



Title: Permitting Program Briefings Discussion

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Purpose:

At the March 13, 2025, Operations and Programs Committee (OPC) Meeting, staff will introduce the concept of routine programmatic briefings from Permitting to the Board of Managers (Board), facilitating a discussion of how permitting strategically supports MCWD's mission, the purpose of the proposed briefings, criteria for filtering specific projects, and content the Board may find useful.

Background:

MCWD's Strategic Context:

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District's (MCWD) Balanced Urban Ecology approach explicitly recognizes that what happens on the landscape fundamentally affects the amount and quality of water within the watershed. However, the District does not control or own all the decisions that are made regarding the use of land. Therefore, to achieve its mission, MCWD works through partnership with the land use planning community (landowners, developers, engineers, transportation agencies, community development staff, and other public officials) to deliver its strategy of:

1. Building high impact projects that create vibrant and healthy places in the watershed
2. Developing policy at the interface of land and water planning, that influence the project outcomes of others

Permitting's Alignment with MCWD Mission:

MCWD's permitting program exists at the nexus of land use change and water resource protection. The policies and regulatory standards set by the MCWD Board exist to guide and shape development activity within the watershed, and to manage its impact on natural systems and processes that underpin urban ecology. In many ways, MCWD's permitting program is one of the most prominent ways in which MCWD's interfaces with the land use planning industry. Each year hundreds of applications are made to change the landscape of the Minnehaha Creek watershed, requiring alignment with MCWD policy, through thousands of interactions with municipal officials, developers, engineers, architects, landowners, and residents.

Given this setting, MCWD's permitting program is positioned to:

1. Observe and reflect on the implementation of policy
2. Shape projects across the watershed that affect land and water
3. Monitor patterns in infrastructure and land use projects
4. Build relationships with key stakeholders within the land use planning community

Purpose of Permitting Briefings:

The Board's primary engagement with permitting is through individual permits presented for consideration. Routine programmatic briefings may support the organization in building strategic perspectives on:

1. Patterns in the types of projects, their interface with current regulations, and potential emerging areas of policy
2. Notable development and infrastructure projects and overall land use trends
3. Projects with high public interest and/or projects that may experience challenges meeting MCWD rules
4. The effect of MCWD policies on watershed parameters, like water quality, wetlands, runoff volumes
5. Opportunities for potential partnership with projects that are planned and implemented by others
6. Relational and perception data as MCWD engages with residents, engineers, agency staff and elected officials

March 13, 2025, OPC Meeting:

At the March 13, 2025, OPC Meeting, staff will introduce the concept of routine programmatic briefings and facilitate a discussion with the Board.

The following questions are offered in preparation for the discussion:

- How does the permitting program strategically align and serve MCWD's vision and mission?
- What are the inherent opportunities and tensions in implementing a regulatory program?
- How may these briefings potentially serve MCWD, the Board, and Staff?
- What type of content should staff consider integrating into these briefings?

If there are questions in advance of the meeting, please contact Veronica Sannes at vsannes@minnehahacreek.org or 952.641.4580.