



[DRAFT]
**CITIZEN ADVISORY
COMMITTEE OPERATIONAL
RECOMMENDATIONS**
JUNE 10, 2021



**MINNEHAHA CREEK
WATERSHED DISTRICT**



Summary

In the past several years, MCWD has systematically aligned each of its program areas around its Balanced Urban Ecology approach, to ensure organization resources are aligned to serve its mission.

The final program area to undergo this strategic assessment was the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Throughout 2020 and 2021, MCWD's Board, Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), and staff underwent an intensive process to examine the role of the CAC, in order to ensure the committee provides maximum value to MCWD's work and a worthwhile experience for members.

The assessment followed a similar approach to MCWD's realignment of its other program areas:

- Defining the problem or opportunity
- Gathering data and drawing insights
- Defining the core value proposition of the program relative to the organization
- Defining operational considerations based on value proposition
- Final report and recommendations

The following report summarizes what this work revealed about the core value proposition of the committee, and presents recommendations for aligning the operation of the committee to achieve its core value. It includes the following:

- Core Value Proposition
- Recommendations summary
- Recommendations
 - Scope of work
 - Meeting frequency and schedule
 - Content planning
 - Prep materials
 - Information flow between CAC and MCWD Board of Managers
 - Membership and recruitment
- Next steps
- Appendix A: Forecasted meeting content through 2022
- Appendix B: Summary of assessment process

Core Value Proposition

The discovery and insights work brought into focus the core value proposition of a resident advisory board, and how that value is distinct and complementary to the work of staff, board, technical, or expert advisors. At its core the CAC's value over time is rooted in providing fresh and diverse perspectives that improve how the organization communicates, and thinks, about its key work. This value is embedded in the name of the committee itself:

Citizen: Technical or expert advisory panels provide value by leveraging their shared expertise to go deep on a particular technical topic. In contrast, it is the *lack* of a particular overlapping expertise among members of a resident advisory committee that provides a source of value. This span of backgrounds provides a broader field of vision than many topic-specific advisory groups, which simulates other external audiences the District often must communicate with, such as policymakers and community members. A citizen advisory board has three key points of distinction from expert advisors:

1. *Professional background diversity:* While many technical and expert advisory groups bring together people of similar professional background, the CAC is made up of people

with highly varied professional backgrounds. This means members can draw on broad areas of knowledge and notice novel connections between MCWD's work and similar situations in other professions.

2. *Geographic diversity:* While many resident advisory groups are formed around a particular geographic similarity, advice from the CAC is flavored by the fact that the CAC draws members from all corners of the watershed's varied geography.
3. *Taxpayer perspective:* Unlike technical or expert advisory groups, the CAC is made up exclusively of residents of MCWD, who can provide advice through the lens of an engaged tax-paying resident.

Advisory: An advisor is someone who uses their unique background and skills to help someone think about their work in a new way, providing non-binding advice on how to improve their ideas and plans. Advisors are distinct from:

1. Deciders, who make binding policy decisions, like the Board of Managers. Instead advisors provide perspective that allows decision making bodies to be more effective.
2. Doers, who execute the work of the organization, such as staff, contractors, or volunteers. Advisors inform the work, but do not carry it out.
3. Ambassadors, who carry forward messages on behalf of the District. Advisors provide an inward flow of information, leveraging their networks and local knowledge to inform their advisory work.

Committee: A committee is a group of people appointed for a specific function, which operates differently than an individual advisor. Committees provide a venue for multiple points of view to learn from each other, strengthen each other's ideas, and become greater than the sum of their parts. Over time, members of a committee build relationships and mutual understanding that allow them to continually improve as an advisory body. Additionally, presenting work to a group of people, rather than an individual, challenges staff to consider multiple perspectives when thinking about and communicating their work. An effective standing committee is characterized by:

1. Recruitment and appointment of members who are suited to the role
2. A meeting schedule that ensures the committee is able to provide advice when it is of most value
3. A leadership structure that supports effective functioning of the committee

Within MCWD's culture of idea meritocracy, the CAC has a critical role to play in leveraging its varied perspectives to help examine, refine, and build upon the ideas that underpin MCWD's work. This represents the core value proposition of the CAC.

