



Wednesday, March 15, 2023

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

MCWD Office, Board Room

www.minnehahacreek.org

Board of Managers:

Sherry White, President; William Olson, Vice President; Jessica Loftus, Treasurer;
Eugene Maxwell, Secretary; Richard Miller, Manager; Arun Hejmadi, Manager; Steve Sando, Manager

Board Liaison: Manager Olson

Citizens Advisory Committee Members Present:

Emily Balogh, Marcy Bean, Lisa Fowler, Robert Glisky, Laurie Goldsmith, John Iverson, Suzanne Jiwani, Drew McGovern, Rich Nyquist, David Oltmans, Cassy Ordway, Marc Rosenberg, Denise Tennen

Citizens Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Dan Flo

MCWD Staff Present:

Samantha Maul, Kate Moran, Becky Christopher

6:30 pm

1. **Committee Meeting Call to Order and Roll Call**
Chair Nyquist called the meeting to order.
2. **Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**
Iverson, Goldsmith – All approved.
2.1 March 15, 2023 agenda
3. **Approval of Minutes (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**
Iverson, Goldsmith – All approved.
3.1 January 18, 2023 minutes
4. **Action Items**
No action items.

7:00pm

5. **Discussion Items**
5.1 Land & Water Partnership Initiative – **Christopher and Moran**

MCWD Policy Planning Coordinator, Kate Moran, introduced the Land & Water Partnership Initiative and outlined the agenda for the meeting. Moran began by providing an overview of MCWD's Balanced Urban Ecology policy, which focuses the District's priorities on partnering to integrate land and water planning. Balanced Urban Ecology became the guiding philosophy for MCWD in its 2017 watershed management plan and continues to govern the District's work. The 2017 plan focused on two clear areas for integrated planning: adopting the Land & Water Partnership (LWP) program to respond to opportunities and aligning the

permitting program to serve as an on-ramp for partnership. These two areas have been combined to create the Land & Water Partnership Initiative.

The CAC previously engaged with this work in 2019 by helping staff shape policy direction, vet the program framework, and refine the program's design. In 2021, the Board of Managers initiated the stakeholder engagement process, which included a kickoff mailing and the formation of a technical advisory committee (TAC). The TAC participates in monthly meetings to advise on elements of the Land & Water Partnership Initiative, including the Land & Water Partnership Program and changes to MCWD's permitting program.

The LWP program seeks to promote early coordination with potential partners, leverage opportunities to improve water resources and provide benefits to the watershed. The program recognizes that land use development creates opportunities for impactful change and provides a process for catalyzing these opportunities into projects that deliver significant, regional water resource benefits.

Moran explained the scope and structure of the program. Capital projects with water resource benefits are eligible for the LWP program. Ideal applicants include state, regional, or local agencies, large-scale developers, and landowners; applicants must have the capacity to lead project implementation. Homeowners Associations or Lake Associations must have support from a public partner to take part in the program. MCWD integrates LWP program projects into its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). MCWD may provide assistance for projects throughout initial concept, feasibility, and implementation phases. MCWD's funding support will be determined using the evaluation criteria, the annual budget, and comparing applications against other District or partner-led projects. The LWP evaluation criteria includes scoring considerations for water resource priority, project benefits, effectiveness, and partner capacity & coordination. The criteria and scoring do not limit opportunities to a specific threshold score but aim to provide flexibility so staff and the Board of Managers can exercise creativity. The program submittals have two major milestones, the first one is at project concept and the second is during feasibility of the year the applicant is seeking funding for.

TAC members have shaped and refined the program's structure and process. At the March 16th meeting of the TAC, MCWD is vetting the public partner guidance document with the TAC. This document provides guidance of the program and application process.

CAC members asked for more context on when the program started and when it's set to be implemented and asked for an example of a potential project. Becky Christopher, MCWD Policy Planning Manager, and Manager Olson shared some examples of the kinds of regional impact that the District is looking to support. MCWD is currently operating the pilot phase of the program and has ordered one project to reduce flooding and improve water quality with the City of Plymouth.

Another CAC member asked about the project milestones and the potential partners the program seeks. Moran explained that the program milestones seek to promote behavioral changes like coordinating in early phases of the project to identify where MCWD can support. MCWD is interested in working with large landowners, developers, public agencies, and others that have potential to generate regional impacts.

Christopher transitioned to the Permitting Program Alignment, which is another part of the Land & Water Partnership Initiative. MCWD recognizes that the permitting program is one of the critical ways that the District engages with core audiences for capital project opportunities. CAC members were engaged in early conversations to realign the permitting program. To improve the permitting program and support partnership, MCWD is seeking to align its regulatory scope and standards with state agencies, simplify and streamline rule language and processes, increase efficiency to align staff time with natural resource risk and project opportunity, train staff to act like project planners, develop a compliance framework, and formalize how MCWD partners with other municipalities. These improvements will position MCWD as a partner, rather than purely a regulator.

