



**Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District
Minutes of Regular Board Meeting
February 2, 2022**

The Regular Meeting of February 2, 2022, was held via Zoom web conferencing. A video recording of the meeting can be found at <https://youtu.be/K2zkHa21jeE>. 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
Laurann Kirschner, Attorney for District
Nicole Soderholm, Permit Inspector
Bill Bartodziej, Natural Resource Specialist
Lauren Hazenson, Communications Coordinator
Paige Ahlborg, Project Manager
Brad Lindaman, Barr Engineering

Karen Wold, Barr Engineering
Dave Vlasin, Project Coordinator
Daniel Parks, Westwood Professional Services
Tyler Maxson, Westwood Professional Services
Ian Simonson, LSE Architects

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (0:00:20)

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Manager Aichinger	aye
Manager Ward	aye
Manager Eisele	absent/lost connection
President Swope	aye

Motion carried unanimously.

3. CONSENT AGENDA (0:01:55)

- A. Approval of Minutes from January 5, 2022
- B. Treasurer's Report and Bill List
- C. Permit Program
 - i. 22-02 – Little Canada 2022 Street Improvements, Little Canada
 - ii. 22-04 – Maplewood Gardens Garage and Parking, Maplewood
- D. Ryan Drive & Keller Parkway Conveyance – Change Order No. 1

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

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried unanimously.

4. VISITOR COMMENTS (0:02:22)

There were none.

5. PERMIT PROGRAM (0:02:48)

A. Applications

Permit #22-03: Gervais Wood 2nd Addition – Little Canada

Nicole Soderholm presented an application with a variance request for temporary wetland disturbance and welcomed any questions.

Manager Aichinger asked for details on the first addition. Nicole Soderholm believed the first addition occurred in 2007 to the east, closer to the lake.

Manager Aichinger commented that this property was fairly contentious for some time related to the wetlands. He was glad to see this moving along with development occurring where it can. He asked if the average minimum setback is met. Nicole Soderholm confirmed that the buffer will be provided and provided details on the temporary disturbance proposed during construction. She stated that staff will inspection for erosion control and would ensure vegetation establishment before closing out the permit.

President Swope asked if the native wetland mix would mimic what currently exists. Nicole Soderholm explained that the mix is based on the anticipated hydrology. She noted that the vegetation would most likely be higher quality than what currently exists.

Manager Eisele rejoined the meeting.

Motion: Manager Ward moved, Manager Aichinger seconded, to approve Permit #22-03.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried unanimously.

Permit #22-05: Amira Senior Apartments – Woodbury

Nicole Soderholm presented a request for a senior living facility. She noted that a previous development request proposed to fill wetlands, which was denied by the Board. She stated that this applicant purchased additional property to avoid wetland impacts. She stated that Woodbury has more stringent setbacks and concern for

removal of mature trees, therefore the city requested the north wetland to be expanded with an upland buffer. She stated that temporary wetland buffer disturbance would occur through that process and therefore a similar request is being made for that action. She stated that the buffer requirements will be met, and no permanent wetland impacts would occur.

Manager Aichinger commented that it appears the wetland expansion is being done voluntarily. Nicole Soderholm noted that while not required by the watershed rules, the city did request that action in return for reduced setbacks. She stated that the applicant worked closely with Woodbury on the tree inventory and preservation of the good quality mature trees.

President Swope asked why the wetland classification was changed from A to B. Nicole Soderholm replied that the previous MnRAM assessment is not always accurate and noted that data was provided to support the classification change which was overseen by BWSR. She noted that even though the change in classification would minimize the buffer, the buffer is actually being expanded. She noted that the other wetland did not previously have a classification and has since been rated as low quality.

President Swope asked what would occur if the wetland next to the building were to rise and reduce the buffer. Daniel Parks, representing the applicant, replied that is a low-lying area with a foot or so of elevation that would allow for overflow, therefore it would continue to operate as it does today. He noted that it is well below the building and therefore would not impact the building. Tina Carstens stated that wetland buffers are meant to take on water and vary, therefore there would be no violation from the District if that were to occur and reduce the buffer.