Recommendations

<i>Summary</i>	Current	Proposed
Scope of work	Deep, sustained engagement with a single topic over many meetings	Vetting, stress testing, and brainstorming on the strategy and communication associated with a variety of key initiatives
Schedule		
Meeting frequency	Monthly	Bi-monthly, with option to call additional meetings as needed
Meeting date	First or third Wednesday of the month, as needed	Third Wednesday of the month, unless conflicting with holiday or MCWD event
Meeting time	6:30 to 8:30 p.m.	Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daytime: 11 to 1 p.m. • End of day: 4 to 6 p.m. • Evening: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Content planning	Determined quarterly	Determined every six months
Prep Materials	Memo ahead of meeting	No change
Information flow between Board and CAC		
Executive Team	16 meetings: Monthly ahead of each CAC meeting, plus quarterly with MCWD leadership (16 meetings)	6 meetings: Bi-monthly ahead of each scheduled CAC meeting, including twice with MCWD President and Administrator
Board presence at CAC	Individual board members assigned as formal liaisons	No change
Membership and Recruitment		
Term length	1 year	2 years, with staggered terms
Term limit	None	None
Re-appointment for existing members	By custom, interested members usually re-appointed automatically	Existing members encouraged to re-apply, but slots will be filled competitively
Committee size	Varies	Up to 14 members
Appointments	Decided by Board of Managers, coordinated by Engagement Planner	No change
Recruitment promotion	Limited announcement through MCWD channels, media, partners	Widespread announcement to media outlets, partners and community groups
Appointment criteria	Undefined	Ensuring a variety of geographic, demographic, and professional backgrounds

Scope of work

Each CAC meeting will be structured around a particular MCWD key initiative at a snapshot in time. For instance, a key initiative may be related to a:

- capital project (e.g., design planning for the Six Mile Marsh Prairie trail system),
- planning initiative (e.g., development of the Long Lake Creek Implementation Roadmap),
- organizational project (e.g., developing a machine learning algorithm for optimizing the Gray's Bay dam), or
- engagement activity (e.g., community outreach related to 325 Blake Road Restoration and Redevelopment).

MCWD staff will present an overview of the initiative and facilitate a discussion that allows CAC members to provide advice on both the strategy of the initiative, and how it is being communicated.

Focusing each meeting on a deep dive into a single topic ensures that:

- Staff leading key initiatives are challenged to tell the "full story" of the project to a group of people who aren't immediately familiar with it; something they will need to do frequently during the lifespan of the project
- CAC members can bring their unique perspectives to bear on a variety of MCWD's most important initiatives
- Committee members will stay informed about MCWD's key work by receiving comprehensive briefings on the highest-priority initiatives
- The benefit of the CAC's guidance will be spread across several key initiatives throughout the year

Examples: Advisory support from the committee may take the form of statements such as:

- *Reflecting back:* "Based on your presentation, here is how I would describe the strategy behind this project. ... Is that correct?"
- *Relating to professional experience:* "This reminds me of something similar I worked on at a previous job. What I found worked well in that situation was..."
- *On-the-ground observation:* "I saw a conversation on my Nextdoor app about this project. You should be aware that a few people were wondering..."
- *Flagging clarity:* "The way you described the project was clear for the most part, and made me feel excited. One part that I didn't understand was..."
- *Creative suggestion:* "One way you might emphasize the key point is by comparing it to..."

Meeting frequency and schedule

The committee's advice is most valuable when it is tied to an appropriate milestone - and in MCWD's dynamic work environment, these milestones are often moving target. At the same time, CAC members, Board liaisons, and staff need to be able to plan around scheduled meetings.

In addition, attracting and retaining talented CAC members requires being judicious about the time commitment required to serve on the committee.

Six scheduled meetings: The committee will meet every-other-month: January, March, May, July, September, and November.

