

# Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

## **POLICY #5: GOVERNANCE PROCESS**

### BOARD COMMITTEE PRINCIPLES

The board may establish committees to help carry out its responsibilities. Committees will be used to support the board in carrying out its job and must not interfere with delegation from the board to the District Administrator.

1. Committees may not act for the board except when formally given such authority.
2. Committees are not to be created by the board to supervise or direct staff.
3. Committee members will be approved by the board.
4. Committees will consist of at least three (3) members but are open to all Managers with equivalent status to committee members.
5. Committees are subject to requirements of the Open Meeting Law, Minnesota Statutes chapter 13D.
6. The board will establish committees as required by the board policy on *Monitoring District Administrator Performance*.

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## MCWD Board Restructuring Proposal

*MCWD Board Meeting • January 24, 2013*

### BACKGROUND

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The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) benefits from a wealth of staff and Board member expertise and strong commitment to its mission. As the organization and priorities evolve, MCWD at a May Board meeting decided to engage in a self-evaluation to evaluate options to maximize organizational efficiency. MCWD retained Himle Rapp & Company, Inc. (HRC) to evaluate MCWD's Board and committee structure and propose potentially new organizational models to support good governance, accountability and overall organizational effectiveness.

### OBJECTIVES FOR RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL

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There are three main objectives that the restructuring is designed to address:

**1. Enhance the Public's Ability to Monitor and Engage with MCWD**

Due to the number of MCWD committees and task forces and frequency of meetings, it is challenging for interested members of the public to follow and effectively engage with MCWD. The public, media and other policy makers have been increasingly expressing concerns about agencies that lack enough public transparency. As MCWD evolves and the public tries to engage more, this will become increasingly problematic for the organization.

Issues:

- Too many committees
- Too many committee and Board meetings
- Meetings are too long

## **2. Achieve a Better Balance Between Policy/Strategic Planning vs. Management/Program Implementation**

Board members feel that they do not have the opportunity to discuss policy and water management issues on a strategic level.

Issues:

- Board spends a lot of time on routine business of the organization not leaving time for strategic planning and policy setting.
- The Board's level of engagement is a tremendous asset to the organization but it comes with consequences. This takes focus off the long-term planning for the organization, which is essential to the continued effectiveness of MCWD.

## **3. Allocate Staff Resources to Their Highest/Best Use**

Staff feels overwhelmed by the amount of time spent preparing for and attending Board, committee and task force meetings. Staff feels that this, in part, is making it difficult for them to produce the quality of work that they are expected to do and also leading to job burnout. It has also reduced the focus on strategic goals which could eventually undermine MCWD's mission and excellence.

Issues:

- Lack of clarity of organizational priorities
- Too many meetings (and time spent to prepare for meetings)
- Too many night meetings

## RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

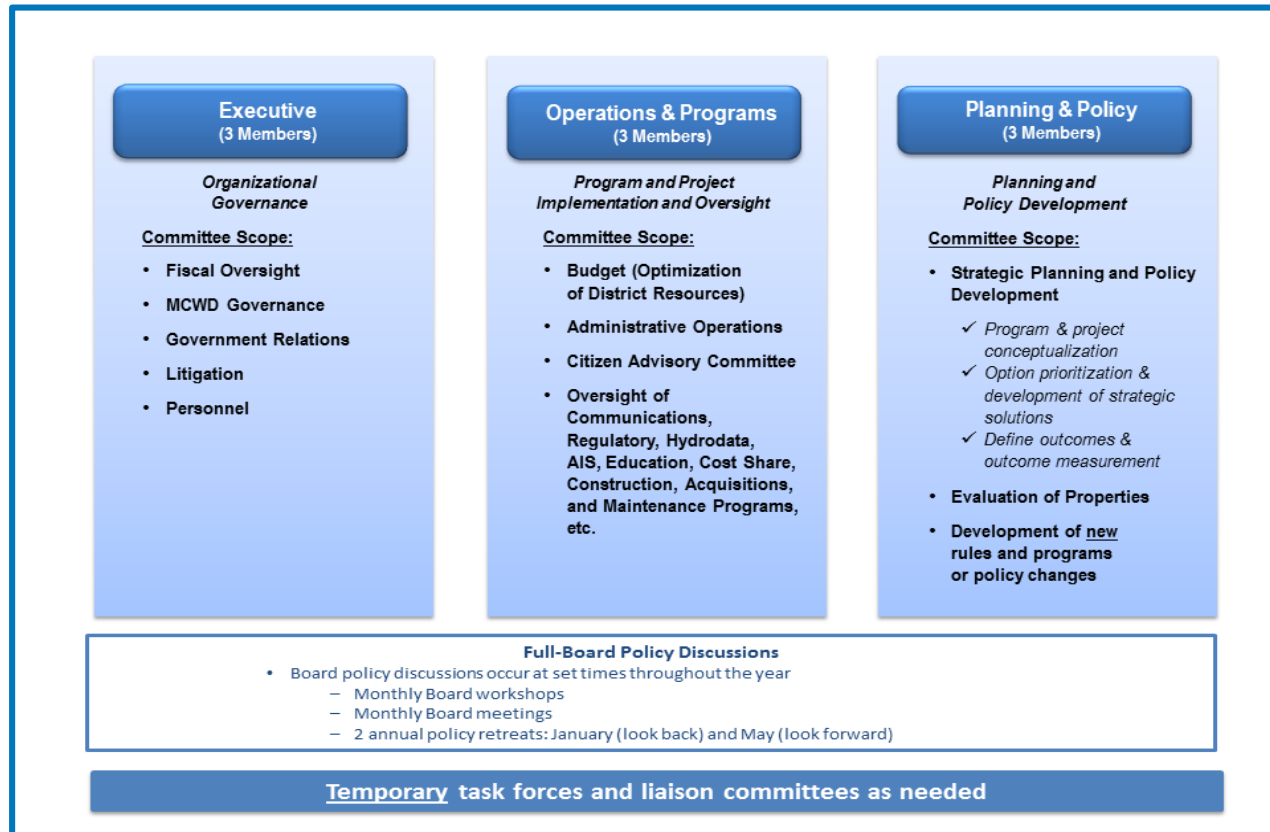
We propose the following recommendations to address the issues presented and achieve the overall goal of optimal organizational efficiency.

### 1. Streamline Committee Structure

This process will:

