

1 **DRAFT**

2 **MINUTES OF THE POLICY & PLANNING COMMITTEE**

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4
5 **August 25, 2016**

6
7 **CALL TO ORDER**

8
9 Manager Miller called the Committee to order at 4:35 p.m. at the District Offices,

10
11 15320 Minnetonka Blvd

12 Minnetonka, MN 55345

13
14 **COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

15
16 Dick Miller and Kurt Rogness

17
18 **NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

19
20 Bill Becker, Bill Olson, and Sherry Davis White

21
22 **OTHERS PRESENT**

23
24 Becky Christopher, Lead Planner & Project Manager

25 Craig Dawson, Director of Research & Monitoring

26 Darren Lochner, Education Program Manager

27 Dave Mandt, Director of Operations & Support Services

28 James Wisker, Director of Planning & Projects

29 Kailey Cermak, Water Quality Technician

30 Katherine Sylvia, Permitting Program Lead

31 Lars Erdahl, District Administrator

32 Maddie Johnson, Technical Support Services Specialist

33 Matthew Cook, Planning Assistant

34 Mike Hayman, Planner & Project Manager

35 Renae Clark, Planner & Project Manager

36 Sarah Fellows, Education Coordinator

37 Telly Mamayek, Director of Education & Communications

38 Tiffany Schaufler, Project & Land Program Manager

39 Yvette Christianson, Water Quality Manager

40
41 **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

42
43 The agenda was approved without amendment.

44

45

46

47 **MEETING SUMMARY**

48
49 Staff summarized the history of the District’s strategic planning efforts since 2009. Staff
50 revisited the purpose of the current strategic planning process, detailed the steps taken thus far,
51 and defined assumptions that would inform how the process would move forward.

52
53 The staff members that acted as facilitators during the program evaluation process presented
54 staff’s input. Feedback fell into four general categories:

- 55
56 • **Program Purpose / Direction** – determining the fundamental purpose for the program
57 and its general policy orientation
58
59 • **Coordination** – exploring how programs support and complement each other and ways
60 to improve cross-departmental communication and collaboration
61
62 • **Operational** – analyzing issues related to resource allocation, program structure and
63 staffing, operational efficiencies, and resource needs
64
65 • **New Priorities / Initiatives** – evaluating new program or organizational initiatives

66
67 Each facilitator discussed the feedback provided for the program they were assigned to.

68
69 Staff outlined the next steps of the process, including staff analysis of alternatives. At the next
70 Committee meeting, staff will present a more detailed process schedule and refined problem
71 statements and policy questions.

72
73 **COMMITTEE MEETING**

74
75 Mr. Wisker stated that the Managers would receive a packet of materials after the Committee
76 meeting, and that a digital version would also be dispersed.

77
78 Mr. Wisker introduced the Facilitator Group, a collection of staff who led focus groups, gathered
79 staff input, and helped to develop the process for program evaluations. He stated that members of
80 the Facilitator Group would be presenting the common themes of staff feedback regarding the
81 initial evaluation of each program.

82
83 Mr. Wisker listed the items that the Managers would receive after the meeting:

- 84
85 • Facilitator Group Recommendations for Organizational Evaluation
86 • Strategic Planning Process Chronology
87 • Resolution 15-085 – Approval of the Strategic Framework
88 • MCWD Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles, and Goals
89 • Executive Summaries of Program Evaluation Input, by Program

90

91 Mr. Wisker stated that the objectives for the meeting were as follows:

92

- 93 • To reaffirm the purpose and key objectives of the strategic planning process
- 94 • Review and agree upon the platform of identified issues that need to be addressed
- 95 • Agree upon an overarching approach to addressing identified issues

96

97 Mr. Wisker provided an outline for the meeting's presentation and discussion topics:

98

- 99 • Background
 - 100 ○ Strategic planning trajectory
 - 101 ○ Strategic planning purpose
 - 102 ○ Strategic planning process
- 103 • Process to Date
 - 104 ○ Vision, Mission, and Goals
 - 105 ▪ Assumptions
 - 106 ○ Internal issue identification
- 107 • Themes, by Program
- 108 • Process
 - 109 ○ Guiding Principles
 - 110 ○ Categorical framework
 - 111 ○ Policy analysis process
- 112 • Next Steps

113

114 Mr. Wisker summarized the trajectory of the District's strategic planning efforts since 2009.

115

116 **2009** – Larry Blackstad presented a framework based on the Hennepin Community
117 Works model to the Board. The framework highlighted the importance of organizational
118 focus and integrating the District's Mission with the objectives of other organizations.