Unscheduled meetings: Because the CAC's advice may be needed at time-sensitive milestones that don't align with the set calendar, staff may request additional meetings in order to meet time-sensitive milestones. These meetings are optional and committee members will be provided at least a week's notice when possible.

Meeting day: By default, meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of the month, in between the two monthly meetings of the Board of Managers – allowing input from the CAC to be relayed at the month's following meeting. The date may be adjusted to accommodate holidays or District events.

Content Planning

Effective content planning will ensure the CAC is providing counsel on the most important MCWD initiatives, that staff members have sufficient notice to prepare their material, and that members begin each year with a sense of what they will be engaged in.

Annual content planning: Twice per year, the MCWD Engagement Planner will work with the MCWD Program Manager team to forecast the schedule of topics for the coming six months (three scheduled meetings), in coordination with the CAC Executive Team.

Recurring topics: Each year, the CAC's January meeting will focus on the year ahead for MCWD and the CAC; and the July meeting will focus on MCWD's budget and work plan. The MCWD Administrator will lead these discussions.

Key initiative topics: Each of the remaining four meetings -- and any additionally-scheduled meetings -- will focus on a key MCWD initiative, led by the MCWD staff member(s) in charge of the initiative.

Changes to content plan: Recognizing the need for flexibility, it will be a mutual expectation that the schedule of topics may have to shift in response to changes in work schedule. In those instances, the MCWD staff member who was scheduled to present to the CAC will work with the Engagement Planner to adjust the topic schedule.

Prep Materials

District staff will continue to provide preparatory materials before each CAC meeting to ensure members have sufficient information on the topic to be discussed at the upcoming meeting.

Meeting materials: Staff will continue to prepare and distribute a brief memo, agenda, and previous meeting's minutes to the committee ahead of each meeting. The staff member who is presenting to the CAC will prepare the memo, with review from the Engagement Planner. The Engagement Planner will remain in charge of circulating the meeting packet.

Information flow between CAC and MCWD Board of Managers

Maintaining a steady two-way flow of information between the CAC and Board of Managers will ensure the value of the CAC's counsel is fully realized, and that committee members can remain apprised of key MCWD business.

Executive Team meetings: The Executive Team will continue to meet with MCWD staff ahead of each scheduled CAC meeting in order to ensure a steady flow of information between MCWD and staff. At the January and July Executive Team meetings, the MCWD Board President and Administrator will attend to review the upcoming content schedule. At the remaining scheduled meetings, the Engagement Planner and staff member who is leading the presentation will meet with the Executive Team to discuss the content and facilitation plan for the meeting.

Board presence at CAC: A member of the MCWD Board of Managers will continue to attend each scheduled CAC meeting as a liaison. Their primary role will be to observe and learn from the discussion, though they may be occasionally asked to provide their perspective.

Rotation of Board liaisons: At the beginning of each year, one Board member will be assigned to each of the six scheduled CAC meetings. Because there are seven Board members and six scheduled meetings, the Board President will not be assigned as a liaison. Instead, the Board President will remain in sync with the CAC via the Executive Team meetings held twice per year.

Board Agenda Packets: CAC members wishing to maintain a more detailed understanding of MCWD's work are encouraged to read the detailed agenda packets distributed ahead of each Board of Managers meeting. Committee members will continue to receive the Board packets via e-mail.

Membership and Recruitment

The committee structure must provide a venue for a variety of viewpoints to complement, enhance, and challenge each other, drawing on the membership's variety of perspectives – geographic, demographic, and professional.

Term length: Like MCWD Managers, CAC members will serve two-year terms -- long enough to ensure a term of service affords each member the opportunity to engage in a range of the District's work, but short enough to ensure a flow of fresh perspectives.

Staggered terms: Like MCWD managers, terms of CAC members will be staggered to ensure a degree of continuity on the committee. Thus, half of the committee's seats will be filled each year. Applications for seats with expiring terms will be accepted from September 1 to October 30 ahead of the appointing year, with appointments in December.

