

1 **DRAFT**

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

3
4
5 **June 9, 2016**

6
7 **CALL TO ORDER**

8
9 Chair Miller called the Committee to order at 4:40 p.m. at the District Offices,

10
11 15320 Minnetonka Blvd

12 Minnetonka, MN 55345

13
14 **COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

15
16 Dick Miller, Brian Shekleton, and Kurt Rogness.

17
18 **NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

21
22 **OTHERS PRESENT**

23
24 James Wisker, Director of Planning & Projects; Becky Christopher, Lead Planner & Project
25 Manager; Michael Hayman, Planner & Project Manager; Anna Brown, Planner & Project
26 Manager; and Matthew Cook, Planning Assistant.

27
28 **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

29
30 The agenda was approved without amendment.

31
32 **COMMITTEE MEETING**

33
34 Mr. Wisker noted that the Committee had previously requested that the role and focus of the
35 Committee be treated as a recurring discussion item.

36
37 Mr. Wisker stated that staff intended during the meeting to outline a specific program for the
38 Committee to focus on during the remainder of 2016. He informed the Committee that he would
39 first review the approved purpose of the Committee, and then review how the Committee
40 purpose could be best applied to the current situational context for the organization.

41
42 He began by reviewing the Committee's purview as informed by Himle Rapp's 2013 MCWD
43 Board Restructuring Proposal, summarized below.

44

45

46

47 The purpose(s) of the PPC:

- 48 • Strategic planning and policy development
- 49 ○ Program and project conceptualization
- 50 ○ Option prioritization
- 51 ○ Developing strategic solutions
- 52 ○ Defining outcomes and outcome measurement

53

54 Manager Shekleton entered the meeting at this point.

55

56 Manager Miller paused to note that the Committee's discussions are intended to prepare staff and
57 the Managers for the full Board's final review and decision. Mr. Wisker agreed, distinguishing
58 Board meetings from Committee meetings, noting that Board meetings are for official and
59 routine business on action items that are well established parts of programs or work that has been
60 previously vetted, whereas Committee meetings are where the Managers' hold preliminary
61 deliberation and work in concert with staff to begin providing form to ideas.

62

63 Mr. Wisker moved on to provide an overview of the current situational context for the
64 organization, which when combined with the overarching Committee purpose could begin to
65 inform the Committee's agenda for the remainder of 2016. He reviewed that over the course of
66 several years the Board of Managers had endeavored to establish a new direction for the
67 organization, rooted in increased clarity, strategic focus, and discipline, supported by operational
68 flexibility and an ethos of partnership.

69

70 Mr. Wisker outlined the major decisions made internally to support the new direction, including
71 the adoption of foundational policies like the *Balanced Urban Ecology*, and the subsequent
72 revision to the vision, mission, goals and guiding principles for the organization. He noted that
73 the MCWD had sought external feedback on this policy platform through the Comprehensive
74 Plan process, and had received enthusiastic support from member communities and constituents.

75

76 Mr. Wisker then reviewed the current budget climate reminding the Committee that during the
77 development of the 2016 budget in 2015, the Board had approved a process to engage in
78 strategic planning and programmatic adjustment and alignment. He summarized the current
79 status of the strategic planning effort, informing the Committee that staff was peer reviewing
80 individual programs and that soon the Board would be receiving the synthesis of this information
81 and be asked to make the first round of significant organizational decisions since establishing a
82 new direction through policy.

83

84 Mr. Wisker commented that the Board would soon be tasked with decisions on how to
85 operationalize the policy direction created over the previous two years. He recommended that,
86 therefore, the Committee adopt a charge of developing a system of thinking and organizational
87 prioritization that would allow the Board to digest the information being developed by staff
88 through the strategic evaluation process, to facilitate an effective decision making process. He
89 reflected that this charge seemed the highest and best use of the Committee's time and was
90 consistent with the Committee charge approved following the Himle governance evaluation. He
91 stated that before moving to thinking at an organizational level, there was both benefit and an

92 immediate need to begin developing a priority framework for capital investments. He then
93 paused to seek Committee feedback.

94
95 Manager Miller stated that he agreed with staff's assessment of the Committee's context and
96 role. He added that he was comfortable having the Committee begin to develop a framework to
97 allow the Board to effectively develop organizational priorities and make decisions with the
98 strategic evaluation information being synthesized by staff.