119

120 **2010** – Jim Brimeyer worked with the Board to prioritize and focus District program
121 activities. This process utilized information from a number of recent program audits.

122

123 **2011** – Louis Smith published a whitepaper that emphasized the effectiveness of public-
124 private partnerships. The whitepaper underscored the importance of integrating the work
125 of the District and other agencies through sustained partnership.

126

127 The District decided to focus planning efforts and capital resources on the Minnehaha
128 Creek Greenway.

129

130 **2012** – Himle Rapp began an organizational evaluation, and found that the District had
131 too many goals and a cumbersome committee structure. The evaluation found a need to
132 improve organizational focus and overhaul the District's governance structure to support

133 increased attention on the strategic direction of the organization, defining program
134 objectives and measures of success.

135
136 Historically, the District's Capital Improvement Plan had widely distributed capital
137 projects across the District, which the District had identified as negatively impacting
138 overall organizational effectiveness. The District sought to depart from this model, opting
139 for an approach of geographical and sequential focus beginning in the Minnehaha Creek
140 Greenway and formalized and carried forward into the Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay
141 focal geography.

142
143 **2013** – Himle Rapp's second proposal from its evaluation of the District provided
144 recommendations for a new governance structure to support the Board's increased
145 engagement in determining the strategic direction of the organization, rather than
146 operational issues. This proposal streamlined the Board's committee structure.

147
148 The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) assessed the District's effectiveness
149 through the Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP). BWSR recommended
150 the District develop strategies to improve relationships with local communities, deliver
151 District programs and projects to areas with the most critical resource needs, and improve
152 cross-departmental coordination among staff.

153 In May of 2013, at the annual Board retreat, the Board discussed the need to begin
154 defining and institutionalizing its evolution towards increased focus, and integration with
155 non-water interests through partnership.

156
157 **2014** – The Board changed staff leadership early in the year. Shortly thereafter, the Board
158 adopted *In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology* (BUE), a guiding policy that informs
159 the District's approach to watershed management.

160
161 The Staff Collaboration Group – an assembly of non-director program staff – was
162 formed, and produced the current Organization Culture document. This document
163 communicated to the Board staff's desire to cultivate an environment of idea-generation
164 and innovation, uninhibited by hierarchy or departmental division.

165
166 The Board selected the Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay geography as an area of focus for
167 the District moving forward.

168
169 **2015** – The District's new Administrator was hired early in the year. As requested by
170 staff, the new Administrator was a business-minded leader, rather than a natural resource
171 specialist.

172
173 The District conducted a self-assessment, which identified District programs as being
174 isolated into separate silos. Programs were found to be unaligned with the District's
175 mission.

176

177 In the face of a sizeable budget-levy gap, staff recommended to the Board that a strategic
178 framework be adopted to evaluate programs and make budget adjustments within a
179 strategic context. The framework was developed and adopted by the Board later in the
180 year.

181
182 **2016** – Early in the year, to establish the foundation of the strategic planning process, the
183 Board adopted new vision, mission, guiding principles, and goals statements.

184
185 Thus far, staff have completed the internal program evaluation process, which identified
186 issues and areas for improvement in each program.

187
188 Mr. Wisker underscored the importance of understanding the momentum that has been built
189 through repeated efforts to make the District more strategically sound.

