



Wednesday, January 14, 2026

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

MCWD Boardroom

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 Maxwell

Citizens Advisory Committee Members Present:

Ricardo Bonner, Cait Caswell, Robert Glisky, Laurie Goldsmith, Steve Hage, Suzanne Jiwani, Drew McGovern, Will Mulhern, Rich Nyquist, Janet Schaefer

Citizens Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Joshua Foschi, John Iverson, Sheri Wallace

MCWD Staff Present: Becky Christopher, Samantha Hoppe, Maia Irvin, James O'Brien,
James Wisker

6:35 pm

1. **Committee Meeting Call to Order**

Chair Glisky called the meeting to order.

2. **Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**

2.1 January 14, 2026 agenda

Jiwani, Schaefer, all approved.

3. **Approval of Minutes (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**

3.1 November 12, 2025 minutes

Nyquist, Bonner, all approved.

4. **Action Items**

4.1 Executive Committee Election

O'Brien and Acting Chair Glisky explained the CAC Executive Committee's role and responsibilities. Glisky opened the floor for nominations, starting with the Chair, then Vice-Chair, followed by two Executive Officer positions. Glisky was nominated for the 2026 CAC Chair. CAC members elected Glisky as Chair. Jiwani was nominated for the 2026 CAC Vice-Chair. CAC members elected Jiwani as Vice-Chair. Schaefer, Nyquist, and Bonner were nominated for Executive Officer positions. CAC members elected Schaefer and Bonner for the two Executive Officer positions in 2026. Based on the election, the 2026 CAC Executive Committee composition is as follows: Chair Glisky, Vice-Chair Jiwani, and Executive Officers Schaefer and Bonner.

7:00 pm

5. **Discussion Items**

5.1 Look Ahead – O'Brien

To begin the look-ahead presentation, O'Brien provided an overview of MCWD's strategic approach and vision for a [Balanced Urban Ecology](#) (BUE). MCWD's BUE policy guided the development of MCWD's [2017 Watershed Management Plan](#) (Plan), which created a framework to support and advance MCWD's two strategic areas of projects and policy. MCWD is beginning the development of the [District's 2027 Plan](#), which will be a continuation of the policy direction set in the 2017 Plan. To achieve this direction and respond to future watershed needs, the 2027 Plan will focus on four areas of work:

1. Subwatershed Planning – Develop tailored, actionable implementation plans for each subwatershed.
2. Land and Water Partnership – Create policy tools and best practices to support integrated planning.
3. Flood Management Strategy – Assess flood risk and mitigation strategies to establish a regional framework.
4. Metrics of Success – Build an evaluation framework to measure and communicate progress.

Over the next two years, MCWD will engage the watershed's communities and partners to develop outputs for each of these areas of work for the 2027 Plan.

O'Brien then stepped through each of the key areas of work, starting with subwatershed planning. MCWD's [focal geography](#) approach targets areas of high need in the watershed to form strong partnerships and implement high-impact capital projects. The Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed, or lower watershed, has been a priority area for MCWD over the past decade. MCWD has concentrated its efforts in two principal areas, the [Minnehaha Creek Greenway](#) and, more recently, the Minnehaha Parkway. Projects such as the [Minnehaha Creek Preserve](#), [Methodist Hospital](#), [Japs Olsen](#), and [Cottageville Park](#) were highlighted as examples. O'Brien also noted an ongoing project in the City of Hopkins, the Gateway to the Greenway, which will expand Cottageville Park in Hopkins and create a western entrance to the Minnehaha Creek Greenway with a new plaza and scenic overlook of Minnehaha Creek, and is set for construction to begin in early 2026. Downstream, in Minneapolis, MCWD has a history of partnership and investment with the award-winning 1990's [Clean Water Partnership](#). O'Brien highlighted that a revitalized partnership with the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will be advancing stormwater projects aimed at addressing both water quality and flooding concerns along Minnehaha Parkway in 2026 and beyond. This region will be a planning priority in the 2027 Plan process.

