



MEMORANDUM

To: MCWD Board of Managers
From: Becky Christopher, Policy Planning Manager
Date: November 26, 2019
Re: Responsive Model Development

Purpose:

The December 3, 2019 Operations and Programs Committee (OPC) meeting will be used to continue the discussion that was started at the November 21, 2019 Policy and Planning Committee (PPC) meeting regarding the development of the District's responsive implementation model. Staff will also provide an update on the external stakeholder engagement process and timeline.

Background:

The District's Watershed Management Plan (Plan), adopted in January 2018, solidified the District's Balanced Urban Ecology policy as the underlying organizational strategy. This strategy prioritizes partnership with the land use community to integrate policy, planning and implementation to leverage the value created when built and natural systems work together.

To implement this strategy, the Plan articulated an approach that is two-pronged:

- Focusing in areas of high need and opportunity to achieve significant, measurable resource improvement
- Remaining responsive to needs and opportunities district-wide through coordination with partners

These two approaches are described in Section 3.4.4 (Program Implementation) of the District's [Plan](#). The focused approach is a District-led effort that involves:

- Identifying an area of high resource need and opportunity
- Convening partners to align goals and plans and develop a roadmap for implementation
- Large-scale implementation and investment by the District and its partners

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The responsive approach is externally-driven and involves:

- Scanning for threats and opportunities created by land use change by promoting early coordination with the District
- Evaluating opportunities against the resource needs and priorities identified in the District's Plan
- Responding to opportunities by mobilizing a range of services to support partner efforts that align with District priorities

To operationalize this responsive implementation model, the District needs to (1) develop the internal framework and processes to support this approach and (2) develop the messaging and materials to communicate it to our target audiences.

Staff kicked off development of the responsive model at the January 2019 PPC meeting with a discussion of the goals and scope of work to develop the responsive model. There was also a brief discussion at the June Board retreat where the Managers expressed the importance of designing the responsive model in a way that allows the District to remain focused on its priorities. The Managers also indicated that there should not be a set budget or number of projects per year, but rather, that all opportunities would be weighed using clear criteria.

The District has been working with the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to vet and refine this model as it is developed. To date, the CAC has had three discussions at their March, April, and July 2019 meetings which covered the purpose and goals of the responsive model, target audiences, scope of services, high level process, and evaluative criteria.

At the August PPC meeting, staff reviewed the proposed process for engaging external stakeholders in the development of the District's partnership approach, including the responsive model, the realignment of the Permitting program, and a policy plan for improving the integration of land-use and water.

Summary:

At the December 3, 2019 OPC meeting, staff will recap the discussion from the November 21, 2019 PPC meeting and will pick up where that discussion left off with review of the evaluation criteria and next steps. Staff will also frame a couple of example opportunities to illustrate how the evaluation criteria would be applied. Attached is the draft framework that was provided in the November 21 PPC packet which outlines the following components of the responsive model:

- Purpose and goals
- Scope
- Process
- Evaluation
- Next steps

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Staff will also provide an update on the timeline for the external engagement process. If there are questions in advance of the meeting, please contact: Becky Christopher at (952) 641-4512 or bchristopher@minnehahacreek.org.

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Purpose and Goals:

Purpose:

Provide support for public and private projects and initiatives that are well-coordinated and align with District goals and priorities.

Goals:

- Improve water resources
- Improve integration and early coordination with land-use planning
- Provide service and value to communities
- Create a framework that is:
 - Clear and transparent
 - Efficient and cost-effective
 - Flexible and adaptive

Scope:

Below is the range of services that the District can provide to support the development and implementation of partner projects or initiatives. The District's role and level of support will be determined using the criteria and considerations outlined in the Evaluation section.

Audiences:

- Primary:
 - Cities/public partners
 - Private developers/
landowners
- Secondary:
 - Residents

Services:

- Planning assistance
 - Convening
 - Policy development
 - Project identification/
feasibility
- Technical assistance
 - Data collection and
analysis
 - Technical analysis
- Permitting assistance
 - Helping to navigate
permitting process
 - Exploring alternatives
(e.g. regional treatment)
- Project implementation
 - Design
 - Construction
 - Maintenance
- Land acquisition
 - Fee title purchase
 - Easement holder
- Financial assistance
 - MCWD funding/CIP
 - Pursuing outside funding
- Education and communications
 - Education/capacity-
building
 - Stakeholder engagement

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Process:

Both public and private partnership opportunities will follow the same general process for opportunity identification, evaluation, and response. One difference will be the timing of the processes.