190
191 Mr. Wisker revisited the purpose of the strategic planning process, as established in resolution:

- 192
193
 - To define the purpose of each program
 - To provide clarity on Board priorities
 - To improve the focus and effectiveness of programs
 - To align programs with the District mission and improve coordination across programs
 - To develop clear outcomes and metrics for evaluating program initiatives
 - To establish a repeatable evaluation process

199
200 Mr. Wisker stated that the strategic planning process identified four key areas for the District to
201 examine, in the following order:

- 202
203
 1. Organizational Strategy
 - 204 a. Vision, mission, guiding principles, and goals
 - 205
 - 206 2. Program Strategy
 - 207 a. Program Mission, strategies, and tactics
 - 208
 - 209 3. Program Operation
 - 210 a. How resources are allocated to program tactics and strategies to achieve the
 - 211 program's mission
 - 212
 - 213 4. Organizational Operation
 - 214 a. How resources are distributed across programs to achieve the District mission

215
216
217 Mr. Wisker reviewed the Strategic Framework. He cited the District's new mission statement,
218 and observed that the organization's primary focus is protecting and improving the landscape to
219 produce measurable change in water quality, water quantity, ecological integrity, in ways that
220 promote thriving communities.

221
222 Mr. Wisker explained that the District implements its mission either by implementing landscape
223 change itself, or by influencing others to implement landscape change. He noted that not
224 everything the District does directly contributes to fulfilling the mission, but supportive activities
225 are necessary to ensure the success of activities that directly achieve the District's mission.

226
227 Mr. Wisker detailed a list of assumptions that one could draw from the background information
228 presented:

- 229
- 230 • Mission focus is protecting and improving the landscape to produce measurable benefit to
231 water quality, water quantity, and ecological integrity in ways that support thriving
232 communities
 - 233
 - 234 • Protecting and improving the landscape is achieved by direct District action, and by the
235 District influencing others to act
 - 236
 - 237 • Initiatives that directly contribute to accomplishing landscape protection and
238 improvement are mission priorities
 - 239
 - 240 • Other initiatives are necessary to support mission priority activities (ie, project
241 maintenance, data collection, operations, planning, etc.)
 - 242
 - 243 • All District initiatives should work in concert to best support mission objectives
 - 244
 - 245 • Support initiatives should prioritize and efficiently implement activities that most directly
246 augment efforts to protect and improve the landscape
 - 247
 - 248 • Strategic planning will define program purpose to align with the District mission, balance
249 resources between direct District action and District-influenced action by others, and
250 balance resources between mission priority initiatives and supportive initiatives
 - 251

252 Mr. Wisker stated that the District must identify the desired balance between direct District
253 implementation and District influence of implementation by others, and the balance between
254 mission critical versus support initiatives. He explained that while direct implementation brings a
255 higher certainty of and control over outcomes, direct implementation is higher-risk and more
256 resource-intensive. Mr. Wisker noted that when the District influences the implementation of
257 others to maximize natural resource benefit, the risk and cost to the District is lower, but the
258 District has less certainty of and control over outcomes.

259
260 Manager Rogness stated that the background information and assumptions presented by staff
261 lays a solid foundation. He expressed his confidence in moving forward with the process.

262

263 Manager Miller thanked staff for a clear and thorough presentation, and for staff's involvement
264 in the strategic planning process. He expressed his comfort with the strategic planning process.
265

266 Mr. Wisker summarized the process by which staff identified areas for improvement in each
267 program:
268

- 269 • Each program developed materials to represent program purpose, function, and resource
270 allocation
- 271
- 272 • Volunteer staff facilitators led three focus group discussion sessions per program
273
- 274 • Anonymous online surveys were developed to further evaluate each program
275
- 276 • Facilitators aggregated staff input and synthesized into executive summaries, identifying
277 themes of feedback
278

279 Mr. Wisker presented a graph detailing participation by staff per program evaluation.
280

281 Mr. Wisker stated that staff found the feedback from program evaluations tended to fit into four
282 categories:
283

- 284 • **Program Purpose / Direction** – determining the fundamental purpose for the program
285 and its general policy orientation
286
- 287 • **Coordination** – exploring how programs support and complement each other and ways
288 to improve cross-departmental communication and collaboration
289
- 290 • **Operational** – analyzing issues related to resource allocation, program structure and
291 staffing, operational efficiencies, and resource needs
292
- 293 • **New Priorities / Initiatives** – evaluating new program or organizational initiatives
294

