



Wednesday, May 17, 2023

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

MCWD Office, Board Room

www.minnehahacreek.org

Board of Managers:

Sherry White, President; William Olson, Vice President; Jessica Loftus, Treasurer;
Eugene Maxwell, Secretary; Richard Miller, Manager; Arun Hejmadi, Manager; Steve Sando, Manager

Board Liaison: Manager Maxwell

Citizens Advisory Committee Members in attendance:

Emily Balogh, Lisa Fowler, Robert Glisky, Laurie Goldsmith, John Iverson, Drew McGovern, Rich Nyquist, Denise Tennen

Citizens Advisory Committee Members absent:

Marcy Bean, Dan Flo, Suzanne Jiwani, David Oltmans, Cassy Ordway

MCWD Staff:

Samantha Maul, Michael Hayman

6:35 pm

1. **Committee Meeting Call to Order and Roll Call**
Chair Nyquist calls the meeting to order.
2. **Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**
Iverson, Fowler – All approved.
2.1 May 17, 2023, agenda
3. **Approval of Minutes (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)**
Iverson, Glisky – All approved.
3.1 March 15, 2023, minutes
4. **Action Items**
No action items.

6:40pm

5. **Discussion Items**
5.1 MCWD Capital Improvement Plan – **Hayman**

Michael Hayman, MCWD Policy Planning Manager, introduced himself and the agenda for the discussion. Hayman explained that he would walk through some background on MCWD's watershed management plan (WMP) and the multi-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), before soliciting the CAC's input on the CIP and interpretive elements of the design of 325 Blake Road and Cottageville Park Phase 2.

MCWD is required to produce a WMP every 10 years. Its most recent plan (2017) frames a two-pronged approach for implementing capital projects,

including MCWD's focal geography approach, and a responsive model now called the Land & Water Partnership (LWP) program. In each of MCWD's focal geographies, MCWD's staff focus in the area for a length of time to understand the unique needs, opportunities, and partners within the region, allowing the District to implement projects that have a significant impact on water resources. The LWP program allows MCWD to be responsive and flexible to opportunities outside of its focal geographies by providing technical and financial assistance to partner-led projects.

MCWD creates an annual CIP, which includes information on its capital improvements for the coming year. The District updates its CIP every year to clarify opportunities and actions. Not every project within the CIP will be completed, but by incorporating uncertain projects, MCWD can pursue projects when opportunities arise. Last year MCWD's project-planning team visited the CAC to discuss how it could better communicate its capital projects to the public. MCWD recently created a multi-year CIP, which includes information on projects in various stages of planning over the course of several years. For each project, MCWD prepares an overview of scope, timeline, and budget for the project's future. The CAC's review of the CIP is one part of a robust process of review before the CIP will be distributed for comment in the fall of 2023.

Hayman explained that in geographic terms, MCWD's projects are spread out across the watershed, especially in the subwatersheds that drain toward Lake Minnetonka. In past years, communities have wanted the District to work within Lake Minnetonka, but over time, MCWD learned that its work upstream delivers greater benefits. MCWD currently focuses on three subwatersheds that drain to Lake Minnetonka: Long Lake Creek, Painter Creek, and Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay (SMCHB).

In the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed, MCWD is working with cities to advance projects that result in improved water quality. The District has two scoped projects to lead in the subwatershed: the Holbrook Park Stormwater Ponds, and the County Road 6 Retrofit. MCWD's WMP includes also includes potential projects in the Painter Creek subwatershed. In the SMCHB subwatershed, MCWD is pursuing several projects to improve water quality in the region's lakes and in Halsted Bay. In the coming year, MCWD has scoped projects like the East Auburn Wetland Restoration, the Turbid-Lundsten Corridor Restoration, and the Halsted Bay Alum Treatment Facility.

MCWD also focuses in the Minnehaha Creek subwatershed, particularly in the most impaired areas of the subwatershed, such as the Minnehaha Creek Greenway. MCWD has several projects moving into construction in the upcoming year, including both 325 Blake Road and the second phase of the Cottageville Park project. For these two projects, MCWD anticipates two years of construction. MCWD is also advancing the Cedar to Greenway Regional Trail Connection, which will connect the Greenway in its entirety.

In the Minnehaha Creek subwatershed, MCWD is also turning its attention to projects in Minneapolis, along the Minnehaha Parkway. MCWD has scoped over three projects that would have a major impact on Minnehaha Creek and its receiving waterbody, Lake Hiawatha. These projects are still in the early stages of planning and will involve partnership with the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board and the City of Minneapolis.

Hayman then asked for questions about the 2024 CIP. A few CAC members asked about funding for projects in the federal infrastructure bill. Hayman explained that MCWD has not pursued funding from the IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) since much of the money is dedicated to energy and transportation, but many of MCWD's city partners may be eligible and interested in securing some of the funding. Another CAC member shared the opportunity for cities and other partners to work with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to utilize a waste load reduction credit system.

After addressing questions, Hayman provided some background on the design of 325 Blake Road, which CAC members were introduced to at the field trip on May 12, 2023. MCWD is currently working with the design firm, HDR, to address pollutants draining to the site from the surrounding 270 acres, as well as position the site as a regional amenity with recreation areas and creek access. Throughout the project's design, MCWD conducted a robust engagement process to allow the community to shape what the site's features would look like. The site includes five major design nodes: Trailhead and Overlook, Regional Stormwater Treatment, the Landing, Nature-based Play Area, and the Gateway to Greenway.