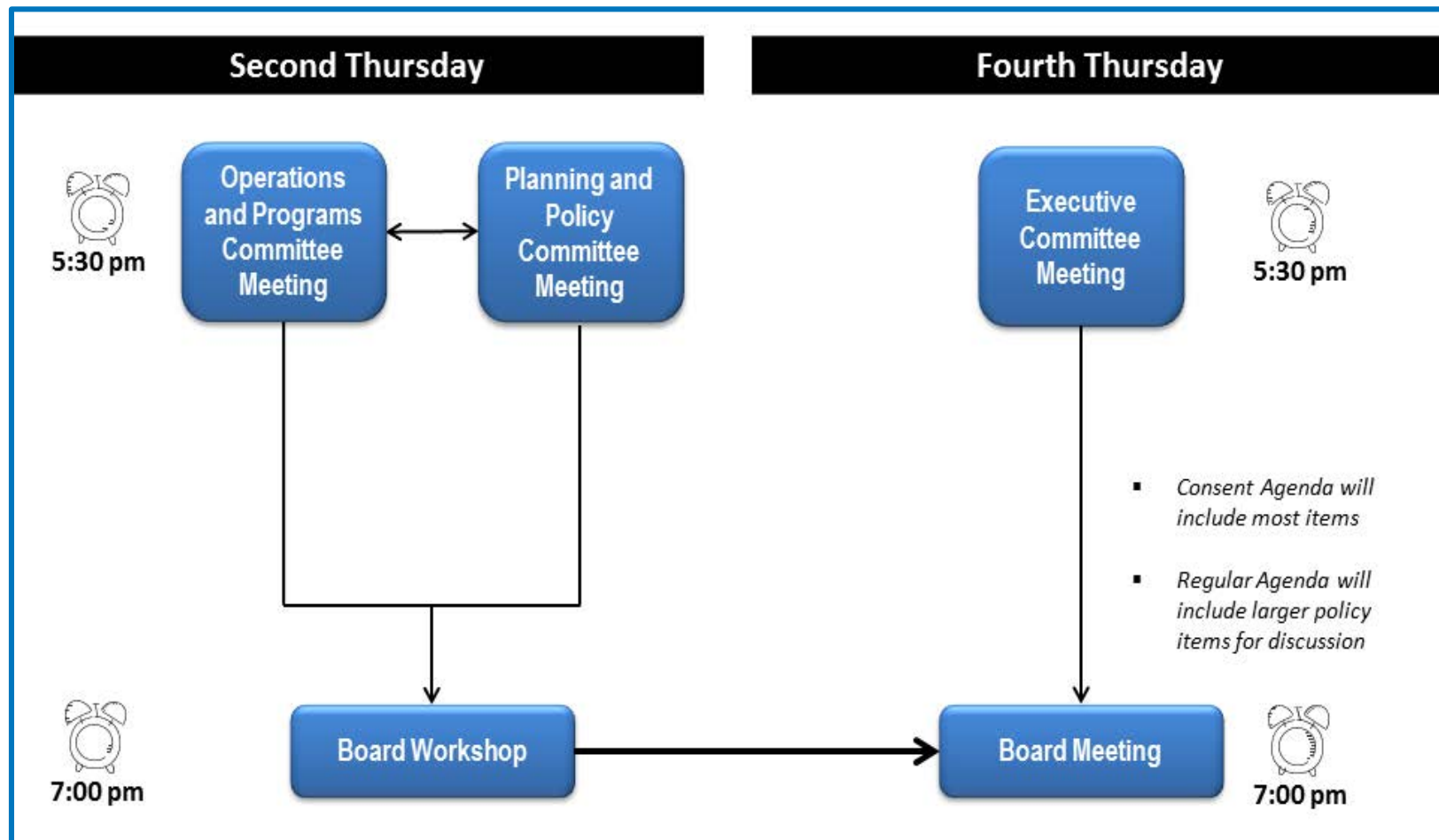
- Help achieve further operational efficiencies
- Improve and encourage public participation/support
- Help relieve pressure on staff, allowing them to focus on work plans

The proposed committee structure reduces the number of committees to three standing committees.



**2. Schedule Board and Committee Meetings on Just Two Nights Per Month**

The number of meetings and the timing of meetings is a barrier to public engagement with MCWD. It also provides a strain on MCWD Board and staff. The following chart outlines a proposed schedule for committee and board workshops and meetings that would address these issues. It provides greater clarity to the Board, staff and most importantly, greater accessibility to the public.



### **3. Expand and Schedule Regular, Full-Board Policy Discussions**

Policy and strategic planning discussions should happen regularly. These meeting should be planned in advance.

