

1 **DRAFT**

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

3
4
5 **July 14, 2016**

6
7 **CALL TO ORDER**

8
9 Manager 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 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 Anna Brown, Planner & Project Manager;

25 Becky Christopher, Lead Planner & Project Manager;

26 James Wisker, Director of Planning & Projects;

27 Kailey Cermak, Water Quality Technician;

28 Lars Erdahl, District Administrator;

29 Matthew Cook, Planning Assistant;

30 Michael Hayman, Planner & Project Manager;

31 Renae Clark, Planner & Project Manager.

32
33 **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

34
35 The agenda was approved without amendment.

36
37 **MEETING SUMMARY**

38
39 Staff reviewed the expectations and design of the strategic planning process. The Committee
40 agreed that the expectations – namely for improved organizational clarity, focus, and
41 prioritization – were accurate and that the design was logical. Staff noted that important
42 decisions would have to be made based on the input provided through the program evaluation
43 process. Both the staff and Managers present agreed that the Committee’s role of reviewing
44 program evaluations and providing recommendations to the Board was crucial. The Managers
45 briefly discussed the importance of Manager attendance at the Committee meetings, especially
46 for meetings in which the Committee reviews strategic planning materials.

47
48 Staff noted that the Project Prioritization Framework and the Investment Task Force white paper
49 were both still in development. Mr. Wisker noted that developing a framework for prioritizing
50 and pursuing outside funds for the Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay geography was the key purpose
51 of the Investment Task Force white paper.

52
53 The Committee made no formal recommendations to the Board.

54
55 **COMMITTEE MEETING**

56
57 Mr. Wisker stated that during this meeting, staff would revisit the purpose, procedure, and next
58 steps of the District's strategic planning process. He noted that staff were not seeking Committee
59 action following the presentation; rather, the purpose was to ensure clarity of expectations for the
60 rollout of information from the staff-led program evaluations. Mr. Wisker underscored the
61 enormity of the District's strategic planning endeavor. He explained that the recommendations
62 and critiques gathered from program evaluations were potentially sensitive and should be
63 handled carefully. Mr. Wisker stated that Ms. Christopher would detail the background, process
64 to date, and next steps.

65
66 Manager Olson entered the meeting at this time.

67
68 Manager Miller shared an article (attached) by Garrett M. Graff, published in Politico. Manager
69 Miller compared the culture of self-assessment described in the article to that of the District,
70 stressing that such processes, however uncomfortable, strengthen the organization and its
71 members as a result. He applauded Mr. Erdahl's willingness to engage in and foster such a
72 critical process.

73
74 Mr. Erdahl agreed that the program evaluation process was worthwhile. He added that staff's
75 input concerning program evaluations will prompt key determinations by the Managers in the
76 near future.

77
78 **Strategic Planning Process: Program Evaluations**

79
80 Ms. Christopher stated that the origins of the District's strategic planning process were the
81 adoption of the *In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology* policy (BUE), the District's self-
82 assessment, and 2016 budget discussions. Ms. Christopher explained that the architecture of the
83 strategic planning process, adopted in October of 2015, was informed by the principles of the
84 BUE and the self-assessment. She stated that through the self-assessment, staff and Managers
85 called for improved organizational focus, prioritization, program alignment, and clarity of
86 mission and goals. She explained that the development of strategic planning process was further
87 catalyzed by the 2016 budget discussions as the need for significant budget reductions was
88 identified and the merits of some program initiatives were questioned.

89

90 Ms. Christopher stated that at the January 2016 PPC meeting, staff presented a draft
91 organizational framework diagram and strategic planning process document. Ms. Christopher
92 referenced the updated process document in their packets and summarized the desired outcomes
93 of the strategic planning process as detailed in the document:
94

- 95 • Program purpose defined
- 96 • Clarity on Board priorities
- 97 • Improve the focus and effectiveness of programs
- 98 • Align programs with the District Mission and improve coordination
- 99 • Develop clear outcomes and metrics of program initiatives for evaluation
- 100 • Establish a repeatable process for evaluation of current and future initiatives

101
102 Ms. Christopher listed the expectations of the staff-led program evaluation process, also from the
103 same document:
104

- 105 • Process will be inclusive and transparent
 - 106 ○ All staff encouraged to participate
 - 107 ○ Input solicited across departments
- 108 • Departments have ownership of their own program(s), but input from all staff will be
109 considered
- 110 • Each department is unique and may require a unique process
- 111 • Process will be iterative; adjustments will be made as necessary
- 112 • Process will chart a course for staged improvement, not immediate / drastic change
- 113 • Keep the staff Core Values in mind:
 - 114 ○ Respect
 - 115 ○ Innovation
 - 116 ○ Humility
 - 117 ○ Teamwork
 - 118 ○ Leadership

