



Wednesday, May 14, 2025

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
Minnetonka Community Center, Minnetonka Mills Room  
14600 Minnetonka Blvd., Minnetonka, MN 55345  
[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 Miller**

**Citizens Advisory Committee Members:**

Ricardo Bonner, Joshua Foschi, Robert Glisky, Laurie Goldsmith, Steve Hage, John Iverson, Drew McGovern, Rich Nyquist, Janet Schaefer, Sheri Wallace, Kevin Zahler

**Citizens Advisory Committee Members Absent:**

Lisa Fowler, Suzanne Jiwani, Denise Tennen

**MCWD Staff Present:**

Becky Christopher, Michael Hayman, Rebecca Neal, Samantha Hoppe, James O'Brien

6:34 pm

1. **Committee Meeting Call to Order**  
Chair Glisky called the meeting to order.
2. **Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**  
2.1 May 14, 2025 agenda  
*Iverson, Nyquist, all approved.*
3. **Approval of Minutes (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**  
3.1 March 19, 2025 minutes  
*Schaefer, Hage, all approved.*
4. **Action Items**  
No action items.

6:36 pm

5. **Discussion Items**  
5.1 2026 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Update – **Christopher/Hayman**  
Director of Policy-Planning, Becky Christopher, provided context to ground the CAC in MCWD's approach to project implementation, which will be advanced through the District's next 10-year Watershed Management Plan (WMP). MCWD approaches projects by integrating land and water planning to realize its [Balanced Urban Ecology](#) (BUE) vision. In the [2017 WMP](#), MCWD adopted a two-pronged approach to focus project investments to provide significant, regional benefits to the watershed. The two-pronged approach is built on two implementation models: [focal geographies](#) and the [Land and Water Partnership](#) (LWP) program. In focal geographies, MCWD leads project investments, working

closely with public and private partners in areas of high resource need and opportunity. MCWD's LWP program allows the District to be responsive to project opportunities by providing technical and financial assistance to advance partner-led projects. Christopher introduced Michael Hayman, Director of Project Planning, to present on MCWD's [Capital Improvement Plan](#) (CIP).

Hayman explained that the CIP is required by statute and lays out the District's project priorities over the coming year. The 10-year CIP is adopted with MCWD's WMP, but an annual CIP is distributed to partners each year to share upcoming projects and allow municipalities to provide feedback on their project priorities. He explained the limitations of the annual and 10-year CIP processes as a communications tool. Recently, staff have developed a multi-year CIP that provides more information on how projects move through the District's capital project implementation process. MCWD currently has four focal geographies. In the upper watershed, MCWD is focused on implementing capital projects in three major tributaries that drain to Lake Minnetonka: Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay (SMCHB), Painter Creek – Jennings Bay, and Long Lake Creek – Tanager Lake. Downstream, MCWD has also designated the Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed as a focal area.

In the [SMCHB Subwatershed](#), MCWD has prioritized work moving from upstream to downstream. This region has a high volume of impaired waters and is experiencing development, providing opportunities to integrate water resource improvements with land use planning efforts. MCWD has worked closely with the City of Victoria on several projects in this region, including efforts that have made significant water quality benefits to [Wassermann Lake](#). Most recently, the [East Auburn Wetland Restoration](#) project, a water quality effort that will reduce pollutant loading into East Auburn Lake, has reached final design. MCWD will solicit bids for construction this summer, with construction starting this winter. MCWD is also scoping potential project opportunities in the Turbid Lundsten Corridor, Mud Lake, and for a potential Alum treatment facility near Halsted Bay.

Moving east, MCWD has worked with municipal partners and the Long Lake Waters Association to identify water resource issues, drivers, and strategies to address impairments in the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed. This process resulted in the [Long Lake Creek Roadmap](#), which identifies over thirty projects that could be implemented. MCWD is currently advancing two key regional stormwater treatment projects: County Road 6 Pond Retrofit and the treatment in the Long Lake downtown area. MCWD recently completed the design of the [County Road 6 Pond Retrofit](#), with construction bidding occurring this summer and construction this winter. MCWD will solicit an RFP later this year for a feasibility analysis of potential projects in Long Lake's downtown area.

In the Painter Creek Subwatershed, MCWD has started diagnostic work to identify water resource issues, drivers, and project opportunities. The subwatershed is a wetland-rich system with low development pressure, however, many of the wetlands have been degraded over time and have become pollutant sources, rather than providing water quality benefits. Findings from the diagnostic work will be rolled into the 2027 WMP to guide appropriate project identification and prioritization, but staff anticipate wetland restorations along the creek corridor may be prioritized.

