



**Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District  
Minutes of Regular Board Meeting  
January 5, 2022**

The Regular Meeting of January 5, 2022, was held via Zoom web conferencing. A video recording of the meeting can be found at [https://youtu.be/jZUpZfDul\\_g](https://youtu.be/jZUpZfDul_g). Video time stamps included after each agenda item in minutes.

**PRESENT:**

Larry Swope, President  
Cliff Aichinger, Vice President  
Dianne Ward, Treasurer  
Val Eisele, Manager

**ABSENT:**

Dr. Pam Skinner, Secretary

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Tina Carstens, District Administrator  
Tracey Galowitz, Attorney for District  
Brad Lindaman, Barr Engineering  
Simba Blood, Natural Resources Specialist  
Dave Vlasin, Project Coordinator

Paige Ahlborg, Project Manager  
Erin Anderson Wenz, Barr Engineering  
Nicole Soderholm, Permit Inspector  
Eric Korte, Water Monitoring Coordinator

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by President Swope at 6:30 p.m.

President Swope acknowledged that Matt Grey, a resident that has been active with the watershed, passed away before the holidays.

Tina Carstens stated that she reached out to the family to express condolences on behalf of the District.

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (1:05)**

Motion: Manager Aichinger moved, Manager Ward seconded, to approve the agenda as presented.

A roll call vote was performed:

Manager Aichinger	aye
Manager Eisele	aye
Manager Ward	aye
President Swope	aye

Motion carried unanimously.

**3. CONSENT AGENDA (1:26)**

- A. Approval of Minutes from December 8, 2021
- B. Treasurer's Report and Bill List
- C. Permit Program
  - i. 22-01 – MnDOT Highway 36 Drainage Infrastructure

- D. Stewardship Grant Program
  - i. 22-01 CS – Woodbury City Hall Improvements, Tree Trench, Native Restoration
- E. District Liability Insurance Coverage Waiver

Motion: Manager Eisele moved, Manager Ward seconded, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

A roll call vote was performed:

Manager Aichinger	aye
Manager Eisele	aye
Manager Ward	aye
President Swope	aye

Motion carried unanimously.

**4. VISITOR PRESENTATIONS (2:04)**

There were none.

**5. PERMIT PROGRAM (2:09)**

A. Applications – See Consent Agenda

B. Monthly Enforcement Report

During December zero notices were sent.

C. Permit Program Summary 2019-2021

Nicole Soderholm stated that the report summarized the permit program from the previous year and included data from the year prior for comparison. She noted that permit applications were down in 2021, perhaps due to COVID or supply chain issues. She stated that there were fewer active sites, which allowed staff to increase inspections. She noted that there were five residential permit applications, which resulted in two violations. She noted that there have been fewer stormwater fund contributions which is perhaps due to the increase in cost for those credits and the matches the desire of the Board for treatment to be provided onsite. She noted that during 2021, the Board also permanently adopted the pilot program for the single lot residential permitting.

Manager Eisele asked if there has been a pattern in violations that occur year over year. Nicole Soderholm confirmed that the violations that occur most often are consistent from year to year. She stated that some violations often occur as a result of rain events while stabilization is often an uphill battle with contractors.

Manager Aichinger asked the difference between violations, verbal warnings, and percent of permits found noncompliant. Nicole Soderholm stated that verbal warnings are not used often as staff is more likely to be completing a full inspection which would include documentation. She stated that there could be three violations from one inspection. She stated that noncompliance is a result of inspections that receive a grade below C. She noted that a site can receive a violation and still receive a grade of A, B, or C. She stated that half of the sites result for all of the violations.

Tracey Galowitz stated that Nicole Soderholm and her staff do an excellent job and that can be shown in the limited funds needed for legal staff to intervene in violation issues.

**6. STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROGRAM (10:02)**

A. Applications – See Consent Agenda

B. Budget Status Update

Paige Ahlberg stated that one application has been received from a municipality and the remainder were carry overs. She noted that more applications will come in as the year progresses.

**7. ACTION ITEMS - None**

**8. ATTORNEY REPORT (10:51)**

Tracey Galowitz stated that this is the year in which attorney, accountant and auditor services go out for bid, therefore legal staff will ensure the notices are published prior to the March meeting. She stated that legal counsel drafted a maintenance agreement for a property in Little Canada. She noted that legal staff continue to monitor the open meeting laws.