119
120 Ms. Christopher then summarized the steps of the program evaluation process that staff had
121 completed to date:
122

- 123 • Staff established clear expectations at an all-staff meeting
- 124 • Six volunteers were identified across multiple departments to serve as facilitators for a
125 program other than their own
- 126 • Departments built draft frameworks and evaluated own programs
- 127 • Facilitators reviewed department frameworks and provided input
- 128 • Departments revised frameworks and other materials
- 129 • Department frameworks and materials released to all staff
- 130 • Staff provided input in facilitator-led focus groups
 - 131 ○ Three 90-minute focus groups per program area
- 132 • Staff submitted anonymous online surveys further reviewing program materials

133

134 Ms. Christopher noted that facilitators were currently working to compile staff input from the
135 focus groups and surveys. She stated that once the information was synthesized, the process will
136 continue as follows:

137

- 138 • Departments will receive all-staff input and review their own frameworks and materials
- 139 • Departments will present their responses and any proposed program changes at an all-
140 staff meeting
- 141 • Information will be presented to the PPC, including program materials, cross-
142 departmental input, and program responses and recommendations

143

144 Ms. Christopher showed examples of the materials that have been prepared for each program,
145 including a strategic framework diagram, a work breakdown showing the allocation of staff and
146 financial resources across program activities, and a written narrative responding to the evaluation
147 questions.

148

149 Mr. Hayman added that the frameworks and materials developed by department staff were meant
150 to represent staff's recommendations for altered program direction or improved operation, not
151 merely to capture what functions the department currently performed.

152

153 Mr. Erdahl noted that the focus groups and anonymous surveys were designed to allow for
154 honest critique of program function by all staff. He stated that when the facilitators synthesize
155 staff input, in addition to preserving anonymity, they are ensuring that the tone of the critiques
156 remains constructive for when it is given to department staff.

157

158 Mr. Wisker stated that the input from staff is direct in nature. He noted that by nature of the
159 District's enthusiastic and invested workforce, it may be uncomfortable to some program staff to
160 receive critiques of their programs. With this in mind, Mr. Wisker stressed the importance of the
161 decisions that will be made as a result of the program evaluation process.

162

163 Ms. Christopher described the types of feedback that were being gathered:

164

- 165 • What is the program's purpose and does it align with the District Mission
- 166 • Prioritization – what initiatives are core to the program? Secondary?
- 167 • How is the program coordinating with other District programs? Is this sufficient?
- 168 • How are resources allocated? Are these allocations appropriate?
- 169 • Are program initiatives efficient / effective?

170

171 Mr. Wisker noted that the facilitators would illuminate key themes and discussion topics from
172 staff, rather than relay every comment to the Managers.

173

174 Manager Rogness stated that through the strategic planning process, the District must establish
175 clear metrics for comparing potential projects and initiatives, citing his professional experiences
176 with successfully applying prioritization tools.

177
178 Manager Becker asked if the allocation of resources was forward-looking in that it represented
179 the desired allocation of resources. Mr. Wisker replied that the allocation of resources identified
180 in the materials for each program were primarily based on current operations. He noted the
181 inherent bias of the strategic planning process was the opportunity for program staff to
182 incorporate all current activity and resource allocation into recommendations for the direction of
183 the program. Manager Becker stated that, based on Mr. Wisker's point, the allocation of
184 resources was forward-looking based on past experiences, and that the process allowed for
185 iterative adjustment of these values. Mr. Wisker concurred.

186
187 Mr. Wisker stated that, over time, the personal preferences of District staff and Managers have
188 influenced program direction and driven program initiatives. He explained that many programs
189 still perform "legacy" functions as a result, and that the Managers would have to decide between
190 maintaining a broad scope of services and focusing District resources on fewer initiatives. Mr.
191 Wisker noted that pursuing a wide range of initiatives tends to diffuse the impact the District has
192 within each initiative.

193
194 Mr. Erdahl stated that the outcome of the process may be to simply narrow the scope or range of
195 District activities so that all programs are pointed in the same direction. He added that it would
196 also be important to continue allowing for flexibility and creativity.

