



Wednesday, July 17, 2024

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**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 Loftus**

**Citizens Advisory Committee Members Present:**

**Marcy Bean, Robert Glisky, Laurie Goldsmith, John Iverson, Suzanne Jiwani, Drew McGovern, Rich Nyquist, Janet Schaefer, Denise Tennen, Sheri Wallace**

**Citizens Advisory Committee Members Absent:**

**Emily Balogh, Cara Donovan, Dan Flo, Lisa Fowler**

**MCWD Staff Present:**

**Samantha Maul, Maia Irvin, James Wisker**

**6:35 pm**

- 1. Committee Meeting Call to Order and Roll Call**
- 2. Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**  
2.1 July 17, 2024, agenda  
*Iverson, Goldsmith. All approved.*
- 3. Approval of Minutes (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**  
3.1 May 15, 2024, minutes  
*Iverson, Jiwani. All approved.*
- 4. Action Items**  
*No action items.*

**6:40 pm**

- 5. Discussion Items**  
5.1 2025 Draft Budget – **Wisker**  
The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District’s (MCWD) Administrator, James Wisker, presented the 2025 draft budget to the CAC, to gather feedback before bringing it back to the Board of Managers in August, before formal adoption in September. Wisker noted that the budget fluctuates slightly year-to-year as staff evaluate needs annually within operations, programs, and projects.

Wisker said that the 2025 budget reflects a 2% decrease from 2024, at \$14.1 million. Broken down, the operations budget is down 0.2%, the programs budget is down 1.5%, debt service is down 0.2%, and the capital projects budget is down 3.8%.

On the revenue side, Wisker noted that MCWD is maintaining a flat levy in 2025, based on organizational needs. MCWD has kept the levy flat five out of the last six years, with only a 2% increase over this time, due to underspending the past few years. Unspent dollars are carried over on programs and projects for long-range capital project needs, since most initiatives require multiple years to complete. Additional revenue comes from grants and partner funds. The draft budget is projecting nearly \$700,000 from grants in 2025, the majority of which is from the Legislative-Citizen Commission for Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) for the second year of the 2-D watershed-wide model build. MCWD also receives revenue from permitting fees.

Wisker provided the CAC with an overview of program-specific expenses in the 2025 budget.

Within the Operations program, the budget for general operations, which includes staff expenses, has a projected 4.2% increase. Information Technology is projected to see a 16% decrease due to staffing changes and postponement of updating enterprise systems. A CAC member asked whether MCWD's Permitting Portal, part of the IT system, stores financial data from permit applicants. Wisker responded that it doesn't. Lastly, within Operations, the draft budget projected a 2.6% decrease for campus improvements. However, Wisker noted that this number will most likely change prior to adoption of the final budget as staff continue conversations around improvements.

In the Permitting program budget, permitting administration is projected to increase 4.4% for personnel and contracted engineering services. A CAC member asked if the streamlined rule revisions implemented in Spring 2024 mean the permitting administration costs should decrease. Wisker responded that the primary reason for the increase in 2025 is due to inflationary costs from MCWD's contracted engineer. The permitting budget is also largely dictated by the number of permits MCWD receives in any given year. Wisker also noted that the rule revisions were recently adopted, so costs will not decrease right away, but the streamlined revisions are meant to improve program efficiency and eventually reduce engineering review time.

Wisker highlighted that the Project Planning program is projecting a 7.8% increase in 2025, due to project planning along the Minnehaha Parkway and in the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed. There is a projected decrease in planning for the Minnehaha Creek Greenway projects.

The Project Maintenance and Land Management program is expecting a 5.7% decrease because there is a projected reduction in the expenses for a flood response plan and a retrofit of the Cottageville Park project, which will wrap up in 2024. Some maintenance project expenses are expected to increase due to inflation, such as vegetation management and the second phase of a stormwater pond study.

Within Policy Planning, the program is expecting a 3.7% increase in 2025. There is a planned reduction in expenses for the Land & Water Partnership (LWP) program since it launched in 2024, however, there is an expected increase in the budget to utilize consultant support for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) planning and climate engagement in 2025. Manager Loftus noted that the evaluation criteria for LWP program support is a useful tool that has allowed

MCWD staff to analyze community needs and determine LWP program support efficiently.

The Outreach program is budgeting a 7% decrease. This is due to discontinued programs and a decreased need for consulting services as the team has increased capacity. Overall, Wisker noted that the Outreach program's budget has been recalibrated to meet the program's actual needs.

In Research & Monitoring, the program budget is projecting a 3.7% increase. Staff are planning a reduction in responsive monitoring and carp management, but an increase in monitoring to understand alum treatment needs in the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Subwatershed.

Wisker noted that the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is also a critical component of the budget. The CIP budget is broken into a few key sections. For 2025, the LWP program is supporting two projects: stormwater management at Holbrook Park in Long Lake and stormwater management at Calvary Church in Deephaven. Staff are also planning stormwater pond maintenance dredging in 2025. Additionally, there are several active MCWD projects that are planned to advance design or construction in 2025.

