

1 **DRAFT**

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

3
4
5 **August 11, 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 Brian Shekleton and Dick Miller.

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 Ben Landhauser, Community Development Director (City of Victoria)

27 James Wisker, Director of Planning & Projects

28 Lars Erdahl, District Administrator

29 Matthew Cook, Planning Assistant

30 Michael Hayman, Planner & Project Manager

31
32 **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

33
34 The agenda was approved without amendment.

35
36 **MEETING SUMMARY**

37
38 Staff presented an overview of potential project opportunities in the Six Mile Creek – Halsted
39 Bay (SMC-HB) subwatershed, located around Pierson Lake, Marsh Lake, and Lake
40 Wassermann. Staff identified this area of interest as the Pierson-Marsh-Wassermann (PMW)
41 management unit.

42
43 Staff explained the merits of focusing in the PMW management unit, given the pressure of
44 development in the area and because the District's partner – the City of Victoria – was also
45 focused on this area. Mr. Landhauser, the Community Development Director for the City, was in
46 attendance, and along with District staff, outlined how the District and City could cooperate and

47 achieve each other's goals by aligning authorities and investments. The Committee reviewed
48 selected project opportunities, and staff highlighted a property of interest that was currently for
49 sale.

50
51 Manager Shekleton raised concerns regarding the District's Committee structure and the role of
52 the PPC in reviewing potential capital project and land acquisition opportunities. Managers and
53 staff discussed the official role of the Committee and the process for evaluating land and capital
54 project opportunities.

55
56 Becky Christopher provided an update on staff's progress with program evaluations. Programs
57 have received feedback from all staff. The Facilitator Group is working to determine how staff
58 will present and use the information gathered in the program evaluation process.

59
60 **COMMITTEE MEETING**

61
62 **Discussion of Opportunities in the Pierson-Marsh-Wassermann (PMW) Management Unit**

63
64 Mr. Wisker stated that staff intended to facilitate discussion with the Committee regarding the
65 appropriate balance between long-range "formal" planning with the Policy and Technical
66 Advisory Committees and real-time "informal" planning within communities experiencing land-
67 use pressure that may represent fleeting capital project opportunities for water resource
68 improvement. Mr. Wisker noted that to act in the short term on potential project opportunities,
69 the MCWD would need some understanding of area-wide potential within sub areas of the SMC-
70 HB subwatershed. He indicated that tonight staff would outline a range of opportunities to
71 provide broader context for any short term capital project opportunities.

72
73 He noted that through the presentation staff wanted to highlight opportunities for significant
74 collaboration with the City of Victoria, and the potential to have MCWD's planning process
75 directly inform the City's Comprehensive Plan.

76
77 Mr. Wisker stated that staff wanted Committee feedback on:

- 78
79
 - Splitting time between long-term plan coordination and short-term project planning
 - Focusing short-term project planning in the PMW management unit

80
81
82 Manager Miller expressed his support for the approach as outlined by staff, noting that the Board
83 has envisioned the District operating through such an approach for some time. He stated that he
84 was pleased that City of Victoria staff have been involved, thanking Mr. Landhauser for
85 attending the meeting. Manager Miller underscored that he was comfortable with staff
86 continuing to explore land acquisition opportunities on a parallel track with the long range
87 planning. He added that the District should not wait to produce results from the SMC-HB
88 planning process until every aspect of the plan is completed, as many opportunities that already
89 fit the spirit of the plan would lapse.

90 Manager Becker stated that it made good sense to seek out opportunities for land acquisition,
91 provided that the parcel in question fit into a larger plan for the surrounding area.
92

93 Mr. Wisker recalled that the Board selected SMC-HB as a focal geography for a number of
94 reasons. He explained that the most principal of these reasons included the pressure of
95 impending development upon the area's natural resources and the opportunity to form lasting,
96 impactful partnerships with the communities and agencies present in the subwatershed.
97

98 Mr. Wisker stated that the District has recently been focused on coordinating plans with other
99 agencies. He explained that having partners incorporate District goals into their plans and vice
100 versa remains a long-term goal for the District. Mr. Wisker noted that long range policy
101 integration was not envisioned to enhance the District's ability to identify and develop capital
102 improvements on a short-term basis.
103

