

1 **DRAFT**

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

3 **August 20, 2015**

4 **CALL TO ORDER**

5 The Planning and Policy Committee was called to order by Committee Chair Calkins at 6:48  
6 p.m. at the District offices, 15320 Minnetonka Boulevard, Minnetonka, Minnesota 55435.

7 **COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

8 James Calkins, Richard Miller, and Brian Shekleton.

9 **NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

10 Sherry Davis White, Bill Olson, and Kurt Rogness.

11 **OTHERS PRESENT**

12 Bill Bushnell, CAC Chair; Lars Erdahl, District Administrator; Katherine Sylvia, Permitting  
13 Program Lead; Tiffany Schaufler, Project and Land Program Manager; Laura Domyancich,  
14 Project and Land Technician; Becky Christopher, Lead Planner; James Wisker, Planning and  
15 Projects Director; Anna Brown, Planner; Chris Meehan, District Engineer; and Matthew Cook,  
16 Planning Assistant.

17 **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

18 The agenda was approved without amendment.

19 **COMMITTEE MEETING**

20 **Presentation and Discussion of Strategic Planning Framework**

21 Ms. Christopher stated that the District staff's intent was to present to the Planning and Policy  
22 Committee the beginnings of a strategic planning framework for future development and use by  
23 the District.

24 Mr. Wisker explained that the purpose of the District formulating and adopting a strategic  
25 planning framework would be to more effectively examine existing and proposed programs and  
26 practices. He noted that examination under such a framework would allow the District to better  
27 determine a given program's or practice's alignment with the District's mission and goals.

28 Mr. Wisker said that the District has already begun realigning programs through reassessment of  
29 their practices and changing their tactics, listing the following departments and their respective  
30 changes as examples:

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- Permitting
  - Permitting is shifting away from solely administering permits that minimize the impact of land use change on natural resources, and is expanding its mission to proactively generate partnerships with local land-use authorities and the development community to generate natural resource outcomes greater than those achieved through regulation alone.
- Capital Improvement Projects
  - Based on analysis of policy and practice the District has migrated away from capital improvements distributed annually across a 181 square mile geography and has moved towards methodical focus within priority geographies to accomplish larger, measurable outcomes on the landscape that are made possible through integration with land-use and infrastructure planning. This is proposed to be complemented by defined mechanisms to remain responsive to emerging partnerships and community needs.
- Planning
  - The District’s planning model has evolved from projects pursued based on individual technical feasibility alone towards multi-dimensional planning, recognizing that combined mission, authority, and investment producing value across multiple sectors reveals more opportunity for watershed management than by planning alone.
- Land Conservation
  - Significant opportunities to protect and enhance the watershed have been revealed by providing meaningful technical assistance to landowners, augmenting the use of fee acquisition to accomplish this program’s mission.

Mr. Wisker outlined the fundamentals of strategic planning for discussion, noting that strategy can be defined as “what you do” whereas tactics are “how you do it.” Therefore, to begin engaging in organizational strategic planning at a programmatic level he outlined the need to begin answering the following questions at the level of organizational mission and programs:

- What does the District do? – Strategies
  - Does the District do “the right thing?”
- How does the District do it? – Tactics
  - Does the District do “the right thing the right way?”

Mr. Wisker recalled that many past Board and Committee discussions regarding District operations focus on the “how” – the District’s “tactics.” He noted that these important tactical discussions would be improved in the future by developing a strategic framework that clearly illustrates what the District intends to accomplish and how it wishes to align its individual programs to attack that mission.

90 He observed that the Board had signaled its desire to engage in developing a strategic framework  
91 during comprehensive plan discussions and more recently with critical questions about the  
92 relative merit of programs, highlighted during 2016 budget discussions. He specifically noted  
93 Manager Calkins' recent comments that all of the District's programmatic efforts are well  
94 intentioned, but that he is not always sure the District is doing the right thing. Mr. Wisker  
95 commented that this was an example of the need for a clear strategic framework that provided  
96 organizational and programmatic direction and facilitated tactical discussions including  
97 budgeting.