Motion: Manager Aichinger moved, Manager Ward seconded, to approve Permit #22-05.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Monthly Enforcement Report

During January, zero notices were sent.

C. Erosion and Sediment Control Inspection Example

Nicole Soderholm noted that a sample inspection report was included in the packet for the Board review following a previous discussion of the Board related to inspections.

Manager Aichinger asked if the inspection is logged into the files for the District. Nicole Soderholm confirmed that the data is logged and provided details on that process.

6. STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROGRAM (0:25:35)

A. Applications

Permit #22--02 CS: Christ Lutheran Church – North St. Paul, 5 Rain Gardens

Tina Carstens commented that this is a bigger project for five rain gardens, noting that porous asphalt was also reviewed but determined not to be cost effective. She stated that staff asked the vegetation plan to be increased, which increased the cost over the \$100,000 cost threshold.

President Swope asked if the planting plan includes more variety or beauty. Tina Carstens stated that the planting area was expanded, using more plugs than seeding, and includes more variety.

President Swope asked if there would be signage advertising the District program. Tina Carstens confirmed that the typical signage would be installed.

Manager Aichinger commented that this is a great site that will treat a lot of rooftop area. He stated that he supports the higher amount.

Manager Eisele agreed that the return on investment is worth the additional cost.

Motion: Manager Eisele moved, Manager Aichinger seconded, to approve Permit #22-02 CS.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Budget Status Update
Noted.

7. ACTION ITEMS (0:28:51)

A. Tanners Lake Outlet Coordination

Brad Lindaman provided background information on a study of the Tanners Lake area that was completed in the 1990s. He stated that MnDOT will be completing major reconstruction of I-94, which provides an opportunity to upgrade pipes under the freeway at the same time. He reviewed the different scenarios included in the packet for the Board to review. He also provided a summary of the different cost estimates for each scenario and noted that staff would suggest scenario three.

President Swope stated that he agrees with scenario three. He asked how the utilities would be avoided through this process. Brad Lindaman provided additional explanation noting that utility conflicts exist above and below, therefore adding a second adjacent pipe would avoid that situation.

Manager Aichinger stated that scenario three seems a difficult choice as he does not see there being additional capacity downstream in the future. He questioned the benefit of having that extra pipe. Brad Lindaman commented that there is a low probability of being able to use the second pipe, but perhaps there is a time in the future where more capacity can be created downstream.

Manager Aichinger asked the cost difference between scenario two and three. Manager Eisele replied that the difference is about \$150,000.

President Swope stated that this may be an opportunity for management, similar to the weir systems. He stated that there could be opportunity to open the extra pipe when water is high upstream but low downstream.

Manager Aichinger asked if there are available funds for this use. Tina Carstens confirmed that the flood risk reduction fund has a balance of over \$2,000,000 that has not been dedicated at this time. She commented that the opportunity to put this in is too great to pass over.

Manager Eisele asked if there are control structures that should be put in place with this change that could also take opportunity of the road construction. Brad Lindaman believed this was the only work that would occur with the MnDOT project. He noted that the control structures could be done at any time in the future as its own project.

Manager Eisele asked if the District would encourage a study for changing the flow out of Tanners Lake. Brad Lindaman commented that the Board could review its prioritization to determine when that should be addressed. He confirmed that this is on the list but is not at the top of the list and would not have to be done as part of this project.

Manager Eisele asked if the \$370,000 would be incurred during this year or spread across multiple years. Tina Carstens was unsure if the project is going to be constructed in 2022 or 2023.

Manager Eisele asked who would be responsible for maintenance if a pipe were to plug. Brad Lindaman stated that it would be his assumption that it would be the responsibility of MnDOT but that should be clarified as the District would be contributing funds.

Manager Eisele stated that he strongly supports scenario three but wants to ensure the details have been thought out. He noted that this action would seem to be highly advantageous even if the benefits will not be realized for ten years or longer.