MCWD is also working with the design firm to determine the layout and themes of the site's wayfinding and interpretive features. The four main themes currently under consideration are local ecology, Minnehaha Creek history, stormwater, and the culture of the creek. A few key interpretive features include a scavenger hunt highlighting local flora and fauna on the site, signage and design features that explain how the stormwater treatment system works, and a translation that expresses the languages previously spoken in the area. Hayman also explained some of the ecological enhancements considered for the site, such as bird houses and pollinator habitat.

Hayman then asked the CAC to provide input on the question: What would visitors find interesting if they visited the site? CAC members asked about fishing locations at the site. Hayman shared that MCWD has some ideas for where fishing would be allowed, but also stated that anglers are not likely to use a formal area. CAC members also asked about the maintenance of the site. Hayman noted that the City of Hopkins will continue to maintain Cottageville Park, but maintenance of 325 Blake Road may fall to the developer, the city, or possibly an HOA, if one is formed for the site's housing.

CAC members also shared feedback on potential signage, noting that MCWD should be careful with the number of signs so as not to overload the public. One CAC member expressed that the signage and interpretation at Wassermann Lake Preserve appears to be effective for families visiting the park and suggested MCWD take a similar approach for 325 Blake Road.

CAC members were also interested in the scavenger hunt feature and how it would work using QR codes. CAC members suggested adding links to other resources for each part of the scavenger hunt. QR codes could also be used to guide visitors to more information on MCWD or the site's stormwater treatment system. CAC members advised that most residents are not very familiar with where stormwater goes or how it works. MCWD could communicate where the stormwater is coming from and where it is going, as well as share the impacts of stormwater treatment. CAC members suggested using a map of local stormwater drains or a similar feature to visualize the flow from nearby streets.

Hayman and Maul also presented a few questions about specific signage themes related to stormwater, balanced urban ecology, and the site's history. CAC members did share that the core elements for understanding and visualizing Balanced Urban Ecology included: best practices, recreation, community vitality, partnership, transportation/industry/business, and the broader system. Due to limited time, Maul expressed that they would send a prompt for additional feedback after the meeting.

5.2 Website Rebuild: Beta Testing Plan – **Maul**

Maul shared that the rebuild of MCWD's website is approaching completion. As staff prepare to launch the new site, a critical step is beta testing, which will involve the CAC, the Board of Managers, MCWD's staff, and some external stakeholders. Since the CAC will be engaging with the new site soon, Maul provided some background on the website rebuild project, introduced the CAC to the draft site, and shared an overview of the beta testing process.

After providing background on the website rebuild project, Maul previewed the draft site for the CAC, sharing each pillar of the new website, as reflected in the sitemap. The draft site is nearing completion, and staff are optimistic that content will be finalized before the end of June. Staff are targeting June 22, 2023, to launch the beta testing process. The beta testing period will last roughly two weeks, during which the CAC will be asked to experiment with the website as a typical user would and provide feedback on visuals, content accuracy, functionality, broken links, and future enhancements. Beta testers will also be asked to share feedback on how well the new website is meeting its original goals. MCWD will share a feedback form to collect input in an organized manner. After the beta testing period closes, staff will analyze and incorporate the feedback received. After feedback has been addressed and proper launch procedures have been executed, MCWD will launch the new website. Staff's current timeline suggests that the new site will launch in August 2023.

8:18pm

6. **Informational Items + Updates**

6.1 CAC Member Updates

- Maul shared that the Board recently passed a Resolution of Recognition for CAC member, Marc Rosenberg, who suddenly passed away a few weeks ago. Maul read the resolution and invited CAC members to sign a card for his family.
- Maul asked for any reflections on the May 12th Field trip to Cottageville Park. CAC members shared that they enjoyed the afternoon and appreciated the site tour and scavenger hunt activities.

6.2 Board Liaison Updates

- Manager Maxwell shared that MCWD was recently recognized with an award from the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) for Community Design Excellence. The award acknowledges MCWD's efforts to center placemaking in the design of its projects.
- Manager Maxwell noted that the Board of Managers approved the final design for 325 Blake Road at the May 11th Board meeting, an important milestone for one of MCWD's largest projects.
- Manager Maxwell explained that the Board has been engaged in a series of conversations to develop a strategic action plan for MCWD's next five years. The Board has explored focus areas such as Capital Projects, and Climate Planning, and will be discussing Partnerships and Brand Equity and its next PPC meeting.

6.3 Staff Updates

- Maul shared that MCWD is hosting its final Technical Advisory Committee meeting for the Land & Water Partnership Initiative in the first week of June. Insights from this process will be captured and distributed in a publication later this year.
- Maul stated that project progress continues in the Long Lake Creek subwatershed. MCWD is leading the early phases of planning and design on two projects, and the Board recently authorized MCWD to work with the landowner and City of Medina for a wetland banking project near Holy Name Lake.
- Maul also shared that MCWD has been working on an internal discovery process to research how it might approach incorporating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into its work. The internal workgroup is producing a Summary of Findings to document learnings and next steps for the process. MCWD is currently scoping options for engaging a consultant in its next steps.
- Maul also shared updates on the permitting program, 2D model funding, and the Research & Monitoring season.

8:40pm

7. **Adjournment**

Balogh, Iverson – All approved.

Upcoming Meeting

Wednesday, July 19, 2023 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting (Manager Loftus, Board Liaison)