



Wednesday, November 13, 2024

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MCWD Office, Board Room

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 Sando

Citizens Advisory Committee Members:

Emily Balogh, Marcy Bean, Robert Glisky, Laurie Goldsmith, Suzanne Jiwani, Rich Nyquist, Sheri Wallace

Citizens Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Cara Donovan, Dan Flo, Lisa Fowler, John Iverson, Drew McGovern, Janet Schaefer, Denise Tennen

MCWD Staff Present:

Becky Christopher, Kate Moran, Becca Neal, Samantha Hoppe, Maia Irvin, James O'Brien

- 6:30 pm**
 - 1. Committee Meeting Call to Order and Roll Call**
 - 2. Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**
2.1 November 13, 2024 agenda
Jiwani, Glisky. All approved.
 - 3. Approval of Minutes (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**
3.1 September 18, 2024 minutes
Wallace, Glisky. All approved.
 - 4. Action Items**
No action items
- 6:45pm**
 - 5. Discussion Items**
5.1 2027 Watershed Management Plan Development – **Christopher/Moran**
Becky Christopher, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD)'s Director of Policy Planning, presented updates on MCWD's 2027 Watershed Management Plan (WMP or Plan) tentative scope and engagement plan. Christopher noted that this is the proposed process and plan for engaging with stakeholders across the watershed to develop the full 2027 WMP over the next two years, in time for the plan deadline.

Christopher noted that the 2027 Plan scope has been a subject of recent Board discussions and explained that staff are inviting CAC input on the proposed plan scope and engagement plan.



A CAC member asked about the reason for a “2027” plan. Christopher explained that MCWD is statutorily required to update its WMP every ten years. The previous WMP was adopted in 2017, and will therefore be due for revision in 2027. Christopher explained that the Plan is an important communication tool for partners and the general public that:

- Aligns MCWD and cities around priority policy areas
- Offers clarity of purpose and priorities to stakeholders
- Provides transparency and accountability

Christopher then provided an overview of the 2017 WMP, including MCWD’s alignment around its Balanced Urban Ecology (BUE) approach. The 2017 Plan’s scope and policy themes included integrated land and water planning, establishing focal geographies, and developing a responsive program to support partner-led project implementation. Christopher emphasized that having BUE as the Plan’s “big idea” helped garner community support for the Plan. During past WMP cycles, the District has learned the value of a focused vision and the importance of a partnership approach.

Christopher asked CAC members to reflect on the 2017 WMP’s strategic direction, and address the question, how has this direction served MCWD? A CAC member expressed support for the continuation of the strategic direction. Another CAC member stated they appreciated how the District’s 2017 Plan provided discipline and focused goals for the District and was shaped with feedback from partners and the public. A CAC member asked if there were aspects of the 2017 Plan that were not effective. Christopher responded that priorities did not shift significantly, however, she did recognize that staff capacity has altered project schedules. Another CAC member highlighted the thoughtfulness of the 2017 Plan and how it established the District’s brand identity.

Following reflections from the CAC, Christopher introduced the 2027 WMP’s “big idea,” which is an integrated flood management strategy. A CAC member asked for clarity on the meaning of the “big idea” and questioned why it focuses solely on water quantity. Christopher explained that the emphasis on volume management reflects the direction set in MCWD’s Climate Action Framework (CAF), which identified the near-term need for coordinated policy solutions to build flood resilience across the watershed and address the impacts of changing precipitation patterns. Christopher emphasized that this direction is not a pivot away from water quality, but a continuation and expansion of the District’s existing goals and priorities. MCWD will continue prioritizing water quality improvements in its capital project implementation.

Christopher also explained that the integrated flood management focus reflects the District’s history since the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District was formed to address flooding within the watershed. While water quality efforts have been at the forefront of MCWD’s work for many years, an increase in the severity and frequency of flood events has highlighted the need for coordinated flood management. The impacts of climate change on precipitation patterns are projected to cause wetter springs and heavier rain events, as well as drier, hotter summers, resulting in swings between flood and drought conditions. Historic land use changes have resulted in significant losses in water storage, exacerbating flooding. These impacts have highlighted the need for projects and policy solutions that maintain and create water storage, rather than focusing on conveyance as an infrastructure solution to flooding.

Christopher then introduced three guiding principles to inform the 2027 WMP. These principles include (1) data-driven decision-making, (2) partnership and integrated planning, and (3) maximizing regional benefit. Christopher also presented the 2027 Plan work areas, which define MCWD's priority work over the next plan cycle and support the WMP's "big idea." The four areas of work are:

- Integrated Flood Management
- Focal Geographies
- Land & Water Partnership (LWP) Program
- Evaluation Framework

Christopher further explained each area of work, outlining the objectives and outputs MCWD hopes to accomplish leading up to the adoption of the 2027 WMP.

A CAC member asked Christopher to provide a definition and examples of flood storage. Christopher provided examples such as wetlands, stormwater ponds, and other best management practices that store water from the landscape. Another CAC member asked how the community will influence management practices framed in the 2027 Plan. Christopher explained that MCWD will engage communities to identify, evaluate, and prioritize management techniques over the next two years to inform the Plan. Another CAC asked about MCWD's use of automated or "smart" ponds to provide flood storage benefits. Christopher noted that MCWD is evaluating a range of strategies for flood resilience, but acknowledged that MCWD is prioritizing a full accounting of the risks before deploying management tools.