Manager Ward commented that the Board has been reviewing reports, prioritizing, and planning and has also pursued low hanging fruit when it arises. She stated that scenario three would make sense because of the low cost to do it at this time compared to the cost it would have in the future.

Motion: Manager Aichinger moved, Manager Eisele seconded, to support scenario three and continue to coordinate with MnDOT on the pipe replacement.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried unanimously.

8. ATTORNEY REPORT (0:47:40)

Laurann Kirschner stated that they posted notice for the annual meeting which will take place in March. She noted that this is the year that the District solicits proposals for engineering, legal and accounting services. She stated that she has also been working on agreements for upcoming CIP projects.

9. BOARD ISSUES, POLICIES AND OPERATION (FOR DISCUSSION AT MEETING) (0:49:16)

A. Wetlands

Noted.

10. PRESENTATIONS (0:49:35)

A. District Wetlands Discussion

Brad Lindaman provided background information based on the previous discussions of the Board. He stated that they included the flooded wetlands report and explained how they use the MnRAM assessment in order to provide additional information for the Board.

President Swope provided the example of Wetland A, which has changed characteristics and asked how that is accounted for in terms of management. He stated that the wetland has functionally changed and therefore has not been preserved and protected. He commented that even though increased water levels temporarily impact invasive species, those will just return when the water levels decrease. Brad Lindaman commented that within managed A, it allows for different characteristics. He stated that even though the flooded conditions may have changed some characteristics, it still falls within a preserve and protect wetland.

Manager Aichinger stated that naturally, wetlands change dramatically from decade to decade. He commented that there are still valuable characteristics even when a wetland becomes more flooded with water. He noted that a wetland is meant to fluctuate.

President Swope commented that he understands fluctuation but noted that Wetland A has never experienced fluctuation of this nature. He commented that there is a lot of water coming in from the north which should be buffered to help the wetland recover. He commented that when wetlands are used for flood storage, they are changed. Tina Carstens commented that there are natural fluctuations especially during flood years. She commented there are also trade-offs that are reviewed noting the balance between mitigating the risk of flooding and wetlands.

Manager Aichinger provided additional background on the review that has been done of wetlands in the District. He noted that prior to the 1990s you were not prohibited from shunting storm sewer into wetlands and therefore wetlands became flood storage and stormwater ponds. He stated that they could not physically restore all those wetlands as they have created a system where storm sewer and roadways are connected to wetlands. He stated that when there are a few dry years and the ground water drops, those areas will go back to normal. He stated that stormwater management and flood storage is part of the MnRAM assessment process.

President Swope commented that he would like to see a policy or process stating that when water is stored in a wetland, there is a process to get it back out. He commented that he wants to ensure the condition of the wetland is not impacted by prolonged storage of water. Tina Carstens commented that it would be nearly impossible to manage wetlands across the district in that way based on climate conditions.

President Swope commented that there should be a policy that if water is going to be stored in a wetland, there should also be intention to return the wetland to its original state. Brad Lindaman commented that the MnRAM assessment method has been used for many years. He asked how the District would know where a change is too much that it needs to be corrected. He stated that there will always be naturally occurring changes.

Manager Aichinger commented that when system modeling is done, they evaluate any potential change against its impact on the overall system. He believed that the system works and recognized that the result and residual may not be to everyone's liking.

President Swope commented that a unique pumping system was installed to move water away from at risk homes. He stated that there are no such plans for wetland A, even though rain events overflow into wetland A without plans for getting the water out of that area. He asked what is meant by preserve and protect. Tina Carstens commented that the permitting program not only uses the current regulations but also attempts to backtrack and mitigate changes in the watershed that have occurred in the past. Manager Aichinger commented that wetlands change all the time. He stated that the rules state to preserve and protect all wetlands. He stated that there cannot be a policy that restricts change in wetlands because that happens naturally, and it will continue to happen more with climate change. He recognized that there were faults with development in the past and noted that

there are now rules in place related to infiltration and water quality. He stated that as development changes, they will catch up, but it is a slow process, and they cannot require restoration when there are not that many opportunities.