Since cities and other public partners generally develop multi-year capital improvement plans, staff is proposing a more fixed annual process for evaluating and responding to these partnership opportunities. This will allow the District to compare opportunities against one another and sync the timing of the process with the District’s annual budget and work planning and external grant cycles.

For private projects, staff proposes a more flexible process to allow the District to act quickly in response to opportunities. This will mean that the District will need to have some reserve capacity in terms of both staff time and budget to evaluate and respond to opportunities. Below is a high level summary of both the public and private processes.

Process and Timeline - Public:

1. Opportunity identification and development
 - a. City/agency contacts District during concept stage through:
 - i. Annual meetings
 - ii. Exchange of CIPs/plans
 - iii. Coordination on specific opportunities (e.g. feasibility studies)
 - b. Meet to discuss opportunity, goals, benefits, potential roles
 - c. Preliminary screening:
 - i. Determine if project goes on the District’s project priority list
 - ii. Determine any District support through the planning stage – data/analysis, planning assistance, technical assistance, etc.
 - d. Establish MOU, if appropriate
 - e. Project development
2. Evaluation
 - a. Partner provides costs, benefits, etc.
 - b. District evaluates against its CIP and other responsive opportunities
 - c. Determine District role and level of support – technical assistance, design, funding (internal or external), etc.
3. Response
 - a. Formalize roles and expectations through cooperative agreement
 - b. Incorporate into District budget, work plans, external grant cycles
 - c. Implementation

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Process and Timeline - Private:

1. Opportunity identification
 - a. Opportunity identified through:
 - i. Developer/landowner coordination
 - ii. City coordination on private development review
 - iii. Staff screening of permit applications
 - b. Meet to discuss opportunity, requirements, goals, potential benefits
2. Evaluation
 - a. District evaluates against its CIP and other responsive opportunities
 - b. Determine District role and level of support – technical assistance, design, funding (internal or external), etc.
3. Response
 - a. Formalize roles and expectations through cooperative agreement
 - b. Project development and implementation

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Evaluation:

Rather than evaluating opportunities using a fixed formula, staff is proposing to use a suite of criteria and considerations as guidance in determining the District's role and level of support. The evaluation process involves two questions:

- Is this a “good” opportunity?
- What is the appropriate role and level of support for the District to provide?

Criteria for evaluating opportunity:

- Resource need/priority
 - Alignment with District-identified resource needs (e.g. impairment)
 - Public value of the resource (e.g. regional vs. local)
- Predicted/potential benefits
 - Progress toward MCWD goals (water quality, water quantity, ecological integrity)
 - Alignment with District-identified management strategies
 - Community benefits
- Cost effectiveness
 - Compared to alternatives
 - Compared to other past/current project opportunities

Considerations for determining District role and level of support:

- Goals/priorities
 - Alignment with District goals/priorities
 - Priority level for partner/landowner
- Understanding of resource needs/system
- Scale and complexity (e.g. multi-jurisdictional/regional vs. local issue)
- Relationships/support
- Early/effective coordination of the request
 - Did they engage the District during concept/feasibility stage?
 - Have the District's goals/plans/input been incorporated?
 - Is there adequate time to plan for capacity needs?
- Capacity
 - Partner capacity/expertise
 - District capacity/expertise
 - Funding sources
- Past/current District investment in the area
- Timing/urgency

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Next Steps:

The following is a summary of the work that needs to be completed to further develop and vet the responsive model.

1. Responsive model development (late 2019-second quarter 2020)
 - a. Develop internal processes and systems for:
 - i. Opportunity identification, routing, and evaluation
 1. Permit applications/District initiated
 2. City/partner initiated
 3. Resident/lake association requests
 - ii. Opportunity screening (GIS tool)
 - iii. Project tracking
 - iv. Decision process
 1. PPC/CAC review
 2. Partnership agreements
 - v. LGU Coordination Plan implementation and evaluation
 - vi. Predicting and managing staff capacity
 - vii. Evaluation and reporting
 - b. Develop external processes and timelines
 - i. Funding mechanism(s) (grant, opportunity-based CIP)
 - ii. Process and timeline (sync with CIP/budget process and outside grants)
 - iii. Requirements and expectations
 - c. Marketing strategy and materials
 - i. Strategy (informed by current Strategic Communications process)
 - ii. Messaging
 - iii. Materials - infographics, fact sheets, website, etc.
2. Internal vetting through CAC and PPC (first-second quarter 2020)
3. External vetting through stakeholder engagement process (second-third quarter 2020)
4. Board adoption (third quarter 2020)

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