CAC members asked about the process for implementing permitting program improvements and the composition of the TAC. Christopher explained that these improvements are at various phases but should be implemented within the next year or so. The rule revision process is ongoing, and is focused on streamlining the rules, not changing standards. Christopher shared that TAC members come from public agencies such as cities, counties, and park agencies. MCWD has considered instituting a standing TAC, and currently plans to reconvene the TAC for climate planning in the near future.

Christopher then explained some of the input MCWD has received from the TAC so far. The TAC has provided input on the value of partnerships built with strong relationships, trust, flexibility, and frequent coordination. The TAC has indicated comfort with the LWP program and recommended more clarification on the program's eligibility and evaluation criteria. The TAC has also provided feedback on changes to the permitting program, revisions to the permitting rules, and coordination across communities. Their suggestions for coordination have included annual meetings, area plans, engagement of planning commissions, and credit/banking systems. MCWD has three meetings left in the TAC process, before the launch of the LWP program. To close the TAC process, and kickoff the LWP program, MCWD is interested in hosting an event or gathering open to key stakeholders. CAC members affirmed that the pre-planning process is the critical time to engage partners and that planning commissions could be a useful channel because development projects must pass through them before they advance.

CAC members were then asked to consider how the District can measure the success of the Land & Water Partnership Initiative. MCWD staff suggested that outcomes could be measured as inputs or outputs. CAC members provided ideas for measuring success within the LWP program and the permitting program. CAC members suggested that MCWD consider metrics like permit approval/rejection rates, requests for partnership, geographic diversity of projects, post-program surveys, and pre-application meetings, as well as traditional water quality metrics such as cost per reduction in phosphorous. Christopher and Moran thanked the CAC for their input and noted they will be seeking similar feedback from the TAC at future meetings.

8:10pm

6. Informational Items + Updates

6.1 CAC Member Updates

- Maul shared that MCWD has set a date for a CAC field trip for April 28, 2023. The field trip event will be held at Cottageville Park in Hopkins, and will be open to CAC members and alums, MCWD staff members, and the Board of

Managers. This will provide all attendees an opportunity to learn more about a key project site along the Minnehaha Creek Greenway and get to know the people behind MCWD's work.

Amendment: The field trip scheduled for April 28th was rescheduled for May 12th due to rain.

6.2 Board Liaison Updates

- Manager Olson explained that the Board of Managers has started working to create a 5-Year Strategic Action Plan. The Board has engaged in several conversations identifying key strategic priorities and is beginning to develop outcomes to clarify and guide MCWD's strategic initiatives over the next five years.
- Manager Olson also shared that the Board of Managers recently authorized MCWD to conduct a classification and compensation study, which MCWD policy recommends every five years. This process will help ensure that MCWD is meeting expectations in the labor market so MCWD can recruit and retain a strong team to implement its work.

6.3 Staff Updates

- Maul shared that MCWD is making progress on several impactful capital projects. 325 Blake Road is in the final stages of design, and MCWD will start construction of the project soon. The Cedar to Greenway Trail Connection and East Auburn Wetland Restoration projects are in the later stages of feasibility, suggesting that both projects will be moving toward design in the coming months.
- Maul shared that the MCWD permitting program will provide a 2022 Permitting Report at the next Board meeting. This report will include some key metrics the program is now tracking with the online permitting portal and an update on recent and recommended changes to the permitting program.
- Maul noted that MCWD is in the process of reconstructing the Minnehaha Creek Preserve boardwalk, due to premature deterioration of the lumber. The Boardwalk construction will be complete this Spring, at which point it will reopen to the public.
- Maul explained that MCWD has recently completed the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Habitat Restoration project. This project, funded by a grant from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, was the largest of its kind. MCWD will now evaluate the program to determine whether similar strategies should be applied in other parts of the watershed.
- Maul shared an update on Spring water levels. While MCWD has received over 80 inches of snow, this water will likely only replenish Lake Minnetonka and other reservoirs, which were at a severe deficit due to recent drought.
- Maul updated the CAC on the progress of the new website build. MCWD is nearing the final phases of content development and will be providing a site tour to the Board of Managers later in March. MCWD anticipates Beta testing in the coming months.

8:30pm

7. **Adjournment**

Iverson, Rosenberg – All approved.

Upcoming Meeting

Wednesday, May 17, 2023 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting (Manager Maxwell, Board Liaison)