



Title: 2021 Policy and Planning Discussion Agenda

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Purpose:

At the November 19, 2020 Policy and Planning Committee (PPC), the Board will continue discussions started in October about the purpose and process for a program of forward facing strategic discussions in 2021.

The PPC meeting will be used to:

1. Refine a shared understanding of the purpose and desired outcomes of the 2021 PPC discussion agenda
2. Discuss and provide feedback on preliminary process elements

The content derived from the October and November PPC conversations will be used by the Administrator and Louis Smith to develop a process to facilitate PPC discussions beginning in the first quarter of 2021.

Background:

Organizational Context:

MCWD's organizational context exists as an important circumstantial backdrop to inform the proposed 2021 PPC discussion agenda. The District currently sits at a significant juncture in its trajectory of growth and development. Several years have been spent visioning a clear mission, developing a supporting strategy, systematically mapping each program's highest and best use, and developing action plans to achieve a new workflow, aligned to support the development of capital projects that protect and improve the environment while resulting in beautiful places that benefit people and the economy. This important groundwork outlined the substantive changes needed for MCWD's work, people and culture, in order to lead the District to its desired future state.

With significant adjustments in structure and personnel, the new MCWD team is working hard to implement a high volume of internal change initiatives across all programs, in its quest for internal alignment and excellence in output. This work to produce organizational change must happen while continuing to advance important externally facing initiatives with key partners, and managing day-to-day operations. Importantly, all of these efforts are now being conducted in a remote environment, a relatively new phenomenon for the District. This has stretched an already taxed team to capacity, as staff and the Board respond to the unique pressures and disruptions that a global pandemic has brought to both home and work life.

While everyone works to implement the changes envisioned, the Board of Managers has expressed a desire to continue strategically thinking about and preparing for the future. Interest in these forward facing conversations is predicated by a shifting organizational dynamic and high levels of trust between the Board and staff.

Initially, the Board of Managers were deeply involved in setting a clear bold direction for the District, communicating that direction to partners through its Comprehensive Water Management Plan process, evaluating organizational operations, working through plans to restructure, and mapping the strategic initiatives needed to align each program (Attachment A - synopsis of strategic directives). However, as the District's restructuring takes shape and the team builds momentum around this program of work, the Board of Managers has gradually stepped back from intensive involvement in auditing organizational operations, and setting a framework for alignment.

The Board is now in the process of resuming a role of quality control over the work underway by staff, and as strategic lookouts and navigators for the organization. In light of this evolving organizational dynamic the Board has recently discussed their desire to develop a program for 2021 discussions that would ensure the District remains a situationally aware, learning organization, that is adequately prepared to meet the future needs of the watershed.

Preliminary Objectives:

At the October 22, 2020 PPC, the Board discussed the benefit of any forward facing strategic dialogue being built off a solid foundation of lessons learned over the last decade, and a shared understanding of the District's current junction point and priorities. Reviewing the District's past, evaluating its present, and imagining its future will help answer the following broad questions:

1. Where have we been and what have we learned?
 - Studying where we have been, critical milestones in the District's collective history, influencing factors, key decision points, mistakes and successes, will allow the organization to mine insights which can be memorialized into principles to integrate and onboard new staff/Board/CAC, maintain alignment, inform current and future Board/staff, and guide the long-term success of the District.
2. Where are we now and what needs to be done?
 - Taking stock of our current situation and where we are in the trajectory of planned organizational change will facilitate the calibration of short-term 2-3 year priorities, help anticipate challenges, and ensure successful execution to continue driving the organization forward towards its desired level of workflow alignment.
3. What are the emerging challenges we will face, and how can we prepare?
 - Scanning the landscape, looking ahead, envisioning challenges the District will have to navigate, and educating ourselves on those topics will help identify preparatory action steps MCWD can take to remain strategically positioned to complete its mission. Topics that have been preliminarily identified include (1) Climate action; (2) Environmental justice; and (3) COVID-19 disruptions.

Preliminary Outputs:

Outputs or deliverables tied to these three areas of discussion might reasonably include the following:

1. Where have we been and what have we learned?
 - a. A concise living synthesis of the District's organizational history, key milestones and decision points in its development, and an archive of lessons learned and principles that have defined its success.
 - b. A program for onboarding new staff/Board/CAC to the organization.
2. Where are we now and what needs to be done?
 - a. A dashboard of strategic initiatives that communicates the timeline for implementation, project dependencies, and resource allocation
3. What are the emerging challenges we will face, and how can we prepare?
 - a. An environmental scan identifying major topic areas of concern and interest for MCWD
 - b. A SWOT analysis for each of the major identified topic areas
 - c. A preliminary map of action steps MCWD will take or evaluate to remain strategically prepared
4. Other potential outputs
 - a. A defined rhythm on which these areas of past, present, future will be revisited
 - b. An understanding of ongoing operational changes that will support this 2021 program of discussion
 - i. (e.g. items and depth of information brought before committee)

Preliminary Process:

This program of discussion is recommended to be broken into three phases, structured around the three questions posed above.