Wisker explained that the active projects in the CIP for 2025 are based on three key geographies within the District: Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed, Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Subwatershed, and the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed. MCWD will also begin diagnostic work in the Painter Creek Subwatershed in 2025, to collect data informing future capital projects in the region. Wisker explained that the LWP program may support additional project opportunities outside focal geographies.

Wisker then asked the CAC to discuss and provide feedback on the 2025 draft budget. One CAC member asked how MCWD thinks about budgeting for future maintenance on active capital projects. Wisker responded that MCWD considers operational and maintenance costs when planning and budgeting for capital projects, which are often split with the District's partners.

The CAC member also asked how MCWD's plans for project opportunities that emerge outside of the regular planning and budgeting cycles. Wisker noted that it often depends on the type of opportunity and the direction of the Board. MCWD's Board seeks to maintain a stable budget and levy; to avoid volatility, MCWD may explore outside funding options or other creative solutions to cover costs.

Manager Loftus mentioned the Halsted Bay Alum Treatment Facility project in MCWD's CIP, which is in the early stages of planning, but would be one of the District's most expensive projects. She emphasized that the facility would be a new type of project for MCWD and would require significant operating and maintenance costs. She emphasized that the District would pursue this investment thoughtfully by closely engaging impacted communities and conducting cost-benefit analyses to understand the risk, impacts, and tradeoffs before ordering and advancing the project. A CAC member asked about the possibility of a similar alum treatment facility in the Painter Creek Subwatershed. Wisker responded that it is too early to know which management strategies would be most effective in that subwatershed, but MCWD would learn more from monitoring and diagnostic data gathered in 2025.

Maul and Wisker also shared the Draft 2025 Budget & Workplan publication with the CAC, which provides additional context and information on the District's expenditures, particularly capital project investments and policy initiatives. Maul invited the CAC to provide feedback on the publication's messaging and design. CAC members noted that additional links to learn more about MCWD's work would be helpful, since the publication is primarily shared digitally. CAC members also noted staff could incorporate additional information that helped to articulate the nuances of the capital project planning process, since projects are often budgeted over multiple years as they advance through the phases of planning, design, construction, and maintenance. A CAC member noted that it might be helpful to include some information on how residents could engage with the District, especially if the publication could be used as a communications tool in communities.

8:25 pm

## 6. Informational Items + Updates

### 6.1 CAC Member Updates

- A CAC member mentioned that they attended Long Lake's Buckthorn Days as a member of the Long Lake Waters Association and thanked Samantha Maul, Outreach Manager, for providing publications and project information for the event, since many attendees were interested in MCWD's work.
- Another CAC member provided updates on a volunteer opportunity with Minnetrista and Mound's rain barrel sale, which distributed 180 barrels.
- Maul reminded CAC members that the annual CAC recruitment and appointment cycle will kick off in early September. Based on the staggered term cycles, half of the CAC will be up for reappointment in 2025. Applications will be open from September through mid-October.

### 6.2 Board Liaison Updates

- Manager Loftus reiterated updates on two MCWD initiatives that had been discussed earlier in the meeting. The Capital Improvement Plan was recently distributed, and a consultant was recently selected for feasibility for the three MPLS-MPRB-MCWD Partnership Phase 1 projects. She thanked the committee for their engagement and perspectives.

### 6.3 Staff Updates

- Maul provided updates on four active capital projects:
  - o The East Auburn Wetland Restoration project, currently in design, has been slightly delayed due to recent wet conditions that have impacted the geotechnical analysis of the wetland. Work will proceed as soon as the water levels subside, and the wetland can be accessed.
  - o The County Road 6 Retrofit project is moving through design, and MCWD will host a public meeting on the project in Fall 2024.
  - o The Board selected a consultant for feasibility for Minnehaha Parkway projects. The partnership's Policy Steering Committee is scheduled to meet on July 23, 2024, to discuss recent progress, long-range planning, and communications.
  - o MCWD has been working with the developer, Alatus, and the City of Hopkins to capitalize the remainder of the 325 Blake Road development. The purchase and sale agreement with Alatus recently expired, but the developer has an extension to secure financing.
- Communications Coordinator, Maia Irvin, presented information on the results of recent wet weather over the month of June and into early July. Precipitation elevated Lake Minnetonka to a peak of 930 feet following the storms on June 21, 2024. As of July 17, 2024, the lake level is 929.75 feet.

Minnehaha Creek also crested during the late June storms at 363 cubic feet per second (cfs) but is now flowing at 252 cfs. Irvin compared current precipitation totals with the wettest year on record, and other seasonal totals. Irvin shared MCWD's proactive approach to water level communications, including water level email updates, media monitoring and relations, and coordination with emergency managers across the watershed. Irvin shared information on MCWD's real-time sensor network (RESNET), which monitors water level, flow, and quality data for locations across the watershed. Key sensors are located along Minnehaha Creek and tributaries to Lake Minnetonka.

**8:50 pm**

**7. Adjournment**

*Iverson. Bean. All approved.*

**Upcoming Meeting**

Wednesday, September 18, 2024, Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting (Manager Hejmadi, Board Liaison)