Turnover: There are no term limits and existing members are encouraged to re-apply. To ensure potential new members have an opportunity to apply, each committee slot will be filled competitively and existing members will not be guaranteed a slot.

If a committee member leaves during their term, the slot will be filled during the next cycle.

Committee size: The committee will be twice the size of the Board of Managers: up to 14 members, large enough to ensure a variety of perspectives, but small enough to ensure each member is afforded the chance to routinely share.

Appointments: The Board of Managers is required by state statute to decide which CAC members to appoint. The Engagement Planner will continue to coordinate the committee application process.

Makeup of committee members: Because the committee's core value comes from its variety of perspectives, the Board's appointment decisions will consider how applicants contribute to the diversity of the committee along key dimensions:

- *Geographic:* The committee plays a key role in using local, on-the-ground knowledge to provide unique perspectives on MCWD's work. Thus, committee members should be dispersed throughout the watershed.
- *Demographic:* MCWD covers a large and culturally varied area within the Twin Cities, and its work serves many different types of people. Thus, committee members should be varied across ethnicity, gender, and age.
- *Professional:* Committee members draw heavily on their unique professional background to provide fresh ways of thinking about MCWD's work. Thus, committee members should come from a variety of professional backgrounds.

Recruitment and promotion: In order to appoint committee members who bring an optimal variety of perspectives along geographic, demographic, and professional lines, the Board of Managers must have a large and varied applicant pool to evaluate.

To create a larger and more varied applicant pool, calls for CAC applications will be broadcast more widely through MCWD's channels: media outlets, community groups, and partners. An accompanying "job description" will describe the activities and time commitment associated with serving on the CAC.

Next steps

Once approved, the Engagement Planner will work with the Administrator and CAC Executive Team to implement the recommendations. This will include the following steps:

Content calendar: The Engagement Planner will work with the Administrator, Board President, and CAC Executive Team to plan and maintain a calendar of upcoming CAC meeting topics. To ensure the momentum of the realigned committee, Appendix A includes a forecasted calendar of topics for through 2022. This content is subject to change as the work requires.

Update bylaws: Some recommendations, such as changes to terms and appointment criteria, may require updating the committee's bylaws. The Engagement Planner will work with MCWD's legal counsel, Administrator, Board President and CAC Executive Committee to review these bylaws and update as necessary.

Job description: Following a best practice used by other organizations, MCWD will produce a job description that clearly lays out the duties and outcomes of service on the CAC. A clear and compelling job description will broaden the pool of qualified candidates and ensure that service on the CAC aligns with new members' expectations.

Diagnostic follow-up: Following MCWD's organizational principle of continuous improvement, the CAC will review the effectiveness of these changes after a trial period. This will allow CAC, staff, and Board members to reflect on the effectiveness of the changes and make adjustments as needed.

Timeline of Next Steps

Content calendar

2021-2022 Calendar

- July 2021- November 2022 Calendar attached as Appendix A

Annual planning schedule:

- December: District staff forecast schedule of topics through May
- January: Executive Team meets to review six month content schedule with the District Administrator and MCWD Board President
- June: District staff forecast schedule of topics through November
- July: Executive Team meets to review six month content schedule with the District Administrator and MCWD Board President

Update bylaws

- Legal counsel review of bylaws
- Executive team reviews bylaw edits one week in advance of the July Executive Team meeting
- July 2021: Executive Team meets to review and discuss draft bylaw edits with the District Administrator, Board President and Engagement Planner. The Engagement Planner continues working with the Executive Team as needed to craft final draft.
- July 2021: CAC votes on bylaw adoption
- July 2021: Board votes on bylaw adoption

Job description

- August 2021: A special meeting of the CAC Executive Committee to review and provide feedback on the CAC job description.

Diagnostic follow-up

- November 2022: At the regular November CAC meeting, there will be a diagnostic check-in on the CAC re-alignment.

Staggered terms transition

- November 2021: All CAC members must indicate their interest in being appointed to another term on the CAC. Members serving a transitional one year term and those serving a full two year term will be chosen randomly among the remaining pool of members. Executive Team elections will follow the process laid out in the updated CAC bylaws.