**9. BOARD ISSUES, POLICIES, AND OPERATION (FOR DISCUSSION AT MEETING) (13:55)**

**A. West Vadnais Lake**

President Swope commented that representatives from West Vadnais will be attending the next Board meeting and encouraged Managers to provide any questions prior to that meeting. He explained that West Vadnais Lake is in the middle of the District's watershed and at the tail end of the West Vadnais watershed. He noted that while there have not been operational issues, there is a lengthy process for actions that involve that water body because of the limited meeting schedule of that organization.

Manager Eisele stated that previously there was discussion of providing history of actions that involved that group and the timeline for approvals. He stated that he would prefer to center around the data and length of time needed for interactions in attempt to keep the conversation calm and prevent groups from becoming territorial.

Tina Carstens stated that she would have to think more about that as there have been some interactions, but the length of time has not been delayed because of the actions of the Vadnais Lake Area WMO.

Manager Eisele stated that he was more curious about the data, noting that perhaps it would show that the timeline was not delayed more than a month. Tina Carstens stated that she would have to think more about it as she could not think of a specific project where that group caused a delay.

Manager Aichinger stated that he could not recall many interactions in the past ten to 20 years that had delays, noting that there have been minor collaborations, but most had been handled by staff. He was unsure that there would be enough instances to provide that data.

Manager Eisele stated that if they have been a good partner and easy to work with, he would not see a problem in continuing to collaborate.

Manager Ward commented that the world has changed since the boundaries were drawn. She noted that the District has taken over the Grass Lake area and Barr Engineering completed a study showing no connection between East and West Vadnais lakes. She stated that she has always been concerned because West Vadnais Lake sits at the top of the District and the water quality is so compromised.

President Swope welcomed any additional topics the Managers may have for that discussion prior to the next meeting. Tina Carstens stated that the representatives from West Vadnais are planning to share their plans for the lake and also hear feedback from the Board.

**B. Wetlands Strategies and Policies**

President Swope asked for input on strategies and policies that perhaps the District may be lacking in its protect and enhance role. He stated that the report mentions tools and surveys that were previously completed and asked

where those can be found for review. He noted that the report states that recommendations and a report were provided in December 2019 and stated that he was unable to find those.

Brad Lindaman stated that updates were made with more current information using the MnRAM assessment.

Erin Anderson Wenz stated that the information was prepared and meant to be presented in a workshop, but that workshop was delayed due to COVID. Tina Carstens noted that the data for the MnRAM assessments is kept in a database but that the data determines the District's wetland classification that can be found in our management plan and in our online maps.

President Swope commented that he would be interested in seeing that information. He stated that conditions change with flooding and droughts, and he believed the first step would be to review the current inventory. Manager Aichinger provided additional details on the MnRAM assessments and how those are used. He noted that every wetland in the District is in the inventory, scored and classified. He noted that when applications come in that would interact with those wetlands, the proper rules and regulations would be triggered.

President Swope stated that he would be interested in information on the different classifications of the wetlands and how that compares to the DNR classifications. Tina Carstens stated that the wetland classification is included in the District plan and available on the website. She stated that DNR classifications are not as detailed and therefore the most accurate information would be provided through the MnRAM assessments. She provided more details on the MnRAM assessment process and how it is completed.

President Swope asked the obligations that would be enacted to protect a wetland classified as A. Tina Carstens explained that the District rules are triggered through permitting and provided additional details on the buffers that would be required and other regulations. She noted that some of the cities have adopted the District regulations for wetland buffers and some are even more stringent.

Brad Lindaman noted that perhaps it would be helpful to have the information that is reviewed in the MnRAM assessment.

President Swope stated that he has additional concerns with the presentation related to creating new wetlands. He made reference to flood storage and noted that he would have additional questions as that would change the conditions of the site. Brad Lindaman stated that much of the scoring criteria comes from BWSR and what it uses to establish a wetland bank.

President Swope stated that he would also want to see emphasis continue on no net loss. Tina Carstens agreed that would be key in ensuring there is no net loss and increasing the overall amount of wetlands in the District.

Manager Eisele stated that he did not believe that building a wetland bank was at the top of the list for priorities from that workshop. Tina Carstens stated that it was mentioned that it is difficult to establish a bank that would be used through BWSR, but it could be used for the purposes of the District.

Erin Anderson Wenz noted that she could pull additional background information that could be provided to the Board.

