

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF  
THE MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT  
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Wednesday, August 18, 2021**

**Members Present**

Balogh, Bushnell, Flo, Girard, McGovern, Rosenberg, Salditt

**Managers Present**

Manager Loftus

**Others Present**

MCWD Staff: Michael Hayman

**Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

Meeting chaired by Salditt and called to order at 6:34 p.m.

Bushnell motioned to approve the agenda, Girard seconded, motion approved.

Salditt noted the new CAC bylaws had been approved by the District Board of Managers at its last regular board meeting. He noted the changes requested by the CAC had been included and approved. Also noted a change in the minutes to reflect they were from the July meeting rather than May meeting. Motion made by Girard with second by Bushnell to approve as noted.

**Discussion Item:**

**325 Blake Road Regional Stormwater and Greenway Effort – Hayman**

Hayman gave a brief introduction of himself and his work for the past 10 years with the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (District). He indicated Gabe Sherman, District Planner and Project Manager, is leading the design effort for this project but was unable to attend the meeting.

Hayman presented a PowerPoint that would include:

- Project background
- Preliminary conceptual design feedback
- Conceptual design to final design
  - Next steps
  - Strategy
  - Risk management

Hayman noted that for nearly 10 years the MCWD has been focusing on this section of the creek to restore, mitigate, reconnect and repair the greenway corridor. This project will provide regional stormwater treatment for approximately 270 acres and serve as the final link in the Minnehaha Greenway, providing a unique natural amenity in direct connection with the SWLRT corridor. In 2013 the

District Board of Managers approved the stormwater management plan. It was explained how the site would be managed and how it was framed to fit within the multi-year SWLRT construction project, including the diversion structures on Powell Road (approved by MPCA and completed in 2015) and Lake Street (completed in 2019).

In 2018 the District began the demolition of the cold storage warehouse on the site. Hayman pointed out the recycling that took place with this tear down, including concrete and bituminous materials. At the same time as demolition, the District began working with Kraus-Anderson as the developer for the site, which ultimately ended with the partners parting ways after a shared vision and value could not be met.

In 2019/2020, with availability of Research & Monitoring's (R/M) real-time stormwater data, the District was able to develop a new path forward, including an increased technical understanding for the site and various redevelopment options. An internal charrette was held with concepts grounded in improved engineering and analytics. Salditt asked for charrette overview for anyone on the committee who might be unfamiliar. Hayman explained it's a creative brainstorming session and envisioning process with engineers, designers, planners and developers.

In Sept 2020 the District executed a cooperative agreement with City of Hopkins. The Board also developed a liaison structure so Managers would remain involved throughout the development and design processes.

In 2021, listening sessions and public meetings were held; surveys were collected from policymakers and community partners. In June 2021 Hopkins/MCWD hosted a joint meeting for the developer selection. Hopkins voiced its preferred developer as Alatus and asked the Board of Managers to back the City in this selection. Alatus was selected as the master developer and began integration into the partnership, including participation in open houses and a two-day design charrette. The charrette effort served to integrate Alatus' design plans with the Greenway vision, but also served as an opportunity to explore how the site could look if development did not occur, including how water could still be moved through the site, how the community would access the site and how and where you would learn about the creek. Amenities, access and stormwater features were refined.

Preliminary construction estimates for regional stormwater and greenway improvements under the fully integrated option (using 35% contingency) are projected as \$2.7 million for stormwater facilities and \$3.1 million for betterments.

Next steps include 30% schematic design of a single direction making the developer/no developer process layered and as seamless as possible. This effort will also include a joint design process and joint community engagement effort. Expect 30% design at the end of August and Phase II design scope in September.

Hayman opened the discussion for questions.

Flo asked about any contamination that might need remediation. Hayman noted there is a minor petroleum plume that migrated from a historic offsite spill and that the contaminated soil is being managed in partnership with Hennepin County.

Girard asked about timeline. Hayman indicated working through early 2022 to have biddable project.

Salditt asked about hydrology – reservoir ponds and what is the understanding of the District and developer about what the constraints would be for moving water; and in time of drought or flooding. Hayman explained volumes are relatively fixed based on the size of diversion pipes so the District will design to capitalize on that; the continuous flow system moves significant amounts through, and we can maximize by holding back for 48-72 hours to prolong the state of water flowing downstream.

McGovern asked about having a well to keep the creek flowing. Hayman noted that the District has taken a stance against groundwater wells for keeping stormwater features wet during dry conditions. The site should be aesthetically pleasing whether in drought or wet conditions.

Balogh asked about groundwater interactions. Hayman explained the dynamic groundwater interaction on the site; the fluctuations of ground water on the site of up to 10 feet; MCWD is monitoring closely for contamination to ensure the system can interact with groundwater.

Balogh also asked about the open house process since she wasn't aware of it having taken place. Hayman explained the direct mailers, posters, publications, etc. Hayman will ensure the CAC members are included in all communications going forward.

Hayman moved the conversation to partnership risks and opportunities. He explained how during the developer process risk/reward was discussed for each developer finalist. Alatus had the biggest financial risk due to the total development cost and financial gap, but at the same time has the highest reward given the innovative vision. The Board and City Council agreed that the public subsidy component risk would be carried by the city; that the purchase price would stand firm at \$11.25 million and could not be used to offset the financial gap; and the partners agreed to work together, including continued involvement from the Joint Liaison Group, to solve for long term operations and maintenance issues.

Hayman described these risks in more detail and asked if the CAC could think of others given their diverse backgrounds. Rosenberg stated Hopkins is in good shape financially.

Hayman stated the city has recognized political risks since two city council seats and the Hopkins Mayoral seat are up for reelection in 2021 and may turn over.

Girard asked about grants and what happens if not received. Hayman stated the project will not be held up and can't affect purchase price. Purchase Agreement is two-phase acquisition with District holding remaining parcels for Phase II.

Salditt asked if a surety bond or other financial incentive would be in place with developer. Hayman stated the District is in discussions with the developer at this time. Hayman mentioned that when Alatus was chosen, Wellington was also selected as runner up. This will help avoid issues if anything happens with the Alatus agreement.

Hayman will continue to engage with CAC on next steps.

## **Updates**

### **Staff Report**

Hayman spoke on the drought and it's continued affects on the creek and lake levels.

**CAC Member Update**

Salditt stated that at last meeting in July the committee looked at final draft of new CAC by-laws; they have since been approved by Board of Managers and Salditt will work with Wisker to distribute copies to the committee.

**Manager Update**

Loftus spoke about 325 Blake Road, the major focus it has been for the Managers these past few years and how excited the Managers are to see where and how that goes.

Loftus also mentioned the Preserve boardwalk failure and that the District has formally filed complaints against those involved and is going to mediation at the end of this month.

Noted the 2022 budget is being prepared and for 5<sup>th</sup> year in a row will submit with a flat levy.

Mentioned that the Board had gone back to in-person meetings but last meeting went back to virtual due to increased positivity numbers in COVID cases.

Committee did not have any comments for Loftus to bring back to the Managers.

Salditt asked for any motion to adjourn. Girard made motion, seconded by Flo.

Meeting adjourned 8:15 pm