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99 Mr. Wisker commented that in the past it appears that the District had undertaken new programs  
100 and practices based on their individual merit, but perhaps without a clear picture of how that  
101 program would be strategically aligned with the rest of the District's work to address the mission  
102 in a manner where the whole was greater than the sum of its parts. He highlighted recent critique  
103 of the District's Aquatic Invasive Species and Cost-Share programs as examples. He noted that  
104 both programs had plans that were review and adopted by the Board of Managers, but that these  
105 plans were never positioned into a clear strategic pictures as part of their inception.

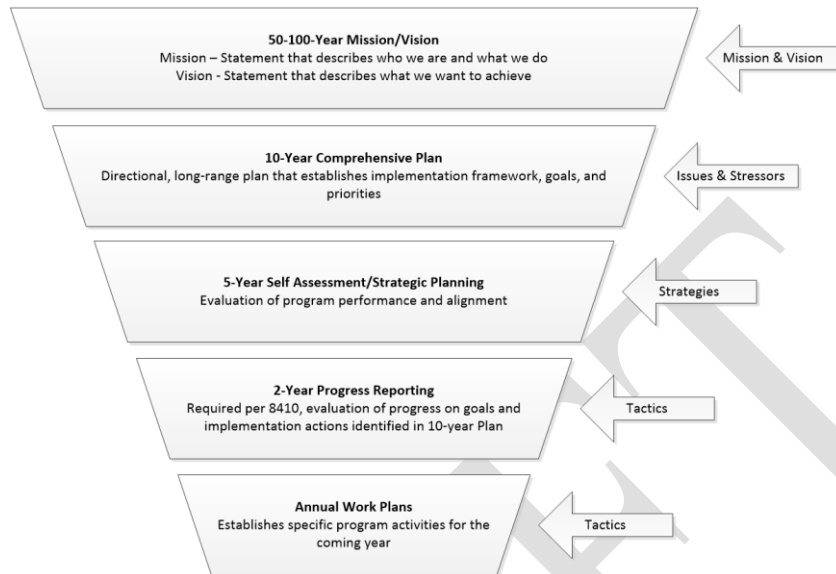
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107 Mr. Wisker suggested the value of a clear strategic planning framework could be several fold: (1)  
108 providing a framework to evaluate existing programs and suggest meaningful realignment and  
109 shifts in tactical approaches, (2) evaluating future programs / initiatives to determine if it would  
110 contribute to the strategic mission or diffuse resources outside the organization's focus, (3)  
111 provide a valuable communication, marketing and branding tool focusing constituent attention  
112 on "why MCWD exists, "what it does, and "how" it does it.

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114 Finally Mr. Wisker highlighted the importance of Committee discussion, at this juncture, to  
115 avoid debating the semantics of graphics and nomenclature presented as an outline for a strategic  
116 framework. Instead, he asked the Board members to be prepare to comment on whether the  
117 strategic framework presented offered more clarity on organizational alignment than the 2007  
118 plan, if the framework provided clarity on how program outcomes and long term measures might  
119 be evaluated, and if the framework provided a useful way to organize the Board's thinking on  
120 organizational focus. He noted that if the answer to these types of questions was affirmative, that  
121 the Committee should have confidence that this was a productive direction to refine.

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123 Ms. Christopher laid out a nested approach over time to conceptualize the District's planning,  
124 with each level informed by the previous (see graphic).

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**Levels of Planning and Evaluation**



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136 Mr. Wisker offered that the Committee institutionalize a recurring timeline for self-evaluation,  
137 between comprehensive plan cycles, against a strategic framework through a relatively defined  
138 process. He outlined that this would ensure future Boards and staff take a similar critical  
139 approach to the evaluation of existing or proposed programs, considering the potential for  
140 strategic alignment and adherence to a focused mission.

