, the District  
112 does not intend to set up implementation efforts for the remainder of the 2017 Plan period in Six  
113 Mile alone. Rather, he explained, the purpose of planning for a focal geography was more geared  
114 towards developing a framework for how the District and the geography's stakeholders will  
115 coordinate on projects and programming for the foreseeable future. Mr. Wisker estimated that  
116 the District may spend three to five years of focused capital investment in a focal geography after  
117 the formal planning phase, after which the geography may be a responsive geography.

118

119 Ms. Vanderwerff Wilson asked how the District will know when a geography's status ought to  
120 transition from "focal" to "responsive." Ms. Christopher responded that the decision to move on  
121 to a new focal geography will be based on an evaluation of when the needs and opportunities in a  
122 new area begin to outweigh those in the current geography.

123

124 Mr. Zadak asked if the E-Grade program would be used to determine when the District shifts  
125 focus from one geography to another. Mr. Bean noted that scientific measures of water resource  
126 improvement may take decades to register. Mr. Wisker explained that E-Grade would be used to  
127 measure management strategy effectiveness in the long term, rather than determining when to  
128 begin or cease implementing management strategies. He clarified that the District would not  
129 keep a geography in the focal track until measurable water quality results began to appear. Mr.  
130 Wisker stated that the District's focus on a given geography hinges much more on project  
131 availability and partner cooperation.

132

133 Mr. Kelly noted that the District had to determine if it would transition a geography from focal to  
134 responsive based on an identified breakpoint in either the planning process or the implementation  
135 process. Mr. Wisker concurred, adding that the transition point ought to be cooperatively  
136 determined with the stakeholders of the respective geography.

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Responsive Track

Ms. Christopher stated that in creating a framework to support the responsive model, there are three areas to consider:

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

Ms. Christopher detailed some of the changes the District has made to its programs.

**Planning & Projects**

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

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

Ms. Christopher continued presenting the changes made to the Planning & Projects program, describing the District’s partnership approach. She noted that establishing MOUs with partners has helped both the partners and the District to enjoy increased transparency and trust. Ms. Christopher noted that the District seeks to exchange CIPs with its partners, allowing for more concrete examination of potential opportunities for aligning investments. She added that regular coordination and communication, as just discussed, would help the District to remain a nimble partner for cities and agencies.

**Cost Share**

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

Mr. Bean suggested that the District send a flyer with information about the Cost Share program to city administrators and policy makers. Mr. Wisker stated that District staff would be developing a “menu” of District services, including the Cost Share program, to be given to city staff and policy makers. He noted that the PAC suggested that the District give presentations annually to city councils.

182 **Permitting**

183 Ms. Christopher noted that the Permitting program, originally focused on issuing permits and  
184 monitoring field compliance, has recently undertaken an additional programmatic focus of  
185 developing partnerships with applicants. Where possible, she explained, program staff will  
186 identify projects with the opportunity for more beneficial natural resource outcomes than can be  
187 achieved through following permit requirements.

188  
189 Ms. Christopher stated that the Permitting program provides the following value-added services  
190 for applicants who engage the District as a partner:

- 191
- 192 • Project-specific technical and planning assistance
  - 193 • Streamlined regulation for applicants through District-held general permits with the  
194 Minnesota DNR and the USACE
  - 195 • Flexibility – offering regional treatment instead of site-by-site treatment
- 196

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

199  
200 Mr. Bean noted that he believed state and regional agencies were more open to regional wetland  
201 banking than on-site mitigation. Ms. Skancke stated that on-site mitigation was not off the table  
202 for the DNR and the USACE, noting that the agencies' preferences would differ from site to site.

203  
204 Mr. Brasch asked if the District was planning on re-writing its permitting rules. Mr. Wisker  
205 clarified that the District would not be overhauling rules or standards, but shifting more towards  
206 a service-focused Permitting program. He explained that most permits will undergo the same  
207 process as always, as most applications are for small-acreage, low-impact projects. Mr. Wisker  
208 stated that the permitting process would only change for larger-scale projects, where there was  
209 increased potential for significant water resource improvement.