295 Mr. Wisker stated that the facilitators would now present the themes of staff input regarding each
296 program.
297

298 Ms. Cermak presented the themes of feedback given for the Cost Share program:
299

300 **Need for clarity and Board decision regarding the program's purpose and**
301 **objectives**
302

303 Should the program focus on administering grants for water quality improvement
304 or education and outreach?
305

306 **Need to prioritize grant dollars to best fulfill program purpose**

307
308 Decisions regarding prioritization will be based off of Board decision on program
309 purpose. The program is currently reactive, merely responding to the project
310 applications received. Staff recommends exploring the possibility of developing a
311 more proactive approach to develop and optimize potential projects.

312
313 **Need to find efficiencies for the homeowner grant process**

314
315 A disproportionate amount of resources and staff time is spent on administering
316 homeowner grants. This allocation of effort is disproportionate because
317 homeowner grants are typically given to projects with little impact on water
318 quality or educational reach.

319
320 Manager Olson stated that he would like the program to remain able to administer both water
321 quality improvement and educational grants. Ms. Cermak noted that staff would present the
322 tradeoffs of selecting one or both programmatic focuses at a later date, after which the Board
323 would discuss the alternatives for the program and make a formal decision.

324
325 Mr. Erdahl stated that the Cost Share program has undergone multiple evaluations in the past few
326 years, and that the decision on program purpose is the culmination of these evaluations.

327
328 Ms. Mamayek underscored that Cost Share grants only cover costs for installed Best
329 Management Practices (BMPs).

330
331 Mr. Wisker stated that the historic tendency to want to achieve a variety of outcomes with
332 limited program resources had been identified as limiting success. He noted that the Board will
333 have to decide whether it wants to allocate more resources to certain District's programs, and
334 maintain the current variety of initiatives, or if the District will cease or scale back certain
335 initiatives to focus effort and resources on other initiatives. He explained that the Cost Share
336 program began when the District brought numerous grant program funds together to centralize
337 application and administration processes. Mr. Wisker noted the array of project types that the
338 Cost Share program had attempted to fund over the years as example of its lack of clear
339 direction.

340
341 Ms. Mamayek agreed, noting that the amendment to the 2007 Comprehensive Plan outlines a
342 broad purpose and set of objectives for the Cost Share program, and that the decision should be
343 made to focus the program on one emphasis or another.

344
345 Mr. Erdahl added that any changes to a particular program would affect the resource allocation
346 and interaction with other District programs. He stated that the staff and Board must consider the
347 context that these programs operate within when deciding to change a program. Mr. Wisker
348 concurred, noting that the Education program's involvement with Master Water Stewards is
349 closely tied to the Cost Share program – the Stewards utilize Cost Share funding for their

350 capstone projects and other projects they bring to the District. Mr. Wisker stated that a change to
351 what kind of projects the Cost Share program would fund would have a direct effect on the
352 Education program's Master Water Stewards initiative. He underscored that other programs have
353 similar relationships, and decisions to change programs must be made in an organizational
354 context.

355
356 Ms. Clark presented the themes of feedback given for the Education and Communications
357 programs:

358
359 **Focus and align activities with District mission of improving the landscape**

360
361 The programs are currently spread thin, with too few resources spread across too
362 many initiatives. Staff felt priority should be placed on initiatives that drive action
363 that protects or improves the landscape.

364
365 **Need to improve coordination with other District programs**

366
367 Staff recommended that the Education and Communications programs should
368 seek to collaborate with other programs more, and learn what functions each
369 program can rely on each other for.

370
371 Ms. Fellows presented the themes of feedback given for the Operations and Support Services
372 program:

373
374 **Need to improve clarity and completeness of materials provided**

375
376 Staff felt they could provide a more detailed evaluation of the program if the
377 summary materials provided were made more clear and complete.

378
379 **Need for increased coordination and communication in decision affecting staff**

380
381 Staff recommended that the Operations and Support Services program include
382 broader staff groups early on when contemplating a switch in vendors or
383 acquisition of new equipment.