A CAC member asked how MCWD classifies "regional scale" projects for the LWP program. Christopher stated treatment of anything beyond the project or property area could be considered regional treatment.

Christopher then paused for a Mentimeter exercise to gauge CAC understanding and solicit feedback on the Plan's scope and work areas. CAC members were asked how well the Plan scope's strategic framing captured the 2027 WMP's "big idea." CAC members stated the "big idea" was well captured, but there was a need to clarify that MCWD is engaging in activities beyond flood management in the Plan update. Christopher emphasized that MCWD is carrying forward all water quality scopes of work, only strengthening its methods and direction around volume management and flood strategies.

CAC members were also asked about the clarity of the four areas of work. Overall, CAC members stated the work areas were clear. One CAC member indicated that the focal geographies felt limited at four, and the list could restrict additional project opportunities. Christopher clarified how MCWD identified the focal geographies and reiterated that criteria for establishing areas of work will be vetted by partners and the public throughout the 2027 Plan cycle.

Christopher then outlined the proposed engagement process MCWD will implement during the Plan's development process over the next two years. She identified the overarching engagement objectives, engagement needs for each of the four areas of work, stakeholders involved and their level of engagement, and the portfolio of methods MCWD will utilize.

Each of the four areas of work will require specific engagement approaches. The CAC will play a critical role in vetting the messaging and approach of work across each of the four areas throughout the planning process.

Christopher showcased how the International Association of Public Participation model helped shape the level of engagement with various stakeholders. The model indicates five levels of public participation; inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. She then provided a visual summary of stakeholders and planned engagement. Christopher also highlighted that Technical and Policy Advisory Committees will be created and consulted, in conjunction with the CAC.

To close the discussion, Christopher asked the CAC what information is most important for the public to know about the Plan update and what topics they would be most interested in. CAC members suggested the public would be interested in learning more about how MCWD partners with cities and other public agencies through the LWP program, and how they could support this approach. CAC members also reiterated the importance of maintaining a steady flow of information to the general public throughout the process. Hoppe encouraged CAC members to write down and share additional engagement methods, to inform tactics MCWD could leverage to communicate with the public.

8:10pm

6. Informational Items + Updates

6.1 CAC Member Updates

- Hoppe provided an update on the 2025 CAC recruitment and appointment process. The 2025 CAC application closed on Oct. 21, 2024. Staff discussed applications with the Board of Managers in early November. The 2025 CAC will be appointed in early December. All 2025 CAC meeting dates have been added to the website.

6.2 Board Liaison Updates

- Manager Sando shared an update on the Greenway to Cedar Trail Connection and Streambank Restoration Project. The Board ordered the project at the Sept. 26, 2024, Board meeting and authorized a design contract on Oct. 10, 2024.
- Manager Sando also announced that the Board authorized the adoption of a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Victoria.

6.3 Staff Updates

- Hoppe provided updates on four active capital projects:
 - o Minneapolis Partnership Phase 1 Projects - MCWD, the City of Minneapolis, and MPRB are advancing three Phase 1 projects, to restore the creek along the Minnehaha Parkway. Partnership staff kicked off feasibility work for these projects in September 2024, and feasibility is expected to be completed early in 2025.
 - o County Road 6 Stormwater Pond Retrofit - The project hit the 60% design milestone in September. Working with an adjacent landowner, the project design was modified to expand the pond's effectiveness and overall project outcomes, delaying construction until Winter 2026. MCWD anticipates hosting a public meeting to refine the project's design in Spring 2025.
 - o East Auburn Wetland Restoration - The project is in the design phase and was delayed due to this year's wet conditions, which prevented

- necessary geotechnical analysis in the wetland. That analysis should be completed in early 2025, advancing the project design.
- Turbid Lundsten Corridor Planning – The updated MOU with the City of Victoria emphasized a focus on the Turbid-Lundsten Corridor to address water quality impairments in Turbid and South Lundsten lakes. MCWD has re-engaged with a landowner whose property includes a 45-acre degraded wetland on the northwest side of Turbid Lake. This wetland presents an opportunity to achieve substantial watershed load reductions for Turbid’s TMDL if restored. Staff have developed a “letter of interest” with the landowner and will present a scope of work to the Board on Nov. 21, 2024.
- Hoppe provided updates on the Carp Management Evaluation Study, MCWD hiring, and water levels and dam operations:
- Carp Management Study – Following a presentation at the [September CAC meeting](#), Jill Sweet, presented at the Minnesota Water Resources Conference in October on MCWD’s carp management work in the SMCHB Subwatershed. She also highlighted the statewide study MCWD is partnering on with the UMN, MDNR, and MPCA. A new [webpage on MAISRC’s website](#) will house the statewide study information once it is completed.
 - MCWD Hiring – MCWD was hiring a Project Maintenance & Land Management (PMLM) Program Manager. Applications for that role closed on Nov. 20, 2024. CAC members were asked to share the job posting with qualified candidates in their networks before the deadline.
 - Water Levels and Dam Operations – After a wet summer, September 2024 was the driest September on record, and Fall 2024 precipitation to date remains below normal. Due to this precipitation deficit, most of the watershed is classified as “abnormally dry.” Gray’s Bay Dam was closed on Oct. 4, 2024, in accordance with the dam’s operating plan and will be winterized and closed for the 2024 season later this month.

8:30pm

7. **Adjournment**

Goldsmith, Glisky. All approved.

Upcoming Meeting

Wednesday, January 15, 2025, Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting (Manager Maxwell: Board Liaison)