President Swope asked if there has been an updated wetland review or whether that is planned. Karen Wold replied that Grass Lake was a specific situation because of the flooding concerns. She commented that the last review was perhaps in 2003 to 2007. She commented that it could be a good idea to do another review, but the State is working in coordination with Wisconsin to develop a new functional assessment methodology. She believed it would be advantageous to wait until that methodology is completed to do another review. Tina Carstens commented that a sampling of other wetlands was done in the district to determine the level of change, believing perhaps that occurred in 2013. She stated that there was very minimal change in classification at that time of review.

Karen Wold commented that additional hydrology guidelines could be implemented and reviewed when applications come before the Board if desired but noted that would be a change to the District rules.

Manager Aichinger commented that perhaps the time to discuss this more would be when the Wetland Management Plan is updated.

President Swope believed that there was an action step in 2019 related to updating the Plan and believed it would be the time to do that. Tina Carstens stated that a plan update is not due until 2027 and advised that the process would most likely start in two years.

Manager Eisele asked for clarification on the MnRAM assessment. Karen Wold provided additional clarification on how the assessment works. She stated that if there are some things that do not seem to make sense, additional review could be done. She noted that if some wetlands are being ranked higher than they should be, the related criteria could be linked to another item, such as quality vegetation.

Manager Eisele asked if there are triggers that should be used in the metric. Karen Wold commented that if there is additional information indicating that the system is overwhelmed or if there is too much sediment loading, that will eventually lower the category. Tina Carstens stated the length of time is another consideration. She noted that while the rating probably would not change between 2019 and 2022, some of the answers may change.

Manager Eisele stated that there is a bias towards preserve, which he understands. He stated that perhaps there is signal in the noise that could be further developed. Karen Wold stated that if there is more consistency in the hydrology in wetland A, the work that has been done will be a benefit such as planting native plant communities to prevent invasive species from coming back.

Nicole Soderholm stated that they should consider how the MnRAM assessment is applied in the rules versus a review of the Board. She stated that the flowchart is meant to be conservative in terms of application review.

President Swope commented that it is still a good wetland even though it is not the same wetland it was before, and his question was whether that was okay.

Manager Ward provided a video of water overflowing from Grass Lake into wetland A from 2016. She commented that it was a lot of water flowing which increased the elevation of wetland A by ten feet. She stated that in 2018 the overflow was installed which filled the wetland to almost its highest point. She stated that once the outlet from West Vadnais was put in, the elevation in wetland A has dropped quickly. She agreed that wetlands do have bounce but noted that in this instance it was overflow from Grass Lake. She stated that if wetland A goes back to normal, would the plantings then be at the right elevation. Bill Bartodziej commented that some of the emergent

plants at the higher elevation are not going to do so well but the established seed bank is quite viable and there is a good chance to see natives migrate down with the water level.

Manager Ward commented that Snail Lake got low this past year as well. Tina Carstens stated that there is a narrower band at Snail and therefore the design took that into account. She stated that plantings were extended last year to address the lower water levels.

Manager Ward commented that many trees and plants died as a result of being under water for a long period of time. She asked how that is balanced with the drowning of canary grass. Karen Wold commented that the species listed in 2013 were primarily invasive species.

Manager Aichinger commented that the wooded areas are not considered wetland. Karen Wold agreed that those trees were on the fringe and would be considered upland. Manager Aichinger commented that MnRAM is not meant to assess that.

Manager Ward asked if that could be something that is considered when asking what is too much change. Manager Aichinger commented that those are great points and there is significance beyond the district. He asked if this discussion should occur on a broader platform. Karen Wold agreed that all metro watersheds have been experiencing flooding over the past few years.

Tina Carstens commented that if that is defined, she would wonder what the next step would be and what could or could not be done.