Manager Ward commented that she found this information interesting and would like to see it used going forward, whether that is in projects or another manner. Tina Carstens confirmed that this work will continue.

### C. Phalen Creek Daylighting

President Swope commented that an article was included in the packet related to the project.

Manager Aichinger stated that as long as the role of the District is minimal, he has no problem with the project but did not believe the District should be spending a lot of time or money on the project. He stated that if the group involved is spending the time and obtaining funding, he has no issue with the project.

Tina Carstens stated that staff meets with the group occasionally to talk about the project and will review the engineering to ensure there are no negative impacts on the District system from the project. She noted that the group has received a large grant to get started on the project and understands that this is not a priority for this District. She stated that this is a higher priority for Capital Region and therefore would not want the District to be a roadblock in that process.

Manager Ward commented that she believes that the District would follow its typical criteria to determine the priority and related contribution.

## **10. PRESENTATIONS (53:40)**

### **A. Kohlman Creek & Ames Lake Flood Risk Reduction Study – Part 3**

Erin Anderson Wenz stated that the last meeting focused on specific things that could be done and things that would need more detail. She stated that the focus this month will be on sequencing and proposed next steps. She stated that while the focus has been on the 100-year storm events, this presentation will also look at lesser events and the impacts those would have.

President Swope referenced the comment that they looked at the smaller storm events in addition to the 100-year events. He recognized that 100-year events would most likely require a lot of engineering and higher costs. He asked if there would be a focus on things that could address the smaller storm event issues. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that they have not yet reviewed design options that could address smaller events such as the ten- or 20-year storm events. She stated that a next step could be to discuss these areas, particularly those more prone to flooding and determine what could be done to protect those areas. She stated that if the 100-year storm event projects are not feasible from a cost perspective, they could look to target something smaller such as a 25- or 50-year storm event.

President Swope commented that perhaps a lot could be done to address issues resulting from more frequent smaller storm events at a lesser cost. Erin Anderson Wenz agreed that is something that would be reviewed as this moves forward.

Manager Eisele commented that there seems to be a diminishing return in attempting to protect all the homes. He stated that he would be interested in finding out more detailed information on the risks to different properties under different storm events. He stated that he likes the approach of reviewing a series of investments that could build to more protection for properties. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that she considered making a map with the structures and color intervals. She noted that similar work was done for NorthStar Estates and therefore she could make that map for the Board to review. Tina Carstens noted that perhaps the map could show the different inundation lines.

Manager Aichinger commented that some of the communities developed before there were floodplain maps, or the floodplain has grown beyond where it previously existed. He stated that there was a time about 15 years ago where the District believed all the flooding issues has been addressed but the updated Atlas 14 modeling changed that. He stated that because there was existing infrastructure and structures prior to the knowledge, mitigation can be planned, or those homes can be informed that they need flood insurance and that there is risk.

Manager Eisele stated that he does see the balance in finding a way to help as many people as they can using taxpayer funds. He acknowledged that not everyone will be able to be helped in a cost-effective manner that makes sense as stewards of taxpayer money.

Erin Anderson Wenz stated that this would be a good time to show the cities what they see in the models and inundation maps to highlight the risks that exist in their city. She noted that they have shared information with cities along the way, but this would be a good time to gauge reactions as much of this work would not be done on public property and would involve the cities. She displayed a flow chart highlighting potential steps for 2022, 2023, and beyond on the different levels, noting that those begin with the emergency response plans and evolve from there.

Manager Eisele asked if there are any impending predictions for the wetness of this year that might lead down one pathway over another. Erin Anderson Wenz commented that they typically do not look at a one year forecast to make decisions in terms of decision, with the exception of when they knew snowmelt would have an impact on high water. She stated that she would tend to focus on the areas that have impact from lower-level events that are being impacted most often.

President Swope stated that he would be interested in the color-coded map but would like to see colors significantly different from each other in order to make it easily readable. He commented that if there is something simple that could be done that would protect 20 to 50 homes, he would see that as a high priority to begin with.

Manager Aichinger commented that he would want to begin with the two-year storm event impacts and work towards at least the 25-year impacts.

Erin Anderson Wenz stated that the next step would be to share the information with the cities and discuss their future plans for the areas, the level of communication the cities plan to have with the homeowners and provide the emergency response plans. She stated on a separate tract they could get into the planning and design for the Kohlman Creek diversion and discuss some of the more regional solutions.