384
385 **Need to centralize more human resources policies**

386
387 Implementation of some human resource policies is currently deferred to program
388 directors. Staff would like to see most policies implemented by Operations and
389 Support Services in a consistent and standardized manner.

390
391 **Need for increased efficiency within department structure, potentially through**
392 **consolidation of staff and vendors**

393

394 Staff felt that there may be opportunities to consolidate program roles and vendor
395 services.
396

397 Ms. Fellows noted that staff appreciated that the Operations and Support Services program has
398 become more organized and has secured a greatly improved benefits package for staff.
399

400 Mr. Cook presented the themes of feedback given for the Permitting program:
401

402 **Rule administration needs to be more time- and resource-efficient**
403

404 Staff currently spends a disproportionate amount of time and resources on
405 processing permit applications for projects with little impact to natural resources.
406 Staff have identified opportunities to streamline the process either through rule
407 change or procedural change. The database the program employs is outdated and
408 lacks basic functionalities, sapping staff time for routine data entry, recall, and
409 analysis
410

411 **Coordination with internal and external partners should be improved**
412

413 Coordination with other District programs and regulatory departments from other
414 agencies could allow for elimination of duplicative efforts.
415

416 **Permitting should message the District mission through its communication channels**
417

418 Every year, the program staff are in immediate contact with a large audience of
419 people who exact change on the landscape. Staff should use this unique
420 opportunity to convey messages beyond the requirements for permits.
421

422 **Prioritize program activities on impact to the watershed**
423

424 Currently, compliance efforts are greatly under-resourced, leading to missed
425 opportunities for natural resource protection. The program has the potential to
426 grow its capacity for partnership development, which should be a priority.
427 Through partnerships with key applicants, the program can achieve greater natural
428 resource benefits than possible through regulation alone.
429

430 Mr. Lochner presented the themes of feedback given for the Planning and Project Maintenance
431 and Land Management programs:
432

433 **Respect and trust in the Planning Department and its staff**
434

435 Staff expressed their confidence and trust in the Planning staff. It was also noted
436 that the Department is highly visible within and beyond the District. Staff raised
437 concerns that Planning staff are overworked.

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Increase collaboration with all staff on District initiatives

Staff felt that as the Planning Department plays a key role in a number of District-wide initiatives, the Department could more proactively involve other programs in the decision-making processes for such initiatives.

Increase coordination and communication with other departments

Staff recommended that the Planning Department seek to make other programs aware of future opportunities for collaboration as early as possible, to avoid last-minute requests for pre-defined work products.

Additionally, staff would like to be kept up-to-date on large initiatives (such as the development of the Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay focal geography) so that when the Planning Department does need assistance from other programs, staff already have general context for what they are getting involved in.

Improve the use of technology such as GIS

Staff saw an opportunity to improve the Department’s ability to effectively plan projects and create visual representations for use externally. Staff underscored that the entire District would benefit from having an inter-connected GIS database, as more opportunities for coordination could be identified and workloads could be lightened due to improved analytical capabilities.

Improve the process for measuring and documenting outcomes and success of projects

Staff wanted the Planning Department to create more clear metrics and consistent documentation to improve evaluation of capital project outcomes. It was noted that these metrics should illustrate benefits not only to natural resources, but to economic and social factors, as well.

Mr. Hayman presented the themes of feedback given for the Research and Monitoring program:

Programmatic purpose: Need for clarity on how the program establishes priority tasks in relation to the needs of the overall organization

Staff recommended that objectives for the Research and Monitoring program be clarified and prioritized. Research and Monitoring staff can then align resources to most efficiently and effectively fulfill the program’s purpose. The program’s role in the following functions should be considered and clarified:

- Data needs

- 482 • Research
- 483 • E-Grade

484
485 **Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS): Need to define the District’s role in AIS and**
486 **improve operational focus and clarity**

487
488 It was noted that the District’s role in AIS is unclear, and that the AIS wing of the
489 Research and Monitoring program is still charged with a variety of initiatives,
490 from inspections to grant funding and education. Staff underscored the need to
491 narrow the District’s focus on the most effective role in AIS management, and
492 realign resources accordingly.

