



Title: Opportunity Updates under the Pilot Phase of Responsive Model

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Purpose:

At the July 8, 2021 Operations and Programs Committee (OPC) Meeting, staff will brief the Board of Managers on four active opportunities that are under review through the pilot phase of the “Responsive Model” and seek Board feedback on staff’s evaluation and recommendations.

Background:

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or District) is focused on the protection and improvement of natural resources in ways that support thriving communities. Since what happens on the land is the primary driver of the health of our natural resources, MCWD’s Balanced Urban Ecology Policy (BUE Policy) recognizes that the District can deliver the most value to its residents by working in partnership with those who change the landscape. Since adopting the BUE Policy in 2014, the District integrated these founding principles within the District’s 2017 Watershed Management Plan (WMP) that articulated an implementation approach that is two-pronged:

- Focusing in areas of high need and opportunity to achieve significant, measurable resource improvement
- Remaining responsive to needs and opportunities district-wide through coordination with partners

In order to carry out the second prong of this approach, the District is developing a “Responsive Model” to guide the District’s process for identifying, evaluating and responding to opportunities. The purpose of the Responsive Model is to provide support for public and private projects and initiatives that are well-coordinated and align with the District’s goals and priorities. The District aims to carry out this approach in a way that provides value to its communities while making efficient use of District resources to allow the District to maintain focus on its highest priority projects and initiatives.

Pilot Phase of Responsive Model

In late 2019, staff presented a draft framework for the Responsive Model to the Board of Managers, including purpose, goals, high-level process, and evaluation criteria. Since that time, staff have been operating the Responsive Model in a pilot phase while continuing to develop the internal workflows, technology tools, formal guidance documents, and outreach materials. Under this pilot phase, staff have been evaluating partnership requests using the following four criteria categories:

- Resource Need and Priority: Alignment with the resource needs and priorities identified in the District’s Plan or through ongoing monitoring and diagnostic efforts.
- Project Benefits: Estimated benefits across the District’s goals of water quality, water quantity, ecological integrity, and thriving communities.
- Cost Effectiveness: Cost effectiveness compared to alternatives or other past/current project opportunities.
- Partnership and Coordination: Strength of partner’s coordination, integration of District goals, and commitment to advance the opportunity.

Staff evaluate these opportunities by applying the four criteria categories and vetting it through a cross-departmental staff team to inform the recommended response. To date, any opportunity that has required funding and/or significant

capacity of District staff has been brought to the Board of Managers (e.g., Long Lake Creek Subwatershed Partnership, 54th Street Streambank Investigation).

Formal Policy Guidance

On July 22nd, District staff will provide and discuss with the Board of Managers the proposed “Responsive Program Policy Recommendations” that will cover key policy recommendations, including scope, criteria, and evaluation process before engaging with external stakeholders in Quarter 4 of 2021.

Summary:

At the July 8th OPC Meeting, staff will provide the Board context and discuss staff recommendations for the below four active responsive opportunities. The presentation will include:

- details on the four active responsive opportunities, evaluation to-date, and the staff recommendations; and
- on-going insights gathered within pilot phase that inform the formal policy recommendations coming to the Board on July 22nd.

Private Brewery located in Spring Park – Rain Garden Project

An owner of a local brewery within Spring Park has completed design and is seeking funding assistance to implement a 2,000 square-foot rain garden to treat stormwater runoff from the brewery’s 4.67-acre property. The rain garden is intended to provide treatment prior to discharge into the channel that connects West Arm to Seton Lake and provide pollinator habitat.

City of Edina – Morningside Flood Infrastructure Project

The Morningside Neighborhood in Edina has several landlocked or low areas that are prone to flooding. The City of Edina has proactively looked to address these flood prone areas with detailed modeling, community engagement, and development of a Flood Risk Reduction Strategy. This opportunity was originally brought forward at the March 11, 2021 OPC as the City requested regulatory guidance, particularly around predictive pumping feasibility and funding of potential water quality project elements.

Since the last OPC update, the City has requested the District to consider funding a stormwater reuse system at Weber Pond for the purpose of irrigation of ballfields and park land in Weber Park. This reuse system would be a project add-on that would be dependent on District funding. The entire Morning Flood Infrastructure Project is scheduled to be completed in tandem with the anticipated street reconstruction projects in the neighborhood in 2022.

City of Plymouth – Maple Creek Drainage Improvements

The City of Plymouth is proposing improvements along Maple Creek to improve drainage and stormwater management that flows into the impaired Gleason Lake. Project elements include iron enhanced sand filtration, expanded flood storage, and stabilization and restoration efforts along Maple Creek and the Steeplechase Development Wetland area. The proposed project is scheduled for construction in winter 2021-22. Preliminary cost-benefit information was submitted on June 30th and the District is requesting additional information in order to assess the feasibility of the project.

City of Medina - Long Lake Creek Partnership: Wolsfeld Woods Ravine Stabilization

Through the Long Lake Creek Partnership, the District has been working with the Cities of Long Lake, Medina, and Orono and the Long Lake Waters Association (LLWA) to conduct a subwatershed assessment and develop an implementation roadmap to guide implementation by the partners. As part of this effort, the District secured grant funding for the Wolsfeld Woods Ravine Stabilization project, which is being led by the City of Medina and is moving into design. Based on recent discussions with the DNR regarding requirements for working in the Wolsfeld Woods Scientific and Natural Area, it appears likely that the project cost will increase from the concept level estimate, and the City may seek funding assistance from the District to help cover the increase once cost estimates are refined.

Supporting documents:

Attachment 1: Overview Map

PILOT PHASE RESPONSIVE MODEL ACTIVE OPPORTUNITIES

LEGEND

- MCWD Legal Boundary
- MCWD Hydrologic Boundary
- County Boundary
- City Boundary
- Responsive Model Opportunity Locations

City of Medina - LLCP's Wolsfeld Ravine Project

City of Plymouth - Maple Creek Project

Back Channel Brewery Co. Rain Garden

Edina - Morningside
Flood Reduction
Infrastructure Project

