



*Wednesday, November 15, 2023*

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**MCWD Office, Board Room**  
[www.minnehahacreek.org](http://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 Hejmadi*

**Citizens Advisory Committee Members Present:**

**Emily Balogh, Dan Flo, Lisa Fowler, Robert Glisky, Laurie Goldsmith, John Iverson, Suzanne Jiwani, Drew McGovern, Rich Nyquist, David Oltmans, Denise Tennen**

**Citizens Advisory Committee Members Absent:**

**Marcy Bean, Cassy Ordway**

**MCWD Staff Present:**

**Samantha Maul, Maia Irvin, Becky Christopher**

**6:30 pm**

- 1. Committee Meeting Call to Order and Roll Call**  
Introduction of MCWD Communications Coordinator, Maia Irvin.
- 2. Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**  
2.1 November 15, 2023, agenda  
*Iverson, Jiwani. All Approved.*
- 3. Approval of Minutes (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**  
3.1 September 20, 2023, minutes  
*Flo, Goldsmith. All Approved.*
- 4. Action Items**  
*No action items.*

**6:40pm**

- 5. Discussion Items**  
5.1 Climate Action Framework – **Christopher**  
Christopher introduced the agenda and purpose for the meeting. MCWD is seeking input on its Climate Action Framework (CAF) and the upcoming engagement process the District will be initiating in 2024 related to its next Watershed Management Plan (WMP).

Christopher provided an overview of the CAF, noting that the document describes MCWD’s role and approach to climate action. The CAF sets the stage for mid-term climate action planning and upcoming engagement with MCWD’s communities; it also outlines near-term actions the District can take to build resilience in the watershed.

Christopher stepped through the process of creating the CAF. Staff started with a discovery phase to answer four critical questions: (1) What's happening? (2) What are the impacts? (3) What's being done? and (4) What is MCWD's role?

Data from the state's climatologist indicates the region is becoming warmer and wetter, which impacts water volumes and rates, and may cause more frequent and extreme floods. To evaluate current actions by other agencies and determine MCWD's role, staff scanned federal, state, regional, and local government plans to address climate change; conducted a SWOT analysis with the CAC and the Board to determine organization's capabilities; and reflected on MCWD's success over the years, which clarified the District's role as a data-driven leader that can convene partners at a regional scale. These findings are reflected in the CAF's pillars:

1. Understand and Predict: Expand data collection and analytical capabilities to predict vulnerabilities and risks across the watershed.
2. Convene and Plan: Collaborate with state, regional, and local partners to assess vulnerabilities to climate change within the watershed and develop a coordinated project and policy strategy to build resilience.
3. Implement, Measure, and Adapt: Coordinate with partners across the watershed to make measurable advancements toward our shared goals, monitor progress, and adapt and evolve the approach to improve the watershed for future generations.

MCWD is currently advancing work within the first two pillars. MCWD has expanded its real-time water level monitoring capabilities with support from partners at Hennepin County, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the National Weather Service. MCWD uses this data with machine learning to improve flood forecasting abilities. Now, the District is preparing to advance its understanding of vulnerabilities within the watershed with its 2-D model, which will help plan for new precipitation scenarios. MCWD recently completed the Pilot Model process, to inform the build out of its 2-D model, which will kick-off later this year.

Scenarios from the 2-D Model will provide a foundation for MCWD to engage its partners and communities, starting in 2024. MCWD will start by learning the challenges, goals, priorities, and strategies of partners around the watershed.

MCWD will also work with its communities to develop a flood action plan and climate equity lens to identify and prioritize projects, both of which are near-term action steps identified in the CAF.

MCWD will execute the third pillar by delivering high-impact projects, quantifying climate benefits, shaping policy, and making operational improvements. Christopher opened the floor for questions and discussion of the Climate Action Framework.

Overall, CAC members supported the CAF and the 2-D model. CAC members asked how recent droughts impact climate predictions since they seem to contradict the emphasis on a warmer and wetter climate. Christopher responded that weather is becoming more extreme and, overall, the trend is still warmer and wetter even though Minnesota has recently seen drought conditions. Christopher noted that drought is a major concern, but flooding is prioritized because of its impacts. A CAC member asked if staff have looked at how impervious surfaces

are impacting water retention and runoff. Christopher shared that MCWD tracks this data, which will be included in the 2-D model.

A CAC member asked for clarification on the CAF's intended audience. Christopher responded that it is primarily for cities and other partners, but it has broader use for residents and the general public. One CAC member suggested further emphasis on the term "climate resilience," because of its specificity and impact. A CAC member asked how the actions of the CAF will be integrated into MCWD's planning context. Christopher responded that the 2027 WMP will have a strong climate and volume focus.

CAC members asked how MCWD will engage residents in the planning process, citing the importance of connecting residents with their municipality as well as direct resident engagement. Christopher thanked CAC members for their comments and shared that MCWD's engagement process would be a topic of discussion later in the meeting.

Christopher then detailed recent action steps taken to advance the CAF's first two pillars. MCWD is beginning the build of its 2-D watershed model. The model will integrate ground, surface, and stormwater data to understand how water is moving throughout the system with changing precipitation patterns. MCWD received funding to build the model along with 14 letters of support from the surrounding communities. Staff began the process by building a pilot model, this was essential for documenting lessons learned and determining what platform to use for the model build. MCWD selected a model platform that can integrate both surface water and groundwater, which is critical to a holistic understanding of water flows. MCWD anticipates the model build will start in December.