Brad Lindaman stated that perhaps that could be put into a scope summary to put some boundaries into these next steps for the Board to review. He stated that there are a lot of pieces that will be moving at once and he wants to ensure that is clear for the Board.

Manager Aichinger suggested providing updates in the project and program status report section of the agenda each month.

Manager Eisele stated that he agrees with that format but would also like to see some discussions and updates on more significant aspects or perhaps on a three-month basis.

## **11. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (1:30:32)**

### **A. Meetings Attended**

No comments.

### **B. Upcoming Meetings and Dates**

Tina Carstens stated that the holiday party has been canceled until the COVID conditions change or the weather is warmer and allows for an outdoor gathering.

### **C. Ongoing Project/Program Updates**

Tina Carstens provided an update on ongoing projects and programs, highlighting topics that will come before the Board in the near future. She stated that there are pipes that need to be inspected on Ramsey County parks property and the County followed a new process that the parties have been working on that makes the process smoother. She also provided an update on the Victoria Shores project timeline.

President Swope asked for details on Casey Lake. Tina Carstens stated that Casey Lake experienced more vegetation with the lower water levels. She stated that the District does harvest on the lake but was unable to harvest until later in the season because of the low water levels. She stated that the District has been providing education to the city and residents related to wetland systems and what can be done for water quality in shallow lakes/wetland systems.

D. Annual Meeting

Tina Carstens stated that they will request proposals for consultant services as previously mentioned prior to the March meeting. She stated that they will hold the annual meeting at the March meeting. She stated that they should also schedule a date to complete her review, which is typically done in early February.

Manager Aichinger stated that once a date is determined, he would meet with Tina Carstens and develop information for the Board to review related to her performance review.

**12. PROJECT AND PROGRAM STATUS REPORTS (1:42:40)**

A. Wetland Restoration Site Search Background Memo

B. Ongoing Project and Program Updates

- i. Interim Emergency Response Planning
- ii. Kohlman Creek and Phalen Chain of Lakes Flood Risk Reduction Feasibility Study
- iii. Kohlman Permeable Weir Test System
- iv. Shallow Lake Aeration Study
- v. Keller Channel and Phalen Outlet Operations Plans
- vi. North St. Paul Target Store Retrofit Project

President Swope asked who staff meets with from Target. Paige Ahlborg reviewed the representatives from Target Corporation that were involved in the meeting.

- vii. East St. Paul Target Store Retrofit Project
- viii. Targeted Retrofit Projects

President Swope stated that he would like to see more detail in the thought process as staff talks with the stakeholders. Paige Ahlborg stated that they look at site conditions to determine what would work for the specific site.

Tina Carstens stated that perhaps staff can provide details on how a site is approached and the opportunities that are considered. She noted that typically a surface rain garden is the first priority as it is the most cost-effective BMP. She stated that they could include a list of the things that are considered and how the stakeholders are approached.

- ix. Ryan Drive and Keller Parkway Conveyance Project
- x. District Inspection Standardization

President Swope commented that it appears this is following the timeline. Brad Lindaman agreed that they are on track with where they thought they would be and are working with District staff on the initial criteria that was identified in the scoring system. He stated that they will then develop the application that could be used on a tablet in the field.

- xi. CIP Maintenance and Repair Project 2021

President Swope commented that it was his understanding that the contractor completed the work. Brad Lindaman confirmed that the work was completed.

Dave Vlasin confirmed that the contractor is going to drop off the required submittals for the 2022 project the following day.

Brad Lindaman noted a change order will come forward for the Keller/Ryan Drive project moving the completion date due to materials not being available.

- xii. CIP Maintenance and Repair Project 2022
- xiii. Natural Resources Program Update
- xiv. Education Program Update
- xv. Communications Program and Website Update

Manager Eisele asked if there could be information provided on the user profiles used for the website update. He stated that he would also like a link to the prototype in order to provide proactive feedback.

Manager Ward commented that she would like to see a news release on the excellent work on the budget.

### **13. MANAGER COMMENTS AND NEXT MONTH'S MEETING (1:55:05)**

Tina Carstens reviewed the topics that are slated to come to the Board at its next meeting.

Brad Lindaman asked that the Managers complete the survey from Barr, explaining that will help to guide the information and presentations that they provide to the Board.

### **14. ADJOURN**

Motion: Manager Aichinger moved, Manager Eisele seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.