MINNEHAHA CREEK
WATERSHED DISTRICT
QUALITY OF WATER, QUALITY OF LIFE

Meeting: Citizens Advisory Committee
Meeting date: 11/10/2026
Agenda Item #: 4.1
Item type: Action

Title: Adopt the Citizens Advisory Committee Engagement Guidelines

Prepared by: Name: Caitlin Johnson
Phone: 952-641-4523
Email: cjohnson@minnehahacreek.org

Purpose:
At the November 10, 2026, meeting of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), MCWD staff will present the CAC Engagement Guidelines for adoption. This memo provides background on the purpose of the Engagement Guidelines and the process for developing the document.

Background:
In early 2026, the CAC Executive Team suggested the creation of an Engagement Guidelines document to complement the CAC bylaws and outline the expectations and responsibilities for effective CAC engagement both within and outside regular CAC meetings. The Engagement Guidelines were created to support new CAC member onboarding and ongoing member participation, to foster meaningful engagement rooted in respect and responsibility.

Process:
MCWD staff and the CAC Executive Team collaborated on an initial outline for the guidelines, including sections for the role of the CAC, meeting participation expectations, and additional engagement opportunities. Building from this outline, the CAC Executive Team drafted the guidelines with MCWD staff feedback. The Executive Team finalized the draft Engagement Guidelines in late fall of 2026, which were then formatted by MCWD staff. The draft Engagement Guidelines were shared for review and comment by the full CAC on October 30, 2026, in advance of the November 10, 2026, CAC meeting.

November 10, 2026, CAC meeting:
At the November 10, 2026, CAC meeting, staff will review the process to develop the engagement guidelines with the Executive Team, describe any CAC input received on the final draft, and present the engagement guidelines for adoption by the full CAC.

Attachments:
- DRAFT Citizens Advisory Committee Engagement Guidelines



CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Engagement Guidelines

NOVEMBER 2026

MINNEHAHA CREEK
WATERSHED DISTRICT

Purpose

These Engagement Guidelines are intended to support a respectful, inclusive, and productive environment for CAC meetings and activities. Guided by the CAC bylaws, these guidelines intend to support meaningful dialogue, enhance all CAC members' experience, and increase the value of CAC input and engagement in meetings or related activities.

To build and maintain understanding, these guidelines will be shared with new CAC members at the start of their terms and briefly reviewed annually at the first CAC meeting of each year, typically in January.

Contents:

2……. Role of the CAC
Expectations of Members
3……. Meeting Participation
Meeting Agenda and Flow
Meeting Discussions
5……. Additional Engagement
Representing the MCWD Brand
Opportunities for Increased Engagement
7……. Appendix:
Process and Acknowledgements
CAC Bylaws

Role of the CAC

The CAC is a resident-led volunteer advisory group of watershed residents. The CAC serves at the pleasure of the MCWD Board of Managers, operating under Minnesota Statutes § 103D.331 and its own bylaws to assist the Board on matters affecting the interests of the MCWD.

The CAC serves in an advisory capacity, providing input to strengthen the MCWD's projects, policy initiatives, programs, budget processes, communications, and other activities. As advisors, the CAC uses their unique background and skills to help MCWD consider its work in new ways, providing non-binding advice on how to improve their ideas and plans. Members provide an inward flow of information, leveraging their networks and local knowledge to inform their advisory work.

The CAC has a critical role to play in leveraging its varied perspectives to help examine, refine, and build upon the ideas that underpin MCWD's work. The Board and staff keep the CAC informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and questions, and share how CAC discussions, ideas, and input influence decisions.

DRAFT

Expectations of Members

CAC members are expected to:

- Act in the public interest and support the CAC's advisory role.
- Treat all participants with respect, courtesy, and professionalism.
- Engage meaningfully in regular meetings, limiting absences, tardiness, and distractions.
- Contribute to effective time management of meetings by arriving on time, following the agenda, and supporting the timely closure of the meeting.
- Engage in thoughtful, solution-oriented discussion by providing constructive feedback.
- Help create space for a diverse range of perspectives and experiences.
- Support meeting processes that promote fairness, clarity, equity, and transparency.

Meeting Participation

Meeting Preparation

To foster meaningful collaboration and discussion during meetings, it is important that members prepare for each meeting by completing the following:

- Review the agenda, meeting minutes, memo, and packet materials ahead of time.
- Come with questions that test approaches and assumptions, highlight areas of concern, and daylight potential gaps or feedback for the staff and Board.
- Acknowledge potential knowledge gaps for the discussion and as time allows, proactively seek out information or resources to support greater understanding in advance.
- Reflect on the impact of MCWD's projects and initiatives on the natural resources, community, and geography.
- Come prepared to share relevant community news, emerging issues, or policy concerns from your community that could influence MCWD's future projects, programming, or decisions.

DRAFT

Meeting Agenda and Flow

CAC meetings are structured to support clear and balanced discussion. Meetings generally follow Robert's Rules of Order, adapted to support thoughtful discussion and participation.