MCWD is also preparing to initiate a stakeholder engagement process in 2024. MCWD held a climate action briefing with cities and other partner agencies in September and utilized the Land & Water Partnership Initiative Technical Advisory Committee to introduce partners to the CAF. MCWD has identified key audiences and channels for the stakeholder engagement process. MCWD will target agency staff, policymakers, technical experts, and residents. MCWD will engage an advisory committee for each stakeholder segment. The advisory committee process will begin with a discovery phase to identify goals, issues, and priorities. After which MCWD will engage stakeholders in scenario planning with outputs from the 2-D model. The final phase is the development of the 2027 WMP, which will be informed by findings from the engagement process.

Christopher asked CAC members for input on the upcoming engagement process by posing questions: What does success look like at the end of this climate planning and engagement process, and what threats and opportunities should we consider in planning for effective engagement?

A CAC member asked if there's an evaluation process at the end of a ten-year watershed management plan. Christopher shared that staff would reflect on the last ten-year plan but have not established tracking systems for evaluating progress. This will be a priority in the next WMP, which will have more clearly defined goals. A CAC member said a simple way to track engagement success is to document how many people attend MCWD meetings, and what topics are discussed. Another CAC member said success would be increased resident engagement and noted that open-house meetings don't usually attract a large, or diverse demographic. CAC members noted that MCWD could find other ways to

attract people. A CAC member emphasized the importance of aligning MCWD's goals with those of its cities. Christopher shared that the best way to do that is to build relationships and have conversations. A CAC member noted that MCWD should communicate the findings of the 2-D model with its municipalities, which is a critical goal of the engagement process.

CAC members suggested that MCWD should engage and leverage residents who have been directly impacted by extreme weather, as well as city channels used to disseminate information to residents. A CAC member suggested that MCWD consider how it might increase resident engagement by utilizing school systems. Another CAC member suggested connecting with Minnesota Water Stewards because the program has established curriculum to teach residents about water resources. Christopher thanked the CAC member for the suggestion and responded that MCWD has shifted away from this education-focused approach in recent years because of capacity, but staff want to ensure communities are informed. CAC members recognized that MCWD might face a challenge in engaging communities, because climate action is rarely considered an urgent issue. CAC members also emphasized the importance of simple, clear messaging.

CAC members asked whether this engagement process would result in a water component in city climate planning work. Christopher responded that new legislation requires climate planning to be part of city comprehensive plans going forward and Met Council is developing specific requirements. MCWD sets the requirements for the local water plans, which will be a part of the city plans that need to be updated by 2028. MCWD is closely tracking and will support cities in the development of these plans.

Christopher thanked all CAC members for their input, comments, and suggestions on the CAF document and the upcoming engagement process.

#### 5.2 End of Year Reflection – **Maul**

Maul provided an overview of the work the CAC accomplished in 2023 as well as recent changes to the CAC's operations. 2023 operational changes included implementing written updates between meetings, improving the recruitment and onboarding experience, and instituting more structure to the Board Liaison process.

Maul asked CAC members to respond to the following discussion questions: Which meetings in 2023 were the most engaging and why? What materials or processes best prepared you to meaningfully engage with MCWD's key initiatives? From your perspective, how have recent operational changes improved CAC operations? What suggestions do you have for continuing to improve CAC operations?

A CAC member said the field trip was impactful because CAC members saw a project first-hand and were able to engage with staff and Board members. Another CAC member said they enjoyed the budget meeting because of the level of detail and breakdown of the capital funding process. A CAC member said they enjoy receiving newsletters in CAC off months because they are focused and tailored for CAC. Maul thanked CAC members for their reflections and invited additional comments and suggestions at any time.

8:15pm

#### 6. **Informational Items + Updates**

### 6.1 CAC Member Updates

- Maul provided an overview of the 2024 CAC meeting schedule.
- Maul provided an update on 2024 CAC recruitment and appointment. The Board will officially appoint the 2024 CAC at the December 14, 2023, Board meeting.
- Maul shared that two current CAC members decided to step down from the CAC in 2024. Maul thanked them for their time and service on the CAC.

### 6.2 Board Liaison Updates

- Manager Hejmadi provided an update on MCWD's permitting rule revisions. Hejmadi noted staff have revised the permitting rules to streamline the process. MCWD will be launching a public comment period on the rule revisions soon, and the Board will hold a public hearing in January before considering a resolution to adopt the new rules in February.
- Hejmadi also shared an update on MCWD's carp management work. Following the completion of the Six Mile Creek Halsted Bay Habitat Restoration program, MCWD is partnering with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Department of Natural Resources to analyze ecosystem responses to carp management and provide clear guidelines for future implementation.

### 6.3 Staff Updates

- Maul introduced CAC members to two new staff members who started in October. Maia Irvin is MCWD's new Communications Coordinator and Tessa Vacek is the new Administrative Services Manager.
- Maul also noted Permitting Technician Abigail Ernst accepted a new position in Carver County; her last day with MCWD was November 15, 2023.
- Maul shared an update on MCWD's stormwater pond maintenance project, which is scheduled for this winter. MCWD will be dredging the Amelia Pond, near Lake Nokomis in Minneapolis, and the Twin Lakes Park Pond, near Twin Lakes in St. Louis Park. MCWD recently sent postcards announcing the project to nearby residents and created a [webpage for project updates](#).
- Maul provided a short update on the 325 Blake Road Project. The Board authorized an extension for the purchase and sale agreement of the site with Alatus in October.
- Maul also gave an overview of water levels and Gray's Bay Dam operations. The Twin Cities has received about 27 inches of precipitation in 2023 so far, which is about 3 inches less than normal. The Twin Cities has moved out of severe drought and is now classified as abnormally dry; most of the state remains in a drought designation. MCWD also recently winterized the dam to prepare for ice-in.

8:35pm

7. **Adjournment**  
*Iverson. Flo. All approved.*

### Upcoming Meeting

Wednesday, January 17, 2024, Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting (Manager Maxwell, Board Liaison)