Hayman then discussed the Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed. He explained that it is an area of high resource need, extremely urbanized, with impairments to

Lake Hiawatha and the creek, and one with a significant flood risk. Within the subwatershed, there are two main implementation areas, the Minnehaha Creek Greenway and the Minnehaha Parkway. The [Minnehaha Creek Greenway](#) was one of the most degraded stretches of the creek; it's been a critical area of focus for MCWD over the last decade. MCWD has integrated major projects with transit plans, development patterns, and private business expansions, resulting in significant water resource benefits. It's been a great case study for how water resource improvements can be integrated with community priorities to provide stacked benefits. MCWD has several upcoming projects in the greenway that are in different stages of scoping and planning: the Boone-Aquila Floodplain, West Blake, [Cottageville Phase 2](#), [325 Blake Rd](#), [Greenway to Cedar-Trail Connection](#), and the Meadowbrook Golf Course project opportunities. Along the [Minnehaha Parkway](#), MCWD has partnered with the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) to advance a first wave of capital projects, identified through a shared Master Plan. Feasibility has been completed on the first three project areas. MCWD will be meeting with the partners to share the results of the feasibility analysis, determine project sequence, and scope long-range planning efforts.

A CAC member asked about the timing of feasibility work in the downtown Long Lake area. Hayman explained that MCWD is working with the City of Long Lake to release the feasibility RFP later this Summer. Another CAC member asked how [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\)](#) is integrated into the project selection and planning processes. Hayman explained that the work is being advanced in coordination with the Policy-Planning team through the draft Equity Lens. Since the Equity Lens is still being developed, staff continue to assess how it will integrate into the phases of capital project planning, design, and implementation, but are piloting it with upcoming projects in the lower watershed. Another CAC member asked about the funding for the Minneapolis projects. Hayman explained that each partner has dedicated a sum to the implementation plan to be allocated across the first three-phase projects. A CAC member asked about the potential to model equity goals after the banking program. Manager Miller provided context on MCWD's project implementation priorities concerning DEI goals, noting that project priorities are driven by sound science and partnership. A CAC member asked how we break down a designated system for project identification. Hayman provided the example of Minneapolis, where we will be analyzing the system on a management unit, or lake-by-lake basis to understand all the sources and receiving water bodies and their combined impact downstream.

CAC members provided feedback through Mentimeter, a digital engagement and polling platform. CAC members provided input on the clarity of MCWD's focal geography approach and advised on the improvements to project communications, reflecting on the value of targeted print newsletters, mailings, and signage. CAC members also suggested integrating MCWD project information with City communications, where possible. CAC members also affirmed the value of well-attended high-quality presentations, which can be a key venue for communications.

## 5.2 Land and Water Partnership Program (LWP) Update – **Neal**

Policy Planning Coordinator Rebecca Neal reminded the CAC of how the LWP program fits within the District's two-prong approach. Neal explained that the program provides technical and financial support to partner-led projects that provide significant regional benefits. The goals of the program are to increase early coordination, explore new project opportunities, provide service and value

to communities, and act as a flexible approach to capital investments. Unlike a typical grant program, the LWP program supports projects from concept through feasibility and into implementation. The program operates through an orderly process, allowing public partners to submit requests with two deadlines to integrate projects into the following year's CIP and budget. However, the LWP program preserves some degree of flexibility to support other projects. Projects are identified through city coordination meetings, permitting processes, and partner inquiries. Projects are evaluated by water resource priority, benefits, effectiveness, and partner capacity and coordination.

Neal shared recent LWP projects. The City of Plymouth's [Maple Creek Improvement Project](#) was the first project supported by the LWP program, where MCWD contributed funding to construct an iron-enhanced filtration system in a stormwater pond in 2022. The newest project supported by the LWP program is the Morningside Stormwater Project with the City of Medina, which involves stabilizing three eroding ravines and building a regional stormwater treatment pond. MCWD contributed funding and technical assistance for the project, which is set to be constructed this summer. Neal also provided information on the Montgomerie Ave Area Drainage Project, which was identified from a city-wide assessment of opportunities with the City of Deephaven. The project involves the installation of an underground infiltration system to treat phosphorus and mitigate flooding. MCWD provided technical assistance and funding, and plans to order the project this summer. Neal explained that MCWD is also planning to support partner-led projects identified in the Long Lake Creek Roadmap, such as a potential wetland banking opportunity near Holy Name Lake, flagged by the City of Medina. Unfortunately, the wetland bank opportunity was assessed and deemed unfeasible by federal agencies. Despite this, it was a great example of the City bringing MCWD to the table early to identify opportunities for integration.