- Phase I – Where have we been and what have we learned?
- Phase II – Where are we now and what needs to be done?
- Phase III – What are the emerging challenges we will face, and how can we prepare?

This work is recommended to begin in 2021 to allow adequate time between now and then to refine the process and the scope of work. It is expected that the process will be revisited iteratively as the Board moves through the macro-phases, to incrementally make adjustments and add definition. Below is a preliminary outline based on discussion to date.

Phase I – Where have we been and what have we learned?

Beginning first with Phase I, clarity is needed on:

1. The topical areas the Board wishes to cover, and
2. How much time the Board is willing to dedicate to the this phase

Answers to these questions will help define what existing resources might be reviewed, the processes that will best support the Board's assimilation of this information, the level of staff support needed, and the timeline for developing Phase I deliverables.

Topical areas might reasonably span from strategy to operations, and could include discussion in the following categories:

- Balanced Urban Ecology Vision and the District's Capital Project and Policy Strategy
- Guiding Principles, Organizational Values, and Culture
- Capital Projects and Programmatic Workflow
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Governance and the roles of the Board, CAC and Staff
- Operations – Human Resources and Finances.

Phase II – Where are we now and what needs to be done?

Phase II will focus on synchronizing expectations around MCWD's current junction point in its trajectory of organizational change, and the short-term 2-3 year priorities that will continue moving the District in the direction set in 2017.

As part of a parallel effort, MCWD's staff team is presently working through an evaluation and prioritization of existing change management initiatives within the organization, which will support the programmatic directives described in Attachment A. It is anticipated that this work product will support Phase II discussions by the Board of Managers in 2021.

To ensure this work product serves both staff and the Board's Phase II discussion, clarity is needed on:

1. What information will the Board expect or find useful in the Phase II report from staff?

Phase III – What are the emerging challenges we will face, and how can we prepare?

Phase III will build on Phase I/II work, to scan the horizon, envision emerging challenges, and begin outlining how the District can best prepare. While consultation with outside experts may be needed to ground and educate the District in the areas identified for discussion, the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) is presently working through discussions on Climate action. These ongoing discussions are expected to yield an interim work product, in the form of a SWOT analysis, which would support Phase III discussions by the Board on this topic.

To begin planning for Phase III discussions, clarity is needed on:

1. What topics does the Board wish to cover?

November 19, 2020 PPC Discussion:

The November 19, 2020 PPC, will be used to continue synchronizing expectations related to objectives, outputs and process for the 2021 PPC Discussion Agenda.

Staff will summarize the overarching objectives, the sub-objectives associated with the three phases of work, potential deliverables, and preliminary thoughts on process.

Discussion with the PPC will be facilitated around the following questions:

Overarching:

1. Is there consensus on the overarching objectives? Are there any outstanding questions regarding purpose?
2. Do the three phases of proposed work support the objectives? Is anything missing?
3. Are the outputs/deliverables for each phase of work clearly defined? Are there other deliverables?

Phase I – Where have we been and what have we learned?

1. What topical areas of MCWD's history does the Board wish to cover?
2. Are there strong preferences or ideas for how to best work through Phase I?
3. How long does the Board expect to spend on Phase I?

Phase II – Where are we now, and what needs to be done?

1. What information will the Board expect or find useful in the Phase II report from staff?

Phase III – What are the emerging challenges we will face, and how can we prepare?

1. What topics does the Board wish to cover?

Other:

1. Where might outside partners or advisors be brought into the process to add value and perspective?

Attachment A – MCWD Strategic Directives

Operations:

- Consolidate and focus MCWD operations on reducing the overhead associated with completing MCWD's mission focused work.

Culture

- Build a transparent, idea-meritocratic environment, with high expectations and accountability, where driven, critically thinking independent people can collaborate and thrive.

Information Technology:

- Invest in technology systems to improve our ability to efficiently store, retrieve, integrate and analyze program data, to improve the quality of planning, decision making, and communications.

Permitting:

- Streamline and refocus MCWD's regulatory framework on high risk – high opportunity projects, and retool to monitor trends in data, recommend policy adjustments, and scan for project partnership potential.

Research and Monitoring:

- Move from discrete and broad anchor watershed monitoring, towards real time sensing, predictive capabilities, and quantitative system-scale diagnostics, to identify macro trends that can guide the organization, while informing the basis of project design and post construction effectiveness across all of MCWD's strategic goals.

Outreach:

- Transition away from grass roots education and broad public awareness completed via third party contracts for service, towards data-driven, targeted outreach that directly informs and influences those critical to MCWD's capital project and policy success.

Capital Project Planning:

- Move from scattered "three year," levy-funded water projects, towards system scale plans for integrated, highly-visible, long-range, multi-jurisdictional capital investments that produce measurable change in MCWD's strategic goals and benefit the broader community.

Policy Planning:

- Maintain a real-time assessment of MCWD's operating environment, and advance policy change internally and at a state, regional and local scale that will improve the District's effectiveness and mission success.

Project Maintenance and Land Management:

- Comprehensively track post construction data to inform mid and long-range management practices for MCWD's past capital investments, while continuously improving design considerations for the next generation of projects.