O'Brien then transitioned into the upper watershed, where the District deploys its Lake Minnetonka strategy, aimed at addressing pollutant loading in the largest tributaries into the Lake. Looking first to the [Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay Subwatershed](#), which has been another area of significant investment for the District over the past decade. As the headwaters to the watershed, which drains to the most degraded bay in Lake Minnetonka, Halsted Bay, MCWD has advanced numerous landscape and in-lake restoration projects to measurably improve natural resources in the area. Examples include the [Six Mile Marsh Prairie Restoration](#), [Wassermann Lake Preserve](#), and the completion of one of the state's largest [carp management and habitat restoration programs, which informed a statewide effectiveness study](#), to guide carp management programs. In early 2026, MCWD will complete the [East Auburn Wetland Restoration](#) project, the newest project in the Subwatershed, which will improve water quality flowing to East Auburn Lake. In both the Minnehaha Creek and Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Subwatersheds, MCWD will reconvene partners to identify next-generation

project opportunities for integration into the 2027 Plan. In addition, MCWD's 2027 Plan will see MCWD expand its portfolio of focal geographies to include both the Long Lake and Painter Creek Subwatersheds.

In the Long Lake Creek subwatershed, which drains to impaired Tanager Lake, the partners will build on the [Long Lake Creek Roadmap](#), which identified 34 potential projects across the cities of Medina, Long Lake, and Orono, to guide implementation. The [County Road 6 Pond Retrofit](#) project in Orono is currently in construction and will improve water quality flowing downstream to Long Lake.

The Painter Creek Subwatershed, which drains to impaired West Arm, Jennings, and Harrison's Bays, is unique in respect to both land use and hydrology, meaning restoration will require a strong understanding of the potential pollutant sources driving poor water quality. MCWD has been conducting diagnostic monitoring across the subwatershed to identify sources and potential projects. In 2026, MCWD will complete diagnostic work, which will support engagement and planning with the Subwatershed's communities throughout the Plan process. O'Brien noted that while diagnostic work has been ongoing, MCWD has leveraged its [Land and Water Partnership](#) program to support the City of Medina's [Morningside Stormwater Improvement Project](#), which provides regional stormwater treatment to improve water quality in Jennings Bay.

O'Brien then transitioned to the next key area of work in the 2027 Plan, land and water partnerships. This area of work will include several policy-focused deliverables meant to improve the integration of land and water resource planning among MCWD's partners, including policy tools and best practices, as well as an interactive mapping tool to support project identification.

The third key area of work, building a regional flood management strategy, is a central theme of the 2027 Plan update. O'Brien noted that with a strong existing framework for water quality management, MCWD is seeking to build a similar, data-driven strategy to support flood management. With the watershed becoming warmer and wetter, intense precipitation and flooding events are resulting in costly impacts to infrastructure, natural systems, and communities. Following the wettest seven-year period on record in the Twin Cities, between 2013 and 2019, the MCWD Board of Managers directed staff to identify the District's role in addressing the threats posed by climate change. This involved an extensive internal discovery process, in which the CAC was heavily involved, resulting in MCWD's [Climate Action Framework](#). O'Brien highlighted that through the 2027 Plan development process, MCWD will convene partners to assess current and future flood risks, evaluate flood management strategies, tradeoffs, and applications, to develop an implementation framework that includes goals, strategies, roles, and funding sources for building long-term regional resilience.

O'Brien then transitioned to the final key area of work, the development of a metrics-based evaluation framework. The evaluation framework will identify metrics of progress across MCWD's four goals: water quality, water quantity, ecological integrity, and thriving communities, to support evaluation and reporting for both the 2017 and 2027 Plan cycles. O'Brien noted that the CAC will be heavily involved in the development of the framework, as they provide a unique perspective as representatives of MCWD's member communities. O'Brien then transitioned to the engagement planning process that will support the development of the 2027 Plan. MCWD will be conducting a thorough engagement process with both public partners and the general public. Partner

engagement will be primarily focused on city staff and policymakers, as they exercise land use authority and are key to implementing MCWD's integrated planning approach to watershed management. This will include two advisory groups: a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of public agency staff and technical experts, and a Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) consisting of public agency policymakers. TAC and PAC members, alongside other community partners will also participate in regular subwatershed planning workshops to support both localized and watershed-wide planning efforts. He also noted that to complement the city staff and policy maker engagement, MCWD will be advancing targeted community engagement efforts, including engagement with the watershed's indigenous communities, business leaders, and residents in key areas of investment. An online survey and open houses will support broader engagement with residents across the watershed.