Membership recruitment:

- September 1 to October 30th: Applications for seats with expiring terms will be accepted during this timeframe
- November: OPC committee reviews applicants and makes recommendations on appointments.
- December: At the first Board meeting in December, the Board appoints CAC members to fill expired seats on the committee

Appendix A: Preliminary Content Calendar

The following calendar forecasts topics for the CAC's scheduled meetings through 2022. Project managers wishing to leverage the value of the CAC for additional topics may request additional meeting points. Topics are subject to change as required by the work.

Meeting	Topic (Staff lead[s])
July 2021	MCWD Budget and Work Plan (Wisker)
September 2021	Responsive Model and Permitting Alignment (Moran/Christopher/Dietrich)
November 2021	325 Blake Road Restoration and Redevelopment – Phase II (Hayman/Sherman)
January 2022	Year ahead (Wisker)
March 2022	Website Phase II: Design and Build (Outreach Manager)
May 2022	2 Dimensional Watershed Model (Beck)
July 2022	MCWD Budget and Work Plan (Wisker)
September 2022	Leveraging IT to Measure and Communicate MCWD's Progress (Steele)
November 2022	CAC Re-Alignment Diagnostic Check-In (LaBo)

Appendix B: Summary of Assessment Process

Discovery Process

Staff completed a wide-ranging discovery process which gathered information from inside and outside the organization.

The discovery process included:

- Analysis of six comparable Citizen Advisory Committees
- Review of statutory requirements
- Historical analysis of the CAC
- Informational interviews with the following nine individuals:

Name	Title	Organization or Business
Adam Flett	Communications and Outreach Specialist	Mississippi Watershed Management Organization
Jessica Bromelkamp	Communications and Engagement Division Manager	Capitol Region Watershed District
Kim Havey	Director of Sustainability	City of Minneapolis
Carrie Christensen	Senior Planner	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Emma Pachuta	Senior Planner	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Emily Javens	Executive Director	Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts
Steve Christopher	Board Conservationist	Board of Water and Soil Resources
Louis Smith	Attorney	Smith Partners PLLP
Sharon McCotter	Citizen Advisory Committee Member	Riley Purgatory Watershed District

Assessment Timeline:

The process to align MCWD's Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) with the District's Balanced Urban Ecology Approach involved MCWD's Board, CAC Members, and District staff. This extensive strategic assessment process was guided by the Board's Operations and Programs Committee (OPC), along with input from CAC members and a cross-disciplinary team of staff.

Below is an overview of the CAC assessment process and related timeline:

Assessment Kick-Off

- Establishment of assessment objectives, scope and process
- 12-2-2020 CAC Executive Committee meeting: Discussion
- 12-9-2020 CAC meeting: Memo, presentation, facilitated discussion
- 12-11-2020 Staff meeting: Facilitated discussion
- 12-17-2020 Board meeting: RBA memo, presentation, discussion

Discovery Process

- Analysis of peer organization CAC's
- Informational interviews
- Statute review
- Analysis of CAC history
- 1-11-2021 Staff meeting: Facilitated discussion
- 1-13-2021 CAC Executive Committee meeting: Discussion
- 2-11-2021 OPC meeting: Memo, presentation, discussion
- 2-10-2021 CAC Executive Committee meeting: Discussion
- 2-17-2021 CAC meeting: Memo, presentation, facilitated discussion
- 2-24-2021 CAC Executive Committee meeting: Discussion

Core value identification

- 3-12-2021 Staff meeting: Discussion
- 4-01-2021 CAC Executive Committee meeting: Discussion
- 4-8-2021 OPC: Memo, discussion
- 4-14-2021 CAC: Memo, discussion

Recommendations

- Survey of CAC about meeting time and format
- 5-06-2021 CAC Executive Committee meeting: Discussion
- 5-13-2021 OPC meeting: Memo, discussion
- 5-19-2021 CAC meeting: Memo, discussion
- 6-10-2021 Board meeting: RBA memo, discussion