493
494 **Roles and resources: Need for increased efficiency within program structure –**
495 **linked with prioritization and new initiatives**

496
497 Staff recommended that the program revisit job duties and the allocation of time
498 and resources. It was underscored that decisions regarding the program’s staffing
499 restructure should be made in the context of clarified objectives and priorities for
500 the program, after the program’s purpose is solidified. Concerning the structure
501 and trajectory of staffing growth in the program, the following areas should be
502 examined:

- 503 • Director role
- 504 • Management structure
- 505 • New staff proposal

506
507 Manager Miller thanked the facilitators for their presentation and thanked staff for providing
508 honest feedback through the program evaluations. Manager White concurred, applauding the
509 apparent trust that staff have in each other.

510
511 Manager Miller stated that the District had an opportunity to make the organization an even more
512 exciting place to work for and to work with. He explained that if the staff and Board follow
513 through with the strategic planning process, the District will enjoy stronger partnerships with
514 other organizations.

515
516 Mr. Wisker restated that a core organizational objective of the process was for staff to receive
517 Board direction on a number of programs, and then be given the freedom to implement the
518 decisions made by the Board for some time without constant readjustment.

519
520 Ms. Christopher outlined the next steps of the program evaluation process. She stated that the
521 process should remain open and inclusive to cross-departmental input from staff, and that Board
522 decisions regarding programs should be made in an organizational context. Ms. Christopher
523 noted that the process must be consistent and structured to properly evaluate issues and areas for
524 improvement.

525

526 Ms. Christopher revisited the four categories of program evaluation feedback:

527

- 528 • Program Purpose / Direction
- 529 • Coordination
- 530 • Operation
- 531 • New Priorities / Initiatives

532

533 Ms. Christopher explained that Board decisions regarding program purpose must be made first,
534 so that other decisions made be made in the context of clarified program direction. She noted that
535 for the sake of consistency, staff would be using Bardach's Eightfold Path to analyze policy
536 questions raised by the issues identified through program evaluations.

537

538 Mr. Hayman outlined the eight steps to Bardach's Eightfold Path.

539

- 540 1. Define the problem
- 541 2. Assemble some evidence
- 542 3. Construct alternatives
- 543 4. Select the criteria
- 544 5. Project outcomes
- 545 6. Confront trade-offs
- 546 7. Decide
- 547 8. Communicate

548

549 Mr. Hayman stated that staff would follow this process to identify and compare alternatives for
550 the Board to discuss and choose. He noted that this process is iterative, and may need to be
551 repeated to hone a program's structure or direction in the future. Mr. Hayman added that using a
552 consistent process provides staff with set of conventions for critical discourse, which will allow
553 for honest analysis of issues and solutions.

554

555 To illustrate the process, Mr. Hayman applied Bardach's Eightfold Path to the consideration of a
556 hypothetical geography as a focal geography under the District's Two-Track Approach.

557

- 558 1. Define the problem
 - 559 a. An area is lacking successful implementation
- 560
- 561 2. Assemble some evidence
 - 562 a. A quantitative diagnostic of geography's conditions and results of past
 - 563 implementation
- 564
- 565 3. Construct alternatives
 - 566 a. Focus in the area based on need and opportunity?
- 567
- 568 4. Select the criteria
 - 569 a. Fact-based and value-based criteria of ecological, social, and economic factors

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5. Project outcomes
 - a. Is it reasonable to assume increased effort will produce greater outcomes than minimum effort? Are there undesirable side-effects?
6. Confront trade-offs
 - a. Cost versus benefit; improvement over status quo?
7. Decide
8. Communicate

Mr. Wisker presented a schedule by which staff would move through each of the four categories of identified issues. He noted that the Board should make final decisions regarding program purpose and direction by January of 2017. Mr. Wisker illustrated how the other areas of feedback would be examined afterward, and how timelines for each area may overlap. He added that at the next Committee meeting (September 8th), staff would present a more detailed process schedule and refined issue statements and policy questions.

Manager Miller thanked staff again for the clarity of the presentation.

The Committee meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Cook
Planning Assistant