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**Title:** Establishing a MCWD Governance Advisory Council for a two-year Pilot Period

**Resolution number:** 26-042

**Prepared by:** James Wisker, [Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org](mailto:Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org)

**Recommended action:** Establish a MCWD Governance Advisory Council for a 2-year Pilot Period

**Background:**

As the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) enters a period of transition – including Board turnover, development of the 2027 Plan, and other continued organizational evolution – the Board of Managers has discussed the opportunity to intentionally invest in sustaining the Board’s effectiveness over time.

Recent Board discussion and feedback highlight that MCWD’s effectiveness in policy and project outcomes is underpinned by its governance culture – defined by long-range stewardship, diverse background and experience, disciplined consensus building, and strong partnership between the Board, staff and Citizen Advisory Committee.

To sustain future governance excellence, four areas of investment have been identified:

1. Succession Awareness and Planning

To support continuity of governance excellence by maintaining transparent awareness of future Board transitions and the capabilities needed to sustain MCWD’s mission.

- Understand the potential timing of Board transitions
- Reflect on the range of perspectives, experience, and skills that support effective governance
- Maintain open communication with appointing authorities regarding the Board’s role and expectations

2. Onboarding of New Board Members

To intentionally integrate new Managers into MCWD’s governance model through a structured and phased onboarding that balances:

- Relationship building
- Strategic context
- Governance expectations

3. Reinforcing and Institutionalizing Board Governance Culture

To articulate and preserve the Board’s governance norms, values and partnership model so they endure beyond individual members and guide consistent high-performance leadership over time.

- Board retreats and reflection on culture and strategy
- Documentation of governance principles
- Establishing a framework for ongoing evaluation of Board effectiveness

4. Establishing a Governance Advisory Council

Create a structured advisory group to:

- Support onboarding and mentorship for Board and staff leadership
- Workshop and advise early on direction of strategic initiatives
- Support Board awareness by sharing external perspectives, emerging trends and cross-sector insights

## **Governance Advisory Council:**

### Purpose and Role:

The GAC will exist to strengthen the effectiveness, continuity and culture of the MCWD Board by:

- Onboarding and Mentorship
  - a. Serve as a resource for new leaders through one-on-one mentorship and onboarding sessions
  - b. Preserve and hand off institutional wisdom (e.g. [Historic Insights and Principles of Success](#))
  - c. Provide insight into governance norms and practices (e.g. consensus-based decision-making)
- Early Stage Advising on Strategic Initiatives
  - a. Workshop and advise on the early direction of strategic initiatives (e.g. permitting as a value-add)
  - b. Provide perspective on framing, and potential risks and opportunities
  - c. Surface key considerations and alternative viewpoints to support the Board
- Situational Awareness
  - a. Support Board awareness by sharing external perspectives, emerging trends, or cross-sector insight
  - b. Offer perspective drawn from members' experience
  - c. Connect staff and Board to a broader network of advisors and perspectives

### Structure, Function and Evaluation:

The GAC will exist in a two-year pilot capacity as a non-decision-making body, serving at the discretion and request of the Board and/or Administrator, with no authority over policy or management of MCWD.

The Advisory Council will engage primarily through periodic meetings (e.g. quarterly), participation in onboarding sessions, and attendance at Board retreats as deemed appropriate by the Board – based on the purpose and content of the retreat. The Council's work will be integrated into existing Board development and governance processes, without creating parallel or duplicative structures.

The Board will evaluate the function and utility of the Council regularly and determine its continuation at the end of the two-year pilot period.

### Membership:

The Governance Advisory Council will be composed of a small group of 4-5 individuals, serving a two-year pilot term, selected for their experience, judgment, and alignment with MCWD's vision and governance model. Composition may include:

- Current Board representative (e.g. Board President or designee)
- Former MCWD Board Members with demonstrated leadership
- Select trusted advisors with relevant governance, leadership or strategic expertise

### 2-Year Pilot Focus:

For the two-year pilot phase, the Advisory Council may focus on the following areas:

- Onboarding of new Board members
- Mentorship of senior staff leadership
- Positioning MCWD permitting as a value-added partnership service at the interface of land use and water
- Future strategic implications of the 2027 Watershed Management Plan
- Expanding MCWD's network of advisors and perspectives



**RESOLUTION**

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WHEREAS, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District is entering a period of transition, including development of the 2027 Watershed Management Plan, Board turnover, and continued organizational evolution; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Managers has identified the opportunity to intentionally invest in sustaining and strengthening its effectiveness over time; and

WHEREAS, the Board’s effectiveness is grounded not only in policy and project outcomes, but in its governance culture – defined by long-range stewardship, disciplined consensus-based decision-making, and strong partnership among the Board, staff and Citizen Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS, maintaining this governance model through transition requires deliberate attention to onboarding, the transfer of institutional knowledge, governance culture and strategic continuity; and

WHEREAS, the Board has identified that the establishment of a Governance Advisory Council may support onboarding and mentorship, provide early-stage perspective on strategic initiatives, and enhance situational awareness through external insights, without exercising policy-making authority; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of a Governance Advisory Council is intended to operate solely in an advisory capacity, with no authority over policy decisions, staff management or regulatory matters; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers hereby establishes a Governance Advisory Council for a two-year pilot period to support Board effectiveness, continuity and governance culture, through emphasis on onboarding and mentorship, early-stage advice on strategic initiatives, and broadening the Board’s situational awareness through external perspectives and cross-sector insights.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Administrator is directed to work in coordination with the Board President to develop and present a list of recommended candidates for Board consideration, consistent with the desired composition and purpose of the Governance Advisory Council; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board shall periodically evaluate the function and utility of the Governance Advisory Council and determine whether to continue, modify, or sunset the Council at the conclusion of the two-year pilot period.

Resolution Number 26-042 was moved by Manager \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by Manager \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Motion to adopt the resolution \_\_\_ ayes, \_\_\_ nays, \_\_\_ abstentions. Date: 4/9/2026

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 Secretary Date: \_\_\_\_\_