99
100 Manager Olson agreed with the benefits of having the Committee focus at this level noting the
101 potential for long term organizational benefit. He suggested that a useful tool for determining
102 programmatic or project priorities would be a visualization of how project or program costs and
103 required staff time stack and extend over time. He explained that this tool would highlight a
104 program or project's lingering costs after initial development and how those lingering costs
105 effect the District's capacity to take on new initiatives.

106
107 Manager Becker noted that the Board ought to be able to define programs and initiatives as either
108 foundational or discretionary.

109
110 Mr. Erdahl noted that the prioritization framework would be used not only to gauge the
111 opportunity and worth of engaging a certain geography, but to pick the methods by which the
112 District operates in a certain geography, which were not exclusively reliant on capital
113 improvements but included programmatic options as well.

114
115 Manager Shekleton questioned whether the outlined discussion topics were better suited for full
116 Board discussion. He added that a Manager could not be expected to attend a committee that he
117 or she was not a member of, despite the organization-wide impacts of the Committee's
118 discussions. Manager Shekleton stated that to him, a Committee was intended to address specific
119 issues, rather than overarching organizational function.

120
121 Manager Miller disagreed, and underscored his comfort with the outlined Committee role. He
122 stated that such discussion takes time to deliberate and get into the details, and regular business
123 meetings are not well-suited for that purpose.

124
125 Mr. Wisker clarified that developing frameworks for prioritizing organizational options is an
126 explicit role of the Committee as adopted by the Board. He added that it is not staff's intent for
127 the Committee to filter opportunities or make priority decisions. That would remain the role of
128 the full Board.

129
130 After additional discussion Chair Miller requested staff proceed with the presentation.

131
132 Ms. Christopher presented to the Committee a brief history of how the Board reached its current
133 juncture. She stated the Board established a new approach for the 2017 Comprehensive Plan
134 (Plan) through the *Balanced Urban Ecology* policy (BUE). Citing the difficulties of
135 implementing the 2007 CIP, Ms. Christopher noted that the BUE was adopted when the Board

136 and staff recognized that the District was more successful at implementing capital improvements
137 when three key adaptations were made:

138

- 139 • When the District focused on a certain area for a period of time
- 140 • When the District understood and incorporated the goals of its partners
- 141 • When the District responded nimbly to external factors

142

143 The Two-Track Approach, Ms. Christopher continued, built upon the BUE. The two tracks of the
144 approach – focal geography planning and responsive implementation – embody the operational
145 adaptations made in the Urban Corridor.

146

147 Ms. Christopher stated that unlike the approach of the 2007 CIP, the new Plan will not forecast
148 specific projects 10 years out. Under the new approach, she explained, project prioritization and
149 selection is a fluid, ongoing process, done incrementally in response to new opportunities. Ms.
150 Christopher stated that this ongoing process warrants the development of a clear framework for
151 how the staff and Board can work together in prioritizing decisions and assessing staff and
152 funding resources.

153

154 Manager Becker noted the difficulty of comparing and prioritizing opportunities that are not all
155 known at one time.

156

157 Ms. Christopher reminded the Committee of the goals for the strategic planning process:

158

- 159 • Improve organizational focus and program alignment
- 160 • Align work with the District's new approach
- 161 • Evaluate resource allocation against organizational priorities

162

163 Ms. Christopher stated that as part of the strategic planning process, staff has begun analyzing
164 the structure and function of District programs. Ms. Christopher added that in the coming weeks,
165 staff would be completing cross-departmental review of the materials prepared for each program
166 and providing recommendations back to the program. She stated that staff would begin bringing
167 staff's recommendations to the Committee in August for preliminary review.

168

169 Ms. Christopher noted that before the Board can make decisions on individual programs, the
170 Board's higher level organizational priorities must be determined. She stated that staff believes
171 that developing a framework for Board consideration that enables the comparison and
172 prioritizing of District action is a very valuable and well-suited role for the Committee.

173

174 Ms. Christopher stated that the strategic planning process should inform the 2017 budget as
175 much as possible, though the 2017 budget will be finalized before the strategic planning process
176 reaches completion. She added that the strategic planning process will also inform the 2017
177 Comprehensive Plan.

178

179 Manager Shekleton expressed his support for incorporating cross-departmental staff review of
180 programs into the strategic planning process.