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142 He identified that in terms of measuring program effectiveness it was important to acknowledge  
143 the distinction between short term programmatic outputs and long term measurements of success  
144 observable in the watershed. He suggested value in measuring both using the Minnehaha Creek  
145 Greenway as an example. He noted that it would perhaps be 10-20 years before the water  
146 resources showed a measureable response to the District's investment, and that on the short term  
147 results were measured in terms of programmatic outputs like acres of runoff treated, river miles  
148 restored, connected acres greenspace and people attending events. He commented that in the  
149 future watershed response could not be traced back to individual programmatic activities like  
150 permitting, education, cost-share or projects. He asked the Committee and other Board members  
151 present to keep this in mind as evaluation processes are developed to complement the strategic  
152 framework, as short term programmatic outputs represented a valuable policy analysis tool.

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154 During discussion it was noted that budget discussions are critical, and engage policy makers at  
155 the tactical level of strategic planning. It was offered that a strategic framework would provide  
156 the context in which to improve the strategic nature of annual workplan and budget discussions.

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158 Ms. Christopher introduced and summarized a strategic planning framework that positioned  
159 mission, goals, programs, program tactics, and measurements in a linked diagram, from top to  
160 bottom. She outlined the relative significance of each level and noted how moving from top to

161 bottom provided a planning framework and that moving from programmatic tactics up to mission  
162 allowed for a way to visualize program evaluation. She noted that processes would be developed  
163 for each. She noted that based on prior committee suggestion, staff would be looking for  
164 refinement of the District’s mission and goals during a September meeting, and that the input  
165 needed from the committee now was to be focused on what the District’s functions are and how  
166 the District functions.

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168 Mr. Erdahl suggested that the audience for a given level of planning be considered when being  
169 formulated. He contrasted the options of having a mission statement or strategic plan that would  
170 be targeted either at residents as a public relations piece, or at the Board and staff as a guiding  
171 document. Mr. Erdahl noted that the language selected must be optimized for use by its audience.

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173 Mr. Wisker followed that there could be multiple nested and interrelated levels of a strategic  
174 framework for the District, with language based on the framework’s application and audience.  
175 He compared a framework for the overall District with a framework for Six Mile Creek (a focal  
176 geography) stating that the narrower the scope of a framework, the more technical the language  
177 in it would be.

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179 Mr. Wisker commented that a visual strategic framework had utility in depicting program  
180 alignment and facilitated evaluation of programmatic mission. He used the example of Planning  
181 & Projects Department whose unofficial mission might be “to promote integrated land use and  
182 water planning to identify and prioritize investment in green infrastructure. He continued,  
183 highlighting the Land Conservation’s possible mission of conserving and restoring the natural  
184 resources of the watershed. He outlined that the committee had previously identified the  
185 District’s overemphasis on fee title versus use of technical assistance to landowners and  
186 communities as a key tactic, following that Ms. Domyancich’s recent technical assistance in  
187 Medina may produce the largest conservation corridor for the least financial investment of  
188 anywhere in the MCWD.

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190 Responding to questions on how the framework may impact tactical operational levels Mr.  
191 Wisker outlined the recent shift in the Permitting program. He identified that the broadened  
192 mission of the department focused on producing natural resource improvements greater than  
193 regulation through partnership had immediate operational implications. He identified that the  
194 department was predominantly focused on single family home construction which presented a  
195 large time burden but represented the least potential for impact on the watershed. He noted that  
196 staff was evaluating opportunities to realign human and financial resources with the new  
197 department direction without sacrificing service or attention to single family homes.

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199 Mr. Meehan reinforced his observation of how a small change in program mission could impact  
200 tactical operations by highlighting the recent work with private partners like Lennar, Japs Olson,  
201 and the Mader Family. Manager White and Mr. Erdahl both commented that these subtle shifts  
202 are being reflected in the recent bolstering of the District’s reputation as a value added partner  
203 rather than a regulatory obstacle.