Neal noted that staff have learned a lot in the first year of LWP implementation. To support the program, staff have facilitated early coordination among partners and continued to align the permitting department to be responsive to partner priorities. Neal noted that staff have also identified some challenges that could warrant improvements to the program process. Challenges range from misalignment on the timing of projects within the annual submittal process, capacity of smaller cities, and some gaps in coordination and communication. Neal stepped through some planned improvements to address these challenges. MCWD is developing internal guidelines and workflows to improve internal coordination, particularly with permitting, as a key on-ramp into the program. MCWD is working to plan and schedule annual coordination meetings with cities to identify and discuss projects. Lastly, MCWD is building tools to support opportunity assessment and screening, including a map of regional opportunity areas based on water resource issues, flood risk, hydrology, land use, and other key data layers, and an interactive map that partners can use to highlight their priorities, areas of interest, and potential projects.

Neal closed the discussion for questions. A CAC member asked about the return on investment for the Montgomerie Ave Area Drainage project. Neal explained that the City of Deephaven has been a strong partner, and the project was prioritized due to the water quality and flood mitigation benefits. CAC members provided feedback on the LWP process through Mentimeter. A CAC member asked if staff could provide an example of a project that the LWP program likely wouldn't fund. Neal provided an example of a project in Excelsior that doesn't provide significant water quality benefits or treatment beyond MCWD regulations.

CAC members provided additional input on the clarity of the LWP program process through Mentimeter. CAC members were also asked to provide input on the effectiveness of MCWD's two-prong project implementation approach and ideas for continuous improvements. CAC members noted that the District's approach seems to be working as it results in win-win opportunities, recognizing that significant benefits require collaboration. CAC members noted that the quantitative results seem to speak for themselves. A CAC member asked whether cities know what resources are available to them. Neal explained that for the LWP program, MCWD is working to develop a marketing plan and conduct annual coordination meetings to bring more attention to the program. Hayman and Manager Miller also reflected that cities come in all shapes and sizes and therefore have different capacities and priorities for water resource issues.

8:22 pm

## 6. Informational Items + Updates

### 6.1 CAC Member Updates

- Glisky noted a recent article in the Star Tribune that highlighted key paddling locations in the Twin Cities.
- Schaefer noted that the Long Lake Waters Association would be hosting a carp fishing tournament on July 12, in alignment with Buckthorn Days.
- Wallace noted that LMCD recently approved a permit for after-dark bowfishing, and the Harrison's Bay Association has worked to get the impaired water bodies to be the first focus area.

### 6.2 Board Liaison Updates

- Manager Miller provided updates on active capital projects across the watershed, highlighting efforts to connect the Minnehaha Creek Greenway with the [Cedar Lake Regional Trail](#) in St. Louis Park, which recently reached 30% design.

### 6.3 Staff Updates

O'Brien provided updates on CAC, capital projects, hiring, and dam operations:

- All-MCWD field trip: To be held on June 5<sup>th</sup> from 1-4 pm. Programming information and communication will be distributed in the coming weeks.
- 325 Blake Road Restoration project: MCWD staff are working to reply to the lawsuit that was filed by Alatus regarding the termination of the Purchase & Sale Agreement.
- MCWD Hiring: MCWD recently hired a GIS Coordinator and a Permitting Assistant. MCWD has also brought on two seasonal field interns to assist the Research and Monitoring Department this summer.
- Water Levels and Dam Operations: Gray's Bay Dam remains closed, however, conditions are facilitating its opening by tomorrow, May 15<sup>th</sup>, in accordance with Zone 4 of the operating plan. A water level update newsletter will be distributed upon dam opening. As of May 14<sup>th</sup>, Lake Minnetonka sits at 929.15 feet, and Minnehaha Creek is flowing at 13.30 cubic feet per second (cfs) at the Hiawatha Ave gauge. With water levels relatively low, staff are taking an opportunity to prepare for flood emergencies. MCWD is hosting a Flood Response Summit with emergency managers on May 29<sup>th</sup> to build role clarity and identify new service areas during flood events.

8:40 pm

## 7. Adjournment

*Iverson, Goldsmith. All approved.*

### Upcoming Meeting

Wednesday, July 16, 2025, Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting (Manager Loftus: Board Liaison)