104 He recalled that the successes of the Minnehaha Creek Greenway came from the District's ability
105 to engage on fleeting project opportunities. Mr. Wisker stated that the District had already
106 acknowledged that it could not simply replicate this approach in SMC-HB and expect success;
107 the District must employ a long-term model for cooperative planning and implementation. Mr.
108 Wisker reinforced that because of the large scale of SMC-HB, and the diversity of partner
109 agencies, the area warranted a formal approach to collaboration, ratified in policy and planning
110 documents.
111

112 However, Mr. Wisker recommended an operational shift to dedicate more staff time to short-
113 term, project-specific planning efforts. He noted that this would likely affect the timeframe for
114 long-term planning efforts in the subwatershed, but that short-term successes would also likely
115 translate to greater support for long-term planning efforts and help to secure outside funds.
116

117 Manager White stated that she was comfortable with the District seeking short-term
118 implementation while long-term plans are being developed, so long as actions taken align with
119 the plans made thus far.
120

121 Manager Miller recalled previous Comprehensive Plan cycles, noting that past Plans did not
122 account for the District's capacity to implement. He expressed his excitement for the 2017
123 Comprehensive Plan, underscoring that the District is developing a plan for meaningful action.
124

125 Mr. Wisker stated that staff would work to effectively split their time between long-term
126 planning and short-term implementation, moving the two efforts forward in parallel while
127 keeping the Board of Managers informed through routine briefings to the PPC.
128

129 Mr. Wisker noted that in terms of short term capital improvement implementation, the area
130 around Pierson-Marsh-Wasserman was generally the most rich with potentially fleeting
131 opportunities, when compared to other parts of the watershed.
132

133 Mr. Wisker stated that in addition to being a logical target area regarding the District's water
134 resource objectives, the PMW management unit is a focal area for the City of Victoria due to
135 development pressure and the impending annexation and stressed the importance of the District
136 staying in sync with its partners.

137
138 Mr. Wisker cautioned that the District must adhere to a strategy when identifying and selecting
139 parcels to focus on. He stated that staff will have to prioritize parcels based on the condition of
140 the water resource connected to the parcel and the project possibilities for said parcel.

141
142 Mr. Wisker described the general condition of each of the three lakes in the PMW management
143 unit and the principal drivers of water quality concerns. He then examined preliminary
144 implementation opportunities both in the lake and at a landscape level.

145
146 Manager Shekleton entered the meeting at this point.

147
148 Mr. Wisker provided a preliminary framework through which the District may consider land
149 acquisition for land conservation, versus land acquisition for capital improvements. In doing so
150 he outlined a number of factors to be considered, including:

- 151
- 152 • Is the property located on a priority water resource?
 - 153 • Does the parcel contribute to solving an impairment or protecting high quality water?
 - 154 • Does the parcel offer opportunities to improve ecological integrity, habitat, etc.
 - 155 • Is the parcel located in a potential greenway corridor?
 - 156 • Is the parcel accessible or highly visible to the public?
 - 157 • Is the parcel under development pressure?
 - 158 • What is the projected impact of the development pressure?
 - 159 • What is the urgency of action?
- 160

161 Mr. Wisker then noted that the additional lens through which the District must consider
162 acquisitions is comprised of local or external priorities. For example:

- 163
- 164 • Is the parcel located on a local priority resource?
 - 165 • Does the parcel intersect with goals of economic development, trails, parks and open
166 space, transportation?
 - 167 • If there is an intersection of effort, are local resources available to support the
168 transaction?
- 169

170 Mr. Wisker restated that these are things to contemplate when evaluating short term
171 implementation opportunities within the PMW corridor. He added that Mr. Landhauser would
172 provide the Committee with a forecast of potential development patterns in the PMW
173 management unit and explain how the District's planning could provide long term policy
174 integration between MCWD and City of Victoria Comprehensive Plans.