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205 Manager Rogness said he was impressed with the proposed framework and thought it would be  
206 extremely positive for the District. He observed that the frequent comparison and evaluation of  
207 programs to organizational goals has proven beneficial in his own professional experience. As an  
208 example he highlighted the identification of client satisfaction as a key objective and critical  
209 measure of successful output within particular divisions in his past practice. He noted that  
210 keeping this style of thinking fresh would benefit the District long-term. He questioned how  
211 something equivalent to customer satisfaction might be measured at the District. He reflected  
212 that answering these type of questions would facilitate the development of evaluation tools,  
213 leading to improved measures for key programmatic outputs to gauge relative success.

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215 Mr. Erdahl noted that the District's partnership approach is a differentiator for the organization  
216 and has left cities and private businesses satisfied, using examples such as Lennar and the City of  
217 Victoria. Manager Miller reflected that this framework did, in fact, stimulate a way of thinking  
218 about measurement, drawing parallels to his experience with the Greater Metropolitan Housing  
219 Corporation where measures moved away from the number of units to the impact on individual  
220 people served. He reinforced the need and potential benefit to developing clear output metrics  
221 for program evaluation that fit within the strategic framework.

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223 After brief discussion between Manager Olson and District staff over the relative importance of  
224 goals versus strategies versus tactics in the apparent hierarchical outline, Mr. Erdahl noted that  
225 the diagram of the District's programs and practices was not hierarchical, but a linking diagram  
226 intended to portray flow from mission to operations. Manager Shekleton noted that the diagram  
227 presented provided a good demonstration of strategic planning and is a good model to keep  
228 exploring. Mr. Wisker added that the 17 goals of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan were all still  
229 contained in the proposed framework, but some of the old goals were now classified as strategies  
230 or tactics, and had not lost their significance. In response to questions he noted that "community  
231 engagement" might contain efforts of branding the District, garnering support for District  
232 actions, and exacting positive behavior changes in the public concerning the treatment of natural  
233 resources.

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235 Mr. Meehan noted that the diagram presented could be read top-down or bottom-up as a tool for  
236 planning or evaluating, respectively. He also noted that the diagram could be complemented with  
237 a timescale, which would allow people to understand the timeframe of when to expect changes,  
238 bolstering the District's communication efforts.

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240 President White and Mr. Erdahl both expressed support for developing the tool further. Mr.  
241 Erdahl said that the diagram allows the Board and staff to define not only what the District does  
242 but also what the District does not do, which gives focus to and limits the District in a positive  
243 way.

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245 Manager Miller reinforced the need to begin integrating measures of success and evaluation  
246 processes into the framework as next steps. Ms. Christopher responded, stating that the  
247 programmatic output metrics would be incorporated in the near future, referring to the Permitting  
248 Department's diagram as an example of what that may look like.

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250 Committee Chair Calkins asked if the diagrams supplied represented what the District was  
251 currently doing or a future scenario. Mr. Wisker confirmed that the diagram was intended to  
252 begin mapping out current operations in a strategic framework and that strategic planning was  
253 largely about knowing where you are, defining where the organization should be and then  
254 collectively charting a course defining how to get there.

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256 Mr. Bushnell expressed his support for the materials presented and the prospect of determining a  
257 method by which to measure program success in future. He noted that a lot of mission  
258 statements are intended as communication pieces but rarely have a framework that clearly  
259 depicts how mission and vision trickle down into programmatic strategies or tactics.

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261 Strategic Planning Framework for Focal Geography: Six Mile Creek

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263 Ms. Brown began by introducing the rationale behind the selection of the Six Mile Creek area as  
264 a focal geography. She cited the area's natural assets, development pressure, and the system's  
265 complex and connected hydrologic system.

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267 Ms. Brown stated that she and other District staff would soon be initiating kickoff meetings with  
268 community partners to undertake collaborative and integrated planning, perhaps beginning in  
269 October. She reviewed potential agenda topics of subsequent meetings, including the gathering  
270 of stakeholder goals and the mapping of mission, authority, plans and investments of partner  
271 agencies in this geography.