210  
211 Mr. Bean stated that the best time for annual meetings with city staff to coordinate on large  
212 projects would be in late September or October, when cities would be gearing up for springtime  
213 projects.

214  
215 Mr. Wisker stated that the American Planning Association (APA) recently published a water  
216 policy guide which called for, among other things, the integration of water planning with land  
217 use planning. He noted that the District's shift in direction matches this call action.

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219 **Education**

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

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- 222 • MS4 education requirements support
  - 223 • Fee-for-service events, trainings, and materials
  - 224 • Concerned citizen response
  - 225 • Coordination with Lake Associations and Master Water Stewards
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227 Ms. Vanderwerff Wilson noted that Master Water Stewards had to spend 25 hours per year on  
228 approved activities to maintain their certification. She explained that perhaps the District could  
229 provide an opportunity for MWSs to accumulate creditable hours through serving as a liaison to  
230 private salt applicators on behalf of cities or the District.

231  
232 Ms. Christopher asked the Committee what the District could do to better coordinate with cities,  
233 and vice versa.

234  
235 Mr. Bean stated that cities would be beginning their respective Comprehensive Plan drafting  
236 processes, and that such a time would be ideal for the District to meet with city staff and policy  
237 makers to weave coordination with the District into city policy.

238  
239 Ms. Geheren stated that quarterly meetings between District and city representatives would be  
240 useful. Mr. Bean concurred, noting that he meets with Carver County Watershed Management  
241 Organization as much as six to eight times a year.

242  
243 Ms. Christopher asked the Committee whether the District should contact policy makers, land  
244 use planning staff, or water planning staff.

245  
246 Ms. Skancke stated that city and agency water planning staff ought to invite internal land use  
247 planning staff to meetings with the District. Mr. Kelly agreed, noting that having a city planner at  
248 the annual meetings between the District and cities would be useful.

249  
250 Mr. Bean suggested that District staff present to city councils annually on the District's approach  
251 and available services. He explained that explaining to policy makers the added value that  
252 partnership with the District brings is the key to establishing the District as an asset for cities,  
253 leading to more frequent cooperation.

254  
255 Ms. Stout asked how the permitting process would change for cities that have kept permitting  
256 authority. She noted that for more independent cities, District partnership may not be as enticing  
257 as maintaining that independence. Mr. Wisker acknowledged that such cities will likely prefer to  
258 operate within a responsive geography, where the city would initiate project coordination.

259  
260 Mr. Jeffery stated that the same presentation on the District's approach and services which may  
261 be given to city councils may be as useful when given to land use planners. Mr. Bean suggested  
262 that District staff tailor their presentation and audience for each city.

263  
264 Mr. Wisker asked the Committee when the best time to begin these presentations would be. The  
265 Committee generally suggested that the District begin presenting as soon as possible. Ms.  
266 Geheren noted that the timing of the presentations would be slightly different for each city.

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268 Updates

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270 Ms. Christopher presented the District's new Vision, Mission, Goals, and Guiding Principles to  
271 the Committee. She stated that the new guiding documents were meant to bring focus and clarity  
272 to the District's approach of partnership and integration.  
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274 Ms. Christopher stated that the District was developing a brochure summarizing the approach of  
275 the District's 2017 Comprehensive Plan. She noted that the deliverable would be sent out to  
276 District partners in April.  
277

278 Ms. Christopher stated that the District would be sending out an information request to cities on  
279 the following information:  
280

- 281 • City CIPs, land use projections, and goals/priorities
- 282 • Progress towards 2007 load reduction goals
- 283 • Relevant ordinances  
284

285 Ms. Christopher noted that at the next PAC, the Committee would be discussing the role of  
286 LGUs in protecting water resources through load reductions, best management practices, and  
287 ordinances.  
288

289 The Committee agreed to meet on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April.  
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291 The Committee meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.  
292

293 Respectfully submitted,  
294

295 Matthew Cook  
296 Planning Assistant