MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

QUALITY OF WATER QUALITY OF LIFE

Wednesday, September 16, 2026

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
MCWD Boardroom
www.minnehahacreek.org

Board of Managers:
Sherry White, President; William Olson, Vice President; Eugene Maxwell, Treasurer; Ricardo Bonner, Manager; Arun Hejmadi, Secretary; Steve Sando, Manager; Janet Schaefer, Manager

Board Liaisons: Manager Hejmadi

Citizens Advisory Committee Members Present:
Cait Caswell, Joshua Foschi, Robert Glisky, Laurie Goldsmith, Steve Hage, Will Mulhern, Rich Nyquist

Citizens Advisory Committee Members Absent:
Drew McGovern, Sheri Wallace, John Iverson

MCWD Staff Present:
Becky Christopher, Corrina Marshall, Maia Irvin

Members of the Public Present:
Gary Dukes

6:30 pm

1. Committee Meeting Call to Order
Chair Glisky called the meeting to order.

2. Approval of Agenda *(Additions/Corrections/Deletions)*
2.1 September 16, 2026 agenda
Goldsmith, Nyquist. All approved.

3. Approval of Minutes *(Additions/Corrections/Deletions)*
3.1 May 20, 2026 minutes
Foschi, Hage. All approved.

4. Action Items
No action items.

6:35 pm

5. Discussion Items
5.1 2027 Plan: Land Use Integration – **Christopher/Marshall**
Policy Planning Director, Becky Christopher, and Policy Planning Coordinator, Corinna Marshall introduced the meeting discussion, focused on building a shared understanding of the land use process, how it relates to watershed outcomes, and MCWD's approach to supporting land use and water integration opportunities.

Christopher shared that this is an important work area of the 2027 Watershed Management Plan (Plan) process and framed the recent and upcoming context of engagement with the Plan's advisory committees. Christopher noted that the

July Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting and upcoming Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) are focused on understanding community water resource priorities, governance, and improvement activities. This groundwork will support the next phase of PAC and TAC discussions, which will tie in land use considerations. Christopher framed some of the high-level reflections from recent PAC and TAC meetings, including affirmation for MCWD's partnership approach, appreciation for efforts to streamline and reorient permitting, recognition of the scale and impact of MCWD's projects, and a continued demand for MCWD to support a range of community water resource improvements. However, as MCWD is a small, regional organization, through the 2027 Plan process, the District is working to align priorities and roles with partners, to foster reciprocity and ensure MCWD can work with partners most effectively to achieve the greatest water resource outcomes. TAC and PAC members have reflected that water resources are a high priority for their communities, but they face many competing priorities, capacity limitations, and constraints that make it challenging to lead large-scale projects. As a result, communities reflected that MCWD can add significant value as a planning, funding, and technical partner, to help them identify and implement project opportunities. To support this direction, MCWD will be working to provide recommendations, policy tools, and best practices to support integrated planning.

To accomplish this, Marshall explained that the MCWD team is working to build its understanding of the land use process and map opportunities within the system for stronger integration. Marshall then walked through key elements of the land use process and intersections with watershed work. Cities control land use designation, zoning, capital programming, and development approvals. City staff create Comprehensive Plans every ten years with Met Council direction and plan how it will develop its land, redevelop older areas, ensure adequate housing, provide roads and sewers, protect natural areas, and meet other community objectives. Cities are required to include a local surface water management plan (SWMP) as part of their Comprehensive Plan. Most cities currently treat the SWMP as a separate process and work product from their Comprehensive Plan, usually in the form of an appendix. These SWMPs report on city water programs and practices. Private developers respond to policy signals from Comprehensive Plans, the timing of different infrastructure projects, and market conditions. Cities review early development plans and provide feedback through Planning Commissions and Council to ensure alignment with their Comprehensive Plan. For private developers, their last step is often looking for permits, including watershed permits. This typically results in MCWD being brought into land use at the end of the process, when key decisions have already been made, limiting opportunities for water resource benefit beyond regulatory compliance.

With this understanding of the process, MCWD can highlight opportunities for cities and private developers to bring the District in early to shape land use decisions and water resource outcomes. However, to advise these land use decision-makers effectively, MCWD needs a strong understanding of community priorities, both for water resources and other community needs; that way MCWD can help communities think about integration opportunities, like zoning or conservation planning, that align with shared goals.

Marshall and Christopher shared an example of this approach, with the City of Victoria. In the City's last comprehensive planning process, MCWD engaged extensively in evaluating the City's western growth corridor, where they

anticipated future development, and analyzed opportunities for natural resource preservation and improvement alongside the sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure necessary to support planned development patterns. This way, water and natural resources were one of the first considerations of the City as they were planning development, rather than at the very end of the process as a regulatory constraint.