181 Mr. Hayman presented several examples of capital project opportunities to the Committee. He
182 stated that the District's new approach merits ongoing prioritization of opportunities that arise.
183 Mr. Wisker clarified that staff were not seeking Committee direction on which of the examples
184 presented took priority over the others. He explained that the examples were meant to illustrate
185 how every opportunity has a range of factors to consider.

186
187 Mr. Hayman stated that the potential for the District to work on Meadowbrook Golf Course was
188 catalyzed by the 2014 flood. He stated that the project promised numerous benefits to natural
189 resources and community access, as well as the project's immediate connection to the
190 Minnehaha Creek Greenway. However, he noted, the project carried a certain aspect of risk
191 based on past experience with the project partner.

192
193 As another example, Mr. Hayman stated that there has been a lot of recent interest in the quality
194 of Long Lake by concerned residents. He noted that it is a large and complex system with
195 multiple impairments and resource needs. The District enjoys strong relationships with the
196 communities, and a number of residents are planning to form a lake association. Mr. Hayman
197 explained that despite the opportunity and support for pursuing work in the subwatershed,
198 District time and financial resources are currently limited.

199
200 Mr. Wisker noted that in emerging instances constrained by time and money, the District may
201 choose to take advantage of the opportunity by providing less costly services to the subwatershed
202 than a full-scale capital project. He articulated that the District's level of involvement should
203 always be cognizant of the organizations capacity to succeed.

204
205 Next, Mr. Hayman stated that he was approached by staff from the City of St. Louis Park about
206 the possibility of the District devoting staff time to advise the development of a project on Bass
207 Lake. He noted that while the District had strong relationships with the relevant parties and the
208 City has significant funds dedicated to the area, Bass Lake is a historically neglected and
209 degraded wetland and not necessarily considered a high priority regional resource.

210
211 As another example, Mr. Hayman stated that the District has recently reengaged with the Army
212 Corps of Engineers (USACE) regarding the Painter Creek subwatershed based on opportunities
213 in the Six Mile Creek subwatershed. Mr. Hayman noted that while the USACE has significant
214 funds available and the District has established land rights, the agency's processes tend to take a
215 long time and they have proven a challenging partner in the past. Mr. Wisker added that in
216 comparison to prior examples, there was little to no local pressure to implement projects in the
217 area and that working with the USACE would take a considerable amount of staff time.

218
219 Finally, Mr. Hayman detailed the history of the Arden Park stream restoration project. He stated
220 that the original impetus for the project was the opportunity to coordinate stream improvements
221 with the City of Edina's road reconstruction. The City's work has since been completed,
222 removing the urgency of the stream work. The relationship with the City remains strong but there
223 is only moderate local pressure for the project and the urgency of being linked to transportation
224 investments has been removed.

225

226 Mr. Hayman stated that these responsive project opportunities are generally not planned or
227 budgeted for. He noted that undertaking any project requires staff allocation of time over
228 multiple years, and commitments including the programmatic demands needed to support the
229 project. Mr. Hayman stated that in addition to cost and staff capacity, the District ought to
230 consider the risks, rewards, expectations, and outcomes of any potential project. Mr. Hayman
231 stated that the spectrum of District response to emerging opportunities will vary from an
232 intensive focal approach to minimal involvement, with additional levels of response falling in
233 between.

234
235 Following discussion Mr. Cook presented to the Committee a draft framework for prioritization.
236 He stated that this tool was intended to provide the Committee with a starting point from which
237 to work.

238
239 Mr. Cook stated that potential District action ought to be considered based on two key
240 determinations. He explained that first, the Managers should decide if some sort of action should
241 be exacted in order to address water resource needs or opportunities. Mr. Cook classified this as
242 a determination of “need.” Second, he continued, the Managers should ascertain whether or not
243 (and to what degree) the District can allocate sufficient staff time and funding to undertake a
244 given action. Mr. Cook classified this as a determination of “capacity.”

245
246 Mr. Cook noted that for each of the two main determinations, the draft framework contains
247 several additional parameters to be weighed against one another. He detailed the parameters as
248 follows:

249
250 **NEED** – “Should something be done?”