The Chair of the CAC is tasked with facilitating meetings and orderly moving the committee through the following agenda structure:

- Committee Meeting Call to Order
    - The official start of the meeting, led by the CAC Chair.
- Approval of Agenda
    - Approval signifies the CAC understands and agrees with the proposed agenda and discussion items, CAC members may suggest amendments to the agenda for further discussion, updates, or action, which must be approved by the full CAC with a motion, second, and majority vote.
- Approval of Minutes
    - The minutes serve as the official record of CAC meetings and a reliable point of reference for past decisions and discussions. Members may suggest additions or edits to the meeting minutes before they are approved by the full CAC with a motion, second, and majority vote.
- Action Items
    - Action items refer to substantive matters requiring a decision or vote from the CAC, such as electing Executive Team members, approving CAC documents, or formal recommendations. All actions require motion, second, and majority vote.
- Discussion Items
    - Discussion items are the central component of CAC meetings, as they provide an opportunity for CAC members to provide input, feedback, questions, and reflections on MCWD's initiatives. Discussion topics are framed by staff and vetted by CAC at the first CAC meeting of the year. Discussion is informal, consisting of MCWD presenting a topic or project and inviting discussion through mixed formats. CAC members may formalize consensus-based recommendations with a motion, second, and majority vote, but such action is typically unnecessary.
- Informational Items + Updates
    - CAC Member Updates: Members are invited to share relevant community concerns, events, or projects, and propose ideas for future exploration.
    - Board Liaison Updates: An MCWD Board Liaison attends each meeting to share Board-level updates and bring CAC input back to the Board.
    - Staff Updates: Staff provide updates to the CAC on MCWD projects, initiatives, and activities to support continued situational awareness and future discussion.

DRAFT

Meeting Discussions

To foster productive conversations, it is expected that members:

- Actively participate in group discussions, facilitated exercises, and other activities aimed at soliciting CAC input.
- Be mindful and ensure all CAC members have the opportunity to participate in discussions.
- Listen actively and allow others to finish speaking before responding or sharing a new idea.
- In discussing feedback, focus on ideas and issues rather than individuals.
- Use respectful language and tone to constructively share differing viewpoints.
- Use established processes, such as motions and hand signals to be recognized by the Chair and help clarify direction.

Additional Engagement

While the baseline expectation for CAC engagement centers on bimonthly meeting participation, members who wish to expand their impact can pursue additional opportunities. Feedback gathered from the membership indicates a strong openness to enhanced preparation, ongoing learning, and deeper involvement outside of regular CAC meetings.

Representing the MCWD Brand

CAC members often engage with community members, partners, and stakeholders outside of regular meetings.

In these settings, members are encouraged to:

- Represent the mission, values, and work of MCWD authentically and thoughtfully.
- Share information about CAC discussions only as appropriate.
- Be mindful to distinguish between personal perspectives and formal positions or decisions of MCWD or the Board.
- Listen to community input with openness and curiosity and bring those perspectives back to MCWD when relevant.
- Direct individuals to MCWD staff for detailed questions, official statements, or technical information when needed.

DRAFT

Opportunities for Increased Engagement

Enhancing MCWD Initiatives

During and outside of meetings, CAC members are encouraged to bring forward ideas that enhance MCWD's reach and effectiveness:

- Propose methods to enhance the annual recruitment and appointment process.
- Share examples of innovative work from other sectors that relate to current MCWD initiatives.
- Identify community events where MCWD's presence would be valuable.
- Share emerging community or policy concerns that could influence MCWD's future projects, programming or policy decisions.
- Recommend tools, resources, or communication strategies that could enhance MCWD's operations and effectiveness.

Participating in MCWD Meetings and Events

- Attend the annual MCWD field trip for increased understanding and relationship-building with fellow CAC members, staff, and Board members.
- Attend and observe MCWD Board meetings for exposure to organizational initiatives, processes, and Board perspectives.
- Attend community meetings and events to learn more about specific projects and support broader community participation (ex. project meetings, planning events, public hearings).

Bridging MCWD and Local Communities

Active participation can also extend into the broader watershed community by connecting local networks back to the MCWD:

- Be an advocate and supporter for MCWD's work in your local community.
- Connect with local lake associations, neighborhood groups, environmental organizations, and municipal processes and share findings and areas of alignment relevant to MCWD's mission and regional context.

DRAFT

Appendix

Appendix 1. Process

These engagement guidelines were drafted by the 2026 CAC Executive Committee, with input and guidance from MCWD Staff.

The engagement guidelines were reviewed by the 2026 CAC and approved on November 10, 2026.

2026 CAC Members:

Chair Robert Glisky
Vice Chair Suzanne Jiwani
Executive Officer Rich Nyquist
Executive Officer Sheri Wallace
Cait Caswell
Joshua Foschi
Laurie Goldsmith
Steve Hage
John Iverson
Drew McGovern
Will Mulhern

Appendix 2. CAC Bylaws

CAC Bylaws, adopted in 2021, are available online here: https://minnehahacreek.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/2021-Final-Bylaws_Clean.pdf

DRAFT