Marshall also explained some examples of MCWD partnering with private developers. At the Mader Wetland Bank, MCWD engaged with landowners and the City to provide an opportunity for the Mader family to integrate a wetland bank with a development subdivision, increasing value for the landowner, the City, and the developer, while completing an impactful wetland restoration. Another example is MCWD's partnership with the Crooked Water Golf Club, where the permitting team helped the Golf Club navigate wetland buffer regulations and ultimately found an opportunity to restore four acres of historically filled wetland, creating greater benefit than regulation alone.

Christopher opened the floor for discussion, asking what questions CAC members have about the content, what they found looking at their own community's Comprehensive Plans and SWMPs, and how MCWD could make integration recommendations actionable. CAC members asked what made the partnership with the City of Victoria possible and how that could inform work with other communities. Marshall and Chrisopher noted that MCWD's strong relationship with the City, their development pressure, and their strong environmental priorities were conducive to the planning partnership.

CAC members then paired up to discuss the questions presented. CAC members reported they had more familiarity with smaller water projects (i.e. rain gardens) reflected in their community SWMPs, rather than the large-scale, regional projects MCWD leads. CAC members reflected on the differences between communities, noting space constraints, community-driven priorities, identified water resource issues (i.e. stormwater or chloride), and implementation approaches ranging from BMPs to regulation.

When discussing how to make recommendations actionable, CAC members noted MCWD should be in front of these agencies as soon as possible since most communities are currently in the midst of their Comprehensive Planning processes. CAC members emphasized the importance of demonstrating MCWD's value as a planning partner with specific case studies and example of how integration recommendations can be implemented. CAC members also suggested an opportunity framework for different types of land use planning could help MCWD and cities identify project opportunities early. CAC members noted the importance of building community support and suggested messaging to these partners could emphasize broader co-benefits of this approach and how proactive water planning will lead to less regulatory challenges in the future.

8:10 pm **6. Informational Items + Updates**

6.1 CAC Member Updates

- Irvin provided an update that the DEI Task Force has reviewed MCWD's DEI approach in context of watershed demographic data, to identify opportunities for the Task Force and the CAC to be stewards of MCWD's DEI approach and support more inclusive CAC recruitment. Irvin noted the Task Force has identified several ideas to test in this recruitment cycle, and others to explore in future years.

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- Glisky and Irvin provided an update on the Engagement Guidelines development that the Executive Team has been working to develop, which will be shared with the full CAC for review and approval at an upcoming meeting. Irvin led a Mentimeter poll to get CAC feedback on engagement expectations being considered within the draft guidelines.
- Irvin shared an update on 2027 Recruitment and Appointment process, noting that CAC members should have received an email from Samantha Hoppe in the previous week noting their membership status for this year's appointment cycle. She reiterated that CAC members are expected to share MCWD's call for applicants with at least one community organization in their area, encourage at least one friend, neighbor, or other connection to apply, and spread the word more broadly by sharing the call for applicants across your network with the recruitment materials provided. The CAC application will remain open through October 20.

6.2 Board Liaison Updates

- Manager Hejmadi provided a brief update that the Board ordered the Cedar Avenue Stormwater and Restoration Project at its August 13, 2026, Board Meeting.
- Manager Hejmadi shared that the Board approved the 2027 Budget and certified the 2027 Tax Levy at the September 10, 2026 Board Meeting. MCWD is maintaining a flat levy with a balanced budget in 2027.

6.3 Staff Updates

- Irvin provided an update on several active Capital Projects. She noted that the Minneapolis Thriving Waters Partnership is advancing its first project at the intersection of Minnehaha Parkway and Cedar Ave into the design phase. She noted MCWD is preparing for the Partnership's next Policy Steering Committee meeting in early November. Irvin also shared that MCWD recently completed the Downtown Long Lake Stormwater Study and presented the study's findings and project recommendations to the Long Lake City Council. The study evaluated stormwater treatment opportunities in the city's downtown area and recommended two regional treatment projects for immediate implementation. She shared the Gateway to the Greenway project remains in active construction, and construction on the Greenway-Cedar Trail Connection will begin within the next couple weeks and run on a similar timeline as the Gateway, with substantial completion anticipated for Spring 2027.
- Irvin shared that MCWD recently hired a new Outreach Coordinator, Caitlin Johnson, who will be starting on September 22, 2026, and serve as the primary staff liaison to the CAC.
- Irvin shared that water levels have remained low and continued to gradually decline since July, as drought conditions have persisted and intensified, with much of the watershed now in extreme drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. Gray's Bay Dam was closed on Aug. 24, as the Lake level reached its natural runout elevation of 928.6 feet, in accordance with the operating plan. Based on the current water levels, the Dam will remains closed unless the watershed receives enough precipitation to increase the Lake level above its natural runout elevation.

8:30 pm **7. Adjournment**

Goldsmith, Nyquist. All approved.

Upcoming Meeting

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