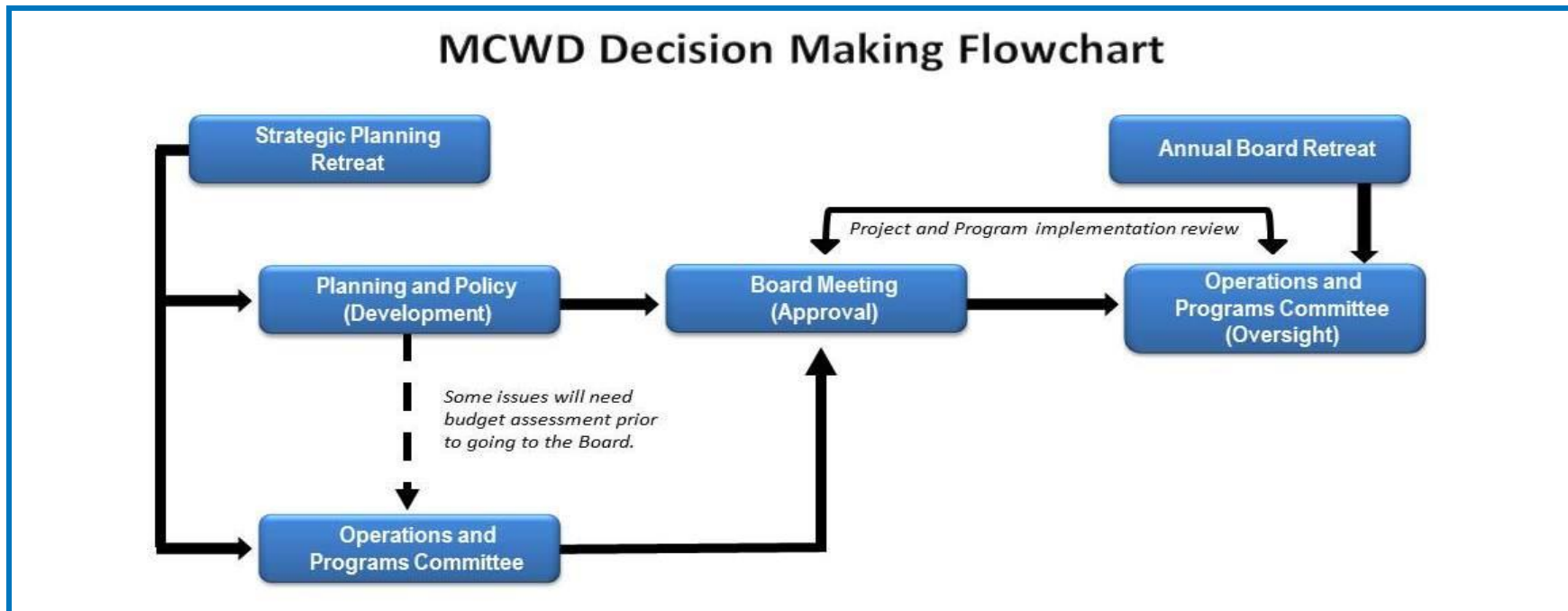
- Monthly Workshops – topics set in advance so policy discussions are planned
- Board meetings as necessary
- Two annual policy retreats
  - January (look back)
  - May (look forward)

Again, this provides predictability for the Board and staff and ensures that these broader policy discussions occur regularly.

**4. Proposed Decision Making Process**

The Decision Making Flowchart illustrates how projects and programs would be vetted by the Board under the proposed committee structure.

- The Planning and Policy Committee will discuss and vet issues more fully, develop a recommendation and send the item/recommendation to the Board for a final decision. Some items may also go to the Operations and Programs Committee for a budget analysis prior to proceeding to the Board for final action.
- Board meetings will include a robust consent agenda and more dedicated time for policy discussions for bigger decisions as necessary. Most items sent to the Board from committees will be added to the consent agenda. Big policy decisions will not be on the consent agenda, but instead will be on the regular agenda for further discussion/decision.
- Managers can always request that a consent agenda item be moved to the discussion portion of the agenda.
- Staff will develop work plans for implementation based on Board decisions.
- Committees meet on an “as needed basis” but are scheduled the same day and prior to regularly scheduled Board Workshops.



**5. Reinforce the Roles of Both Staff and Board as Identified in MCWD Governance Policies**

A key step to refocus the Board and management staff is for both groups to re-visit their roles under the new governance structure. For instance, staff should be respectful of the Board’s role in setting policy and goals. Likewise, the Board should be respectful of staff’s role in managing and implementing work plans to achieve goals.

The chart below is one way to think about this process and can aid in clarifying roles and drawing a distinction between the roles of Board members and staff. The chart includes Board and staff duties at a macro level and can include more detail as necessary. It also includes a list of what is not the role of the Board and staff.

**MCWD Role Clarification Worksheet**

Board Roles	Staff Roles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Setting policy</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Management</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Setting goals</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Implementation of programs to support goals</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Holding MCWD accountable for meeting goals</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Measurement of progress</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Not implementing work plans</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Not setting policy or goals</b></li> </ul>

The process of clarifying roles can happen at a strategic planning session or a workshop. After this process is complete the role clarification can be formalized at a full Board meeting. Once complete, it might also be helpful to print the roles of the Board and staff on every meeting agenda so it is at the forefront at all times.

The ultimate goal is for MCWD to continue to thrive as an effective and efficient public organization. These proposed recommendations will assist Board and staff evolve as public demands increase on the organization.