

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF
THE MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, July 14th, 2021**

Members Present

Balogh, Bushnell, Flo, Girard, McGovern, Nyquist, Ordway, Salditt, Rechelbacher, Rosenberg

Managers Present

Manager Sando

Others Present

MCWD Staff: James Wisker, Kim LaBo

Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Twelfth virtual meeting of the 2021 Citizen Advisory Committee.
Meeting chaired by Salditt and called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Rechelbacher motioned to approve the agenda, Flo seconded, motion approved.

Girard motioned to approve the July 14th, CAC meeting minutes, seconded by Rechelbacher, minutes approved.

Approval of 2021 CAC Bylaws

LaBo reported the CAC bylaws were last updated in 2018 and were in need of additional updates to conform to the CAC assessment recommendations approved by the Board on June 10th, 2021. Other edits to the bylaws were made to provide additional clarification, streamline language, and remove redundancies. LaBo has been collaborating with the CAC Executive Committee on the bylaws and included an updated version in the CAC packet.

In advance of the July 14th CAC meeting, Oltmans submitted several additional edits to the bylaws via email. Salditt reviewed the suggested language changes with the committee. Wisker asked for legal counsel to provide advice on whether the CAC membership has authority to remove members or if that authority lies solely with the Board.

Salditt summarized the recommended amendments to the bylaws:

- Remove the qualifier “active” from Article III, Section 5 and Article IV, Section 2
- Strike language on committee member removal by the chair for excessive absences from Article IV, section 6
- Strike “other” from the sentence “A member may be removed for any other reason...”
- Pending legal counsel review, either keep existing language on committee member removal by 2/3 vote of the CAC or add language providing for the committee to recommend removal.

Bushnell motioned to approve the bylaws with the suggested amendments, Rosenberg seconded, motioned approved.

LaBo informed the committee the Board will vote on the adoption of the bylaws at their July 22nd, 2021 meeting.

Draft 2022 Budget Briefing: Wisker

Purpose: To provide a summary of the draft 2022 budget and highlight key points of information across the major areas of the budget and workplan.

Background:

Through the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District's strategic planning, culminating in 2017, the MCWD Board of Managers implemented a series of fiscal measures to carefully manage the District's levy, while maintaining high quality mission aligned output and service. Those actions included:

- Aligning program budgets with organizational priorities
- Making strategic reductions and implementing operational efficiencies
- Right-sizing, aligning and investing in human resources
- Strengthening partnerships for capital project financing
- Securing increasing levels of outside funding
- Restructuring existing capital project debt
- Reallocating funds from initiatives delivered under budget to capital projects

That work continues to position MCWD well for fiscal year 2022.

MCWD Committee Discussions to Date:

- [April 22, 2021 Policy and Planning Committee](#)
 - Preliminary 2022 budget projection, and review of programs and operations
- [May 27, 2021 Policy and Planning Committee](#)
 - Detailed review of 2022 budget, including:
 - Programs, Operations and Personnel
 - Capital Improvement Program
 - Capital Finance and Debt Service
- [June 10, 2021 Operations and Programs Committee](#)
 - Reviewed areas of 2022 budget refinement
 - Reviewed strategic alignment of 2022 budget
- [July 8, 2021 Operations and Programs Committee](#)
 - Reviewed areas of 2022 budget refinement
 - Reviewed the 2022 workplan

2022 Budget-Levy Projection – Overview:

Wisker reviewed the current projections for 2022, which show a balanced budget of \$15,027,532. Relative to 2021, this preliminary 2022 projection represents a 2% or \$311,111 increase in budgeted expenditures.

The proposed 2022 budget is supported with a flat (0% change) levy of \$9,675,993. This is accomplished by drawing on the funds levied in past years for capital projects, the reallocation of funds from programs either deprioritized or delivered under budget, and \$603,006 in external grant funds.

2022 Budget Alignment – Overview:

Wisker reported that in 2022 and beyond MCWD programs will increasingly align to support high impact capital project planning.

High Impact Capital Improvements

In 2022 the District will continue to develop projects within the District's focal geography pipeline, as well as refining the responsive model and permitting program as pathways to project implementation on a broader watershed wide basis. Projects in queue include work within the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, Minneapolis and the Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay subwatershed.

Data Analytics to Improve Planning, Decision Making and Communications

The ongoing buildout of the District's data-analytic capabilities will be carried forward in 2022. Over the last several years investments have been made to acquire technology solutions to help the MCWD gather, store, retrieve and integrate watershed data with other data sets for the built environment – to better inform planning, decision making and communication with partners and the public. These technology solutions will continue to be integrated in 2022, ultimately pushing data to a rebuilt website for broader public consumption.

Climate Action Planning

As part of its improved data management systems, the District continues to make progress building out its real time sensor network (RESNET) with regional, state and federal partners, to enhance a granular understanding of how watershed hydrology is evolving in the face of climate change. This data set is being leveraged in 2021 to develop machine learning models which will improve the MCWD's ability to use short term weather forecasts to predict and manage water level responses in partnership with emergency managers.

To complement short-term predictive capabilities, the District has obtained support from multiple stakeholders to develop a 2D watershed model which will create the ability to generate more accurate long-term predictions of hydrologic scenarios. This deeper understanding of system changes over time will position the District as a value added partner in planning and implementing infrastructure adaptations that create resilience in the built and natural environments in response to climate driven shifts in precipitation.

2022 Budget Breakdown:

Wisker stepped through a breakdown of the major components of the District's 2022 budget.

The areas covered include:

- 2022 Budget-Revenue
- Programs and Operations

- Capital Improvement Projects
- Capital Finance

Feedback from CAC:

Several members of the CAC provided the below feedback on the budget communications document:

- It could be condensed more and focus more on highlights.
- Some of the phrases, such as high impact capital projects, are not clear and will not be generally understood by the public.
- There could also be more of a storyline which tells the reader what the District is doing and why.
- There is a lot of good content but it is lacking unifying themes and it needs three to four take-aways.

Wisker responded he agrees with the feedback and the District is working with communications consultants at Stantec to draft the final budget communication document. The current budget document is a working draft and it will be further revised before it is shared publicly in September.

Next Steps:

A final review of the budget by the MCWD Operations and Programs Committee (OPC) will occur at the August 12, 2021 OPC meeting. The committee review will be followed by a public hearing scheduled for August 26, 2021, before the Board of Managers considers adoption of the budget on September 9, 2021.

Updates:

CAC Member Updates:

Rosenberg referenced a Star Tribune news article on St. Paul and Minneapolis expanding their tree canopies as a strategy to adapt to climate change and he will share it with the group

Manager Update: Sando is very impressed with the group and looks forward to working with them in the future.

Staff Report:

LaBo provided a community engagement update for the 325 Blake Road Restoration and Redevelopment project. On July 7th an in person public event was held at Cottageville Park in Hopkins to understand the community's preferences on design options for the public green space at the site. Sixty-five people provided their ideas at the event. Alatus, the developer recently selected to redevelop a portion of the site into a transit-oriented development, shared a preliminary concept plan with the community.

Wisker reported 60% of Minnesota is in a moderate drought and 40% is in severe drought. The Twin Cities is 4 inches below average and the drought severity will increase. Gray's Bay Dam is now closed and the only water entering Minnehaha Creek will be stormwater. Every stream in the upper watershed is dry. District staff will continue monitoring water levels.

Girard motioned to adjourn the meeting, Rechelbacher seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Next Meeting is Wednesday, September 14th, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Board of Managers Liaison: Manager Olson