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**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

**March 16, 2015**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Planning and Policy Committee was called to order by Committee Chair Calkins at 6:45 p.m. at the District offices, 15320 Minnetonka Boulevard, Minnetonka, Minnesota 55345.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

James Calkins, Richard Miller, and Brian Shekleton.

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Lars Erdahl, District Administrator; Becky Christopher, Senior Planner-Project Manager; James Wisker, Director of Planning and Projects; Michael Hayman, Planner-Project Manager; Tiffany Schaufler, Land and Project Manager, Chris Meehan, District Consulting Engineer; and Mr. Kurt Rogness.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mr. Wisker requested that item 5.4 Minnehaha Creek Greenway Updates be moved up to 5.3. The agenda was approved as amended.

**COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Comprehensive Plan – Focal Geographies**

Becky Christopher reviewed the Committee’s previous discussions on the form and function of the District’s Cost-Share and Land Conservation Programs under the Comprehensive Plan’s “two-track” approach of focal geographies and District wide responsiveness.

Ms. Christopher reviewed the merits of the two track approach as previously discussed by the Board and as specifically outlined in the *Balanced Urban Ecology* policy. She highlighted that addressing water resource impairments and issues throughout the District is a long term effort that will span many comprehensive plan cycles. Accordingly, Ms. Christopher noted, the *Balanced Urban Ecology* policy states a need to intensify and maintain focus on high priority projects, while not neglecting the routine needs of the entire watershed. She restated the District’s previous acknowledgment that increasing focus allows for the improved understanding of built and natural systems, ability to build partnerships and support, and the integration of MCWD water resource investments into other public and private sector efforts.

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47 Given the “two track” foundation of the next generation Comprehensive Plan, Ms. Christopher  
48 identified the need to develop principles to guide the selection of future focal geographies. She  
49 outlined a draft list of guiding criteria: number and severity of impairments and issues, public  
50 value of the impacted waters, local partnerships and support, known opportunities (landowner  
51 relationships, partner projects, funding sources), development/redevelopment pressure,  
52 likelihood of success (sufficient data, land rights, implementation potential), previous area  
53 investment.

54  
55 Manager Calkins asked how the District’s focal geographies would interact with total maximum  
56 daily loads (TMDLs). Ms. Christopher responded that based on the draft criteria the selection of  
57 focal geographies would be influenced by the presence, abundance and public value of  
58 impairments. Moreover, she noted that focal geographies did not preclude the District’s ability  
59 to remain responsive to opportunities to address impaired waters outside of focal geographies.  
60 Mr. Wisker agreed stating that focal and responsive geographies simply represented different  
61 pipelines for project development. He cited Richfield’s initiation of the Taft-Legion  
62 improvement project as a good example of how the District may be able to remain responsive to  
63 local efforts to address impairments outside of large, regional, focal geographies.

64  
65 Following discussion the Committee agreed that the draft criteria were reasonable and  
66 comprehensive, acknowledging that they may be refined in the future.

67  
68 Ms. Christopher then outlined an overarching process for planning within focal geographies:  
69

- 70 • E-grade program collects in-depth data, identifies data gaps and potential stressors
- 71 • District convenes stakeholders to share findings, gather information on partner goals and  
72 plans, identify areas of intersection and opportunity, and identify funding sources
- 73 • Develop implementation and investment framework
- 74 • Begin implementation while initiating planning in next geography

75  
76 The Committee agreed with the proposed planning framework, noting that iterations of this may  
77 be required within specific geographies to provide the resolution of information necessary to  
78 develop implementation and investment plans that were integrated into other public and private  
79 initiatives.

80  
81 The Committee discussed the content of the subwatershed implementation plans, comparing and  
82 contrasting focal and responsive geographies. The Committee identified the need to create  
83 subwatershed implementation plans that are less prescriptive than the 2007 Comprehensive Plan,  
84 with implementation being goal oriented and adaptable in order to remain responsive to  
85 emerging opportunities within a landscape. The Committee discussed the limitations of a  
86 prescribed 10 year capital improvement plan with specific projects, locations, costs and schedule.  
87 In review of the focal geography planning framework the Committee discussed the desire for the  
88 implementation plans to focus on strategies to address known issues, schedule and overarching  
89 costs. The Committee discussed the need within these geographies for increased program  
alignment, with District programs working in synchrony with capital improvements.