- 251
- 252 • **Resource Need / Condition**
 - 253 ○ Is the resource impaired? At a tipping point? Is a pristine resource under threat?
 - 254 ○ Does or could the resource see significant community use?
 - 255
 - 256 • **Action Outcomes**
 - 257 ○ What progress will the action make towards the four organizational goals?
 - 258
 - 259 • **Urgency**
 - 260 ○ Will the opportunity disappear if we do not seize it now?
 - 261 ■ If the opportunity will dissipate, should we resource up to accommodate
 - 262 the action?
 - 263 ■ If we would not resource up to IMPLEMENT the action ourselves, should
 - 264 we seek to INFLUENCE someone else to?
 - 265
 - 266 • **Support / Relationships**
 - 267 ○ Do communities and / or agencies support the District pursuing this project?
 - 268 ■ Would pursuing this project improve or hurt our relationships with a given
 - 269 community or agency?
 - 270

- 271 • **Commitments / Momentum**
272 ○ Are we already committed to this project?
273 ■ Is the commitment formal or informal? Binding or non-binding?
274
275 ○ Is this project important to maintaining District momentum?
276

277 **CAPACITY** – “Can we do something? How much can we do?”
278

- 279 • **District Funding**
280 ○ Is adequate funding available through the District’s levy, debt service programs,
281 or carryover?
282 ■ Is the funding source an appropriate match for the action? (For instance,
283 carryover should not be used to take on recurring costs.)
284
285 • **Outside Funding**
286 ○ Is there an opportunity to leverage outside funding?
287 ■ What strings are attached to available outside funds?
288
289 • **Workload**
290 ○ Can staff accommodate the workload associated with the projects?
291 ■ Staff time, resources, capabilities, etc.
292
293 • **Internal / Programmatic Support**
294 ○ Is there sufficient programmatic support to succeed?
295 ■ Would we have to resource up to accommodate additional program
296 activities, or are the necessary supportive actions already within the
297 program’s workplan and budget?
298
299 • **External Support**
300 ○ Is there sufficient external support?
301 ■ Do we have external support to complement or enable District action?
302 ■ If we have little or no external support, can we succeed alone?
303

304 Manager White stated that she sees the prioritization framework as a critically important task for
305 the Committee and the organization.
306

307 Manager Miller stated that the framework should help in comparing water resource needs to
308 community impact when prioritizing potential District action.
309

310 Mr. Wisker summarized the intent of the framework, stating that the District should match its
311 level of involvement in a given opportunity for action with the relevant resource needs and
312 available District capacity. He asked the Committee if (1) the recommended Committee charge
313 resonated, and (2) if the draft framework seemed valuable enough to continue advancing.
314

315 Manager Olson stated support for the need to continue refining the organization's ability to set
316 priorities, and viewed it is important for ongoing success. He stated that the framework would
317 allow the Managers to make much more intelligent decisions when comparing and selecting
318 projects.

319
320 Manager White noted that the framework would be useful in maintaining relationships with
321 District partners, as it offered substantial clarity externally regarding the District's decision-
322 making process in accepting or declining opportunities could be illustrated.

323
324 The Committee and Managers in attendance supported the Committee's ongoing efforts in the
325 area of organizational prioritization, and recognized the need to develop these frameworks to
326 support Board decision making with the strategic evaluation data.

327
328 Ms. Christopher provided a brief summary of the current Planning Department budget for 2017,
329 noting an overall decrease as compared to 2016. She reviewed the work that the 2016 Planning
330 budget has been allocated toward to date and how that is being used to inform 2017 budget
331 needs. For instance, the program budgeted \$100,000 in 2016 for Responsive Track Planning. As
332 of the end of April, approximately half of that budget has been spent and has resulted in over 400
333 acres of conservation easements, among other work. This is one area where the program is
334 recommending increasing its budget for 2017.

335
336 Regarding the 2017 budget, Mr. Wisker stated that the fund for responsive planning might be
337 considered by the Board as a contingency fund. He explained that the Board should weigh the
338 outcomes of responsive planning and implementation against its costs. Mr. Erdahl stated that the
339 same considerations should be made for other programs, and that program initiatives should be
340 compared against one another.

341
342 Mr. Wisker asked if Manager Becker would provide his report for the Investment Task Force at
343 the Board meeting, as the Committee meeting had run long. Manager Becker agreed.

344
345 The Committee meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

346
347 Respectfully submitted,

348
349 Matthew Cook
350 Planning Assistant