197
198 Mr. Wisker stated that, though the culture of the District is one of critique and self-assessment,
199 the dispersal of program evaluation input to program staff should still be handled carefully as
200 staff are invested in their work.

201
202 Manager White expressed her support for staff's willingness to examine their own work and
203 receive critique. Manager Olson remarked on his own professional experience, stating that he
204 also saw the value of an organization adopting a critical attitude.

205
206 Mr. Wisker asked if the Managers present were generally comfortable that the purpose of the
207 process was clear and that it was on track to meet expectations. The Managers agreed.

208
209 Manager Olson noted that he would not be comfortable with completely dropping program
210 services that the public had grown accustomed to. Manager Miller stated that he would be
211 comfortable dropping program services if it were in the interest of organizational focus and
212 effectiveness. Manager White explained that if the Managers did decide to halt or discontinue
213 certain services that are performed by other agencies, District staff could still direct public
214 inquiries to the correct agency and act as an information source. Manager Olson stated that he
215 would like the District to remain an informational resource for the services it currently provides.
216 Manager Miller agreed, referencing the Mader wetland example.

217
218 Mr. Wisker reminded the Committee that, under the approved process, the PPC is supposed to
219 package recommendations for the Board concerning program evaluations.

220

221 Manager Miller stated that the PPC’s role in the process was important, and that all Managers
222 ought to show up to PPC meetings as they are able. Mr. Wisker suggested that the Board set
223 expectations concerning PPC attendance by Managers.

224
225 Manager Olson asked that staff include an executive summary of Committee meetings in the
226 minutes, to ensure that any absent Managers have an easy means by which to stay informed on
227 Board discussions.

228
229 Mr. Wisker stated that Ms. Christopher would walk the Committee through the strategic
230 framework diagram once again, with a focus on the balance of “implementing” and
231 “influencing” actions, and the difference between core, foundational, and supportive actions. Mr.
232 Wisker noted that classifying an action as supportive did not mean that the action was not
233 important.

234
235 Referencing the strategic framework, Ms. Christopher compared “implementing” actions to
236 “influencing” actions. She explained that when the District implements a change to protect or
237 improve water resources, the District maintains a high level of control over outcomes while
238 incurring a higher cost. Conversely, Ms. Christopher noted, when the District influences a
239 partner to protect or improve water resources, the District minimizes its own costs and lessens its
240 control over outcomes.

241
242 Ms. Christopher then highlighted the District’s “supportive” actions, as shown on the strategic
243 framework diagram. She stated that while some District initiatives are “core” to the
244 organization’s mission, some are “supportive”. Ms. Christopher noted that while “supportive”
245 initiatives do not directly accomplish the District’s mission, many must be pursued in order to
246 effectively fulfill the mission.

247
248 Ms. Christopher asked the Committee members if they would be open to scheduling additional
249 meetings over the next few months to accommodate the review of program evaluation materials.
250 The Committee members affirmed that they would.

251
252 Project Prioritization Framework – Progress Update

253
254 Mr. Hayman stated that staff were in the process of creating a framework which could be applied
255 to weigh the benefits and costs of project opportunities. He added that staff would use the
256 framework to prioritize known project opportunities as an example for the Committee of how the
257 framework could be used. Mr. Hayman noted that staff would present the framework to the
258 Committee soon.

259
260 Investment Task Force White Paper – Progress Update

261
262 Mr. Wisker stated that staff would have a completed draft of the white paper ready for the Task
263 Force soon. Regarding the content of the white paper, he explained that the District has
264 historically pursued outside funding by applying for project-specific grants.

265

266 Manager Shekleton entered the meeting at this time.

267

268 Mr. Wisker stated that the District needs to begin pursuing outside funds on a programmatic
269 level. He explained that to fund the focal geography approach in the Six Mile Creek – Halsted
270 Bay subwatershed, the District would have to market groups of projects as programs to outside
271 funding sources. Mr. Wisker noted that the most obvious funding sources to engage would be the
272 Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund, Section 206 funding from the USACE, and state bonding
273 funds.

274

275 Mr. Wisker stated that the white paper would include a framework for prioritizing funding
276 opportunities. He noted that once developed, this framework could help the District market its
277 capital improvements as a program, and perhaps provide a means by which staff could apply for
278 project-specific grants without needing explicit Board approval.

279

280 Manager Miller stated that he wanted the Board to approve the pursuit of any grant funds.

281

282 The Managers thanked staff for the clarity of their presentation.

283

284 The Committee meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

285

286 Respectfully submitted,

287

288 Matthew Cook

289 Planning Assistant