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273 Mr. Wisker commented that it would be interesting to gauge the success of the intentional and  
274 front loaded planning planned for Six Mile as it was intended to replicate the success of the more  
275 informally planned Minnehaha Creek Greenway. Mr. Wisker elaborated, that the critical  
276 component in both geographies is the identification of external goals and then positioning the  
277 District's plans and work in ways that reflect those priorities, such that partner agencies see the  
278 District as invested in their own work as value added partners. He cited the success of the  
279 Minnehaha Creek Greenway being realized by pursuing "city-building" projects, as they  
280 contained the outcomes necessary for partner participation, such as economic development.

281

282 Ms. Brown continued, detailing the strategic framework for Six Mile Creek. She framed the  
283 identification of environmental stressors (causes) and issues (negative effects) – through  
284 observation and the District's E-grade program – within a strategic framework similar to the one  
285 reviewed at an organizational level, noting the differences and similarities. She specifically  
286 traced one stressor, development, through the framework into the water resource issues that may  
287 be created, affiliated watershed management strategies like wetland restoration or partnering  
288 with land-use authorities and developers. She then reviewed tactics, how the work would be  
289 done, such as early involvement in the development process, or the development of a  
290 programmatic permitting framework with the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

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292

293 Laketown 9<sup>th</sup>

294 As an example of these strategies and tactics Ms. Brown reviewed a potential partnership with  
295 Lennar Corporation. Ms. Brown reviewed the existence of a Memorandum of Understanding  
296 with the City of Victoria encouraging collaboration prior to concept plan development. She  
297 noted, however, that the planning for Laketown 9<sup>th</sup> happened between Lennar and the City of  
298 Victoria before the District and the City had established its recent partnership.

299  
300 Ms. Brown detailed a key feature of the proposed development being the improvement of an  
301 existing farm road which would result in approximately one acre of wetland impact. Based on  
302 sequencing the impact appeared to be unavoidable, therefore requiring mitigation. As the plan  
303 stood, she indicated, there was not opportunity on-site for Lennar to restore wetland area to  
304 offset the acre that would be degraded. Ms. Brown said the next solution would typically be to  
305 buy wetland banking credits, of which there are none available in Minnehaha Creek Watershed  
306 District. She stated that this would result in a loss in wetland quantity and quality for the  
307 Watershed.

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309 Ms. Brown said that the District had identified parcels of wetland contiguous with the proposed  
310 development, of which 10-13 acres could be restored. She detailed the potential to partner with  
311 Lennar and Victoria to collaboratively plan, restore and manage wetland acreage that would  
312 provide more benefit than a traditional approach to acquire wetland bank credits outside of the  
313 District.

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315 Mr. Wisker highlighted this preliminary partnership as a potential model for the area that would  
316 be further enhanced by the consolidation of water resource regulation. He commented on staff's  
317 recent efforts to coordinate with Army Corps of Engineers to obtain a Programmatic General  
318 Permit that would help reduce a developer's perceived risk of working with MCWD proactively  
319 without understanding the USACE process. He also noted another point of intersection between  
320 the Six Mile Planning work and the USACE with the potential for the MCWD's plan to be  
321 eligible for Section 206 funds available through the Corps, capped at \$10,000,000. He said  
322 conversations with the USACE are ongoing and the District was receiving advice and planning  
323 assistance from the USACE to develop these ideas through the Six Mile planning process.

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325 Committee Chair Calkins indicated that he heard a consensus of support for staff to continue  
326 developing the strategic planning frameworks presented. Manager Miller suggested that as the  
327 framework is developed, all approvals and programs be presented to policy makers as the  
328 approvals and programs relate to said framework. The Committee reviewed the upcoming  
329 meeting schedule and expressed its favor for continuing this work by scheduling meetings in  
330 November and December.

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332 The Committee Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

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334 Respectfully submitted,  
335 Matthew Cook  
336 Planning Assistant