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90 Ms. Christopher reinforced this concept with examples of how e-grade is focusing monitoring  
91 efforts within priority geographies; permitting is working proactively with municipal partners in  
92 6 Mile; AIS is managing carp assessment in 6 Mile; and how Cost-Share grant fund ranking may  
93 prioritize projects that align with focal geography implementation. She noted that this discussion  
94 may be furthered during the completion of the self-assessment, planned for the coming month.  
95

96 The Committee discussed that in responsive geographies, implementation efforts may end up  
97 being similarly coordinated but that the pipeline for project and program implementation would  
98 predominantly be initiated by external partners rather than the District.  
99

100 Ms. Christopher noted that principal considerations of the model included a need to remain  
101 nimble and responsive to changing information and emerging opportunities; a need to comport  
102 with rules set by plan review agencies; and a need for transparency and accountability to  
103 stakeholders. She outlined several potential procedural tools that would aid in appropriately  
104 balancing specificity, responsiveness and transparency. Specifically, the annual capital  
105 improvement plan distribution was identified as providing the potential to annually telegraph  
106 emerging priorities based on partnership opportunities, and available funding sources, etc.  
107

108 Following further discussion the Committee agreed with the guiding frameworks and principles  
109 presented for implementing the Comprehensive Plan's two-track approach.  
110

111 Painter Creek Subwatershed Planning:

112 James Wisker summarized recent planning efforts within the Painter Creek subwatershed,  
113 specifically in proximity to Lake Katrina and Painter Marsh. He noted that these two project  
114 areas represented areas of potential work pursuant to the United States Army Corps of Engineers  
115 (USACE) Painter Creek Feasibility Study. The Committee discussed Painter Creek in context of  
116 a focal geography. It was determined that the District was currently well positioned to take  
117 advantage of emerging opportunities, rather than identify the subwatershed as an upcoming focal  
118 geography. The use of federal funding through the section 206 program was discussed. Mr.  
119 Wisker introduced a preliminary risk assessment should the District wish to revisit a potential  
120 partnership with the USACE to access the ~\$2.3 Million originally estimated as a federal  
121 contribution to the wetland restoration efforts within the corridor. The Committee discussed its  
122 interest in more carefully reexamining the potential to partner with the USACE and strategies to  
123 minimize the risk to the District through the USACE project partnership agreement.  
124

125 Minnehaha Creek Greenway Planning:

126 James Wisker provided an update to the Committee on the status of partnership planning with  
127 Japs Olson Company in St. Louis Park. He outlined the history of the partnership which  
128 originally contemplated potential land acquisition in the area, and more recently the development  
129 of a letter of understanding (LOU) with Japs Olson. He reviewed the content of the LOU and  
130 outlined the current posture of the partnership. The Committee restated support for the direction  
131 to collaborate with Japs Olson and St. Louis Park to convey land rights and proactively engage in  
132 area wide stormwater planning.  
133

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134 Six Mile Creek Subwatershed Planning:

135 James Wisker provided an update to the Committee on recent planning meetings with the City of  
136 Minnetrista and Three Rivers Park District regarding regional trail connections in the area and  
137 how they may ultimately relate to City water main connections and MCWD restoration  
138 initiatives. He also outlined recent efforts at the headwaters of the Six Mile Subwatershed at  
139 Pierson Lake to work with the Pierson Lake Association, local landowners and the Carver  
140 County Soil and Water Conservation District to address large agricultural drainage areas that  
141 exhibit wetland restoration potential.  
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143 Following discussion the Committee Meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.  
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145 Respectfully submitted,

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147 James Wisker  
148 Director of Planning and Projects  
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