175

176 Mr. Landhauser thanked the Committee and District staff for inviting him to present at the
177 meeting. He stated that the City of Victoria is eager to collaborate with the District, as more can
178 be achieved through working together.

179
180 Mr. Landhauser stated that the city is focusing on the PMW area because of expected growth and
181 development. He noted that the city has already invested infrastructure funds in the area to help
182 draw development. Mr. Landhauser explained that the City's goals were to connect the area to
183 the sewer and power grid, and establish a local park system.

184
185 Mr. Landhauser underscored that both the District and the City are interested in the PMW area,
186 and stated that it was only logical to combine efforts. Mr. Landhauser suggested that City staff
187 could be a resource for the District, and vice versa, by providing information regarding
188 development projections in meetings with the District and the District's consultants. He
189 explained that the City, the District, and developers would all benefit from the cooperation
190 between the City and District due to clearer understanding of the parties' interests.

191
192 Mr. Landhauser presented a map that showed projected residential development in the PMW
193 management unit, assuming limited integration of MCWD and Victoria plans. He highlighted
194 likely areas and density for development, and complementary parks, roads, and trails.

195
196 Mr. Wisker stated that the City and District were currently discussing the opportunity to first
197 collaboratively identifying green corridors, wetlands, and water quality project opportunities, and
198 then map proposed development around these natural assets, rather than the common practice to
199 do things in reverse. He noted that this approach could be part of the City's Comprehensive
200 Plan, and could represent a fundamental shift in community planning in the state.

201
202 Mr. Landhauser underscored that by participating in the District's discussions surrounding water
203 resource protection plans, the City is more able to convey to developers what development
204 possibilities given parcels have.

205
206 Managers Olson, Shekleton and Miller expressed their enthusiasm for the collaborative approach
207 that City and District staff were taking.

208
209 Manager Becker also stated his appreciation for the approach. He asked staff if the District had
210 begun to establish agreed-upon principles for development with other communities in the SMC-
211 HB subwatershed. Mr. Wisker responded that staff was first working on developing a high level
212 resolution of support for the vision and goals of the formal planning process, before then
213 working with individual communities on development principles.

214
215 Ms. Brown detailed the parcels that comprise the aforementioned property on the west side of
216 Lake Wassermann. She noted that the largest parcel was wetland, while the smaller two parcels
217 were upland. Ms. Brown highlighted that the pond on the wetland parcel was high in phosphorus,
218 accounting for 7% of Lake Wassermann's total loading. Mr. Wisker explained that, as the lake's

219 loading was primarily internal in origin, the pond in question may comprise the majority of
220 loading to the lake from external sources.

221
222 Mr. Wisker stated that the District should consider whether or not it must purchase the property
223 and implement a water resource improvement project to receive the desired water quality
224 improvement. He noted that the District might be able to realize the same water quality
225 improvement by merely purchasing an easement over the wetland parcel.

226
227 Ms. Brown stated that if the District did not purchase the property, the wetland parcel would
228 remain protected through existing regulations, and the upland parcels would likely be converted
229 to single family home lots. She explained that if the upland area was converted to residential use,
230 the water quality impact would be minute, but public access to the lake would be lost. Ms.
231 Brown noted that the District's partner, the City of Victoria, has identified the upland parcels as a
232 priority location for a park. Ms. Brown added that through the City's park dedication process,
233 much of the initial purchase cost could be recovered.

234
235 Mr. Landhauser stated that the City was expecting residential development on a large lot
236 immediately west of the aforementioned upland parcel. He explained that through the City's
237 parkland dedication ordinance, the developer of the large lot would be required to incorporate
238 parkland into their development or pay the City if they cannot construct a park. Mr. Landhauser
239 suggested that the small upland parcel that District staff highlighted could serve as the location
240 of the park for the future development to the west. He noted that the City does not have the
241 means to purchase the small upland parcels in question, and thus has turned to the District for
242 assistance. Mr. Landhauser added that those parcels, if made into parkland, could connect
243 existing trails to the east and west.