O'Brien noted that the CAC will be kept informed on all major engagement milestones throughout the Plan process and noted that tonight's discussion will focus on identifying how to best leverage the unique perspective and value of the CAC to support the development of the Plan. O'Brien then shared a draft schedule for both 2026 and 2027 for CAC members to vet and refine. A CAC member commented that the 2027 Plan seems like it will be a major focus for CAC engagement over the next two years. O'Brien confirmed and reinforced that all MCWD strategic priorities over the next two years will be in support of the 2027 Plan. Another CAC member asked when the Plan needs to be completed. Policy Planning Director Becky Christopher noted that the Plan is technically due at the end of 2027, but noted that the formal comment and review processes may extend into 2028. A CAC member commented that it makes sense for the CAC to focus on the Plan process, as the outcome will identify the District's trajectory over the next decade. Another member asked for clarification on the three subwatershed groups. District Administrator James Wisker explained that these groups will provide greater depth on local priorities and issues across the watershed (land use, stage of development, regional pressures, etc.) to ensure that MCWD's approach is reflective of local context.

CAC members then separated into small groups to discuss current and potential engagement opportunities over the next two years, as well as to provide insight into ways the CAC's unique perspective could be better leveraged in these engagements. CAC members then reported on their discussions. Overall, members' insights included:

- Interest in the CAC having a more active role beyond meetings, particularly in engaging with their home communities.
- The CAC's value in helping vet and shape MCWD communications, especially around flooding, and impacts to residents' daily lives.
- Desire for the CAC to help staff understand how communities receive information, to better target and refine outreach efforts.
- Interest in deeper learning opportunities (e.g., water governance, integrated planning, economic development connected to natural systems).
- Support for more discussion-oriented meeting structure, including earlier use of engagement tools (e.g., Mentimeter), small-group discussion, and "homework" or preparation outside of meetings.
- Enthusiasm for providing CAC members with tools and resources to promote MCWD's work externally and build community partnerships.
- Interest in contributing to long-term planning metrics and defining measures of success.

O'Brien thanked the CAC for their thoughtful responses and participation in the discussion and noted that insights will continue to shape not only the upcoming meeting topics as the 2027 Plan is developed, but also how the meetings are structured to ensure effective engagement.

8:17 pm

6. Informational Items + Updates

6.1 CAC Member Updates

- Glisky reminded the CAC about the upcoming Plan Kickoff Event.
- Nyquist described his work with Nine Mile Creek Watershed monitoring chloride levels, noting that monitoring efforts were paused this year because chloride concentrations are elevated throughout the watershed, eliminating the need to identify specific hotspots.
- Schaefer noted that she had seen the active construction for the County Road Pond Retrofit in Orono.

6.2 Board Liaison Updates

- Manager Maxwell thanked the CAC for their thoughtful dialogue and quality feedback. He shared that the Board recently ordered the [Montgomerie Avenue Stormwater Project](#), the newest addition to the suite of projects in MCWD's [LWP Program](#). He also shared that construction is set to begin in the Spring for the [Gateway to the Greenway Project](#) in Hopkins, and also profiled the recent Minnesota Watersheds' Project of the Year Award that MCWD and its partners received for the [Arden Park Restoration](#).

6.3 Staff Updates

O'Brien provided updates on CAC appointments, the 2027 Plan Kickoff Event, and capital projects. Wisker provided an update on Board appointments.

- CAC Member Updates & New Member Onboarding: New member onboarding will continue in February and March and will culminate with a capstone field trip to an MCWD project location, likely in June. Resolutions of Recognition for the outgoing CAC members are on the [January 22nd Board meeting](#) agenda, to formally recognize their contributions to the District. Members who are interested in joining the newly formed DEI Task Force are encouraged to contact the CAC liaison.
- 2027 Watershed Management Plan Kickoff: Due to low registration, the evening session for the 2027 Plan Kickoff Event is cancelled. CAC members are encouraged to register for the event if they have not done so already. The event will take place at the Minnetonka Community Center from 9:30 – 11:30 AM, with the presentation beginning at 10 AM.
- Capital Project Updates: Both the [East Auburn Wetland Restoration](#) and [County Road 6 Pond Retrofit](#) projects are under construction. Both projects anticipate construction to be finalized by the middle of February or early March, respectively. The [Greenway to Cedar Trail Connection](#) project is moving through the St. Louis Park City Council in February, with the goal of beginning preliminary construction site preparation this winter.
- Board Appointments: The MCWD Board of Managers serves staggered three-year terms, resulting in the annual appointment of at least two managers each year. Six managers are appointed by the Hennepin County Board and one by the Carver County Board. In 2026, MCWD will have two Hennepin County-appointed vacancies to fill.

8:47 pm

7. Adjournment

Nyquist, Schaefer, all approved.

Upcoming Meeting

Wednesday, March 18, 2026, Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting (Manager Olson: Board Liaison)