244
245 Ms. Brown explored short term possibilities for acquisition in the area surrounding Wasserman
246 Lake and highlighted the opportunity to develop an option on specific parcels or directly
247 negotiate a purchase agreement. Mr. Landhauser outlined the possible role of park dedication
248 authority in providing a mechanism to reimburse upfront acquisition costs as the surrounding
249 area developed.

250
251 Mr. Wisker sought Committee feedback on staff's recommendation to focus efforts on short term
252 implementation opportunities in the PMW area, and noted that any direction on potential
253 acquisitions would be routed through the Board of Managers in closed session, as part of
254 standard operating procedure.

255
256 Manager Miller expressed support for staff continuing efforts to focus within the SMC-HB
257 subwatershed on short term opportunities for capital improvement implementation, and the
258 specific opportunities outlined by staff.

259
260 Manager Shekleton stated discomfort with the Committee's role in reviewing potential land
261 acquisitions, noting his preference to have the full Board of Managers entertain all land
262 discussions.

263
264 Mr. Wisker noted that staff was not seeking a formal recommendation from the Committee, but
265 was treating the meeting as a briefing of staff activity within the SMC-HB subwatershed. He
266 noted that a defined role of the PPC, as voted on by the Board of Managers, was to engage in
267 preliminary discussion of land and project opportunities before formal direction would be
268 provided by the Board in a closed session.

269
270 Manager Shekleton restated his discomfort with the Committee being shown this information
271 without the rest of the Board present.

272
273 The Committee and staff discussed the need for clarity on this issue and agreed to revisit at a
274 later date.

275
276 Mr. Wisker confirmed that as opportunities became more fully developed, staff would work with
277 President White to schedule a formal closed session discussion for the Board of Managers. Mr.
278 Wisker thanked Mr. Landhauser for attending the meeting, and expressed that he saw Mr.
279 Landhauser's work at the City of Victoria as an asset to the District.

280
281 Strategic Planning: Program Evaluation Update

282
283 Ms. Christopher provided a brief update regarding staff's progress in the program evaluation
284 process. She stated that programs have received anonymous feedback from the rest of staff, and
285 that all staff have seen a summary level of each program's feedback at an all-staff meeting. Ms.
286 Christopher explained that the feedback received across programs could generally be grouped
287 into the following categories:

- 288
- 289 • Program Purpose/Direction – a program's direction is unclear, and ought to be
290 determined through the strategic planning process by the Board
 - 291 • Program Coordination – a program could be made more effective and / or more
292 accountable by coordinating more regularly with other programs
 - 293 • Operational Effectiveness – a program's activities could be made more efficient at
294 fulfilling the program's purpose
 - 295 • New Needs – a program could reach new levels of effectiveness by upgrading
296 technologies or other resources
- 297

298 Ms. Christopher stated that program staff are currently processing the feedback. She noted that
299 the Facilitator Group was working to develop the next steps of the process, including how the
300 program evaluations would be presented to the Committee and Board.

301
302 Ms. Christopher stated that, at the next Committee meeting, staff would present more detailed
303 information regarding the themes of feedback across programs. She sought confirmation from
304 the Committee that scheduled Operations and Programs Committee meetings would be
305 converted to additional Policy and Planning Committee meetings to help move along the
306 strategic planning process.

307

308 Manager Shekleton noted it would be difficult for him to leave work early to make another
309 afternoon meeting each month. The Committee discussed the possibility of holding a Joint
310 Committee meeting or Committee of the Whole to receive strategic planning updates.

311

312 Mr. Wisker noted that the Board had resolved to have strategic planning discussions occur in the
313 Policy and Planning Committee, and that Managers agreed to prioritize the attendance of
314 Committee meetings.

315

316 Manager White asked how long the additional PPC meetings would be occurring. Ms.
317 Christopher stated that she expected to need additional meetings through at least October.

318

319 Mr. Wisker asked if the Managers, especially the Committee Chairs and Board President, were
320 comfortable with having another PPC meeting on the 25th of August. The Managers agreed.

321

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

323

324 Respectfully submitted,

325

326 Matthew Cook

327 Planning Assistant