Manager Eisele stated that he would be interested in receiving updates as the State is going through the new assessment methodology process. Karen Wold noted that she will be a part of the technical committee review and will provide updates and solicit input from stakeholders.

B. Flood Risk Project Scope Summary Updates

Brad Lindaman stated that the scope summaries were included in the packet for consideration.

President Swope commented that he liked the map on page six and enjoys seeing the structures that are impacted by different levels of flood events. He noted that the District may not always be able to accomplish large scale projects, but there are some smaller projects that could be done to remove some homes from the risk zone. He commented that the maps also show how these investments made things better.

Manager Eisele asked if action is needed by the Board to approve the additional spend. Tina Carstens commented that she does not need that action as there are contingency funds to complete that work.

It was the consensus of the Board to continue with the increased scope summary.

Brad Lindaman provided additional details on the second scope summary, noting that more information will be known in early March. He noted that project does not have a huge price tag and asked if the Board wanted to move forward regardless or wait. President Swope commented that he believes it to be a good project that should be completed even if the grant is not awarded.

Tina Carstens commented that she believes this project was already budgeted for and the grant expanded community engagement opportunities. She agreed that the District should continue to move forward the Board agreed.

Motion: Manager Eisele moved, Manager Aichinger seconded, to proceed with the proposed adjustments in the flood risk reduction and emergency response planning projects as outlined in the scope summary.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried unanimously.

C. Website Update and Prototype Presentation

Lauren Hazenson highlighted some of the items that were included in the executive summary that was reviewed a few months ago. She noted that those items will be included in the final website design. She stated that they are also working on new content and provided additional details. She provided an overview of the prototype to show more of the navigation features and functionality, noting that additional content will be added as the process moves along.

Manager Ward asked if the CAC info was located on the Get Involved tab. Lauren Hazenson stated that currently that information is found under the About tab and could be placed under Get Involved seasonally depending on the volunteer opportunities. Manager Ward believed that the CAC should be found under both tabs.

The Managers commended Lauren Hazenson for her work thus far. Lauren Hazenson welcomed additional input the Board may have and reviewed the rough schedule moving forward. She estimated that a rough design would be finished by mid-March and would then begin to populate content.

Manager Eisele stated that he would love to participate as a test user if additional users are needed. Lauren Hazenson stated that once that time arises, she will provide an update to the Board. She noted that they are attempting to gain input from users that are separate from the stakeholders that provided input.

11. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (2:50:22)

A. Meetings Attended

Noted.

B. Upcoming Meetings and Dates

Noted.

C. Ongoing Project/Program Updates

Tina Carstens noted that the Victoria Shores response to comment was included for the Board to review. She stated that the City Council did approve a revised plat for Victoria Shores, noting that none of the lakeshore lots will have riparian rights and the access points have been limited from six to four.

12. PROJECT AND PROGRAM STATUS REPORTS (2:54:38)

A. Ongoing Project and Program Updates

- i. Interim Emergency Response Planning
- ii. Kohlman Creek and Phalen Chain of Lakes Flood Risk Reduction Feasibility Study
- iii. Grass Lake Berm Wetland Mitigation
- iv. Kohlman Permeable Weir Test System
- v. Shallow Lake Aeration Study
- vi. Keller Channel and Phalen Outlet Operations Plans
- vii. Targeted Retrofit Projects

- viii. Ryan Drive and Keller Parkway Conveyance Project
- ix. District Inspection Standardization
- x. CIP Maintenance and Repair Project 2021
- xi. CIP Maintenance and Repair Project 2022
- xii. Natural Resources Program Update
- xiii. Education Program Update
- xiv. Communications Program and Website Update

Manager Ward asked if a news release was done related to the District budget. Tina Carstens did not believe a press release was sent to media outlets. She noted that the information was sent to the *Ripple Effect* and posted on the District website.

President Swope believed that information should be shared with media outlets to show good news related to property taxes. Tina Carstens commented that she was not aware the Board was interested in the media and believed the intent was to share with residents through the typical channels. Lauren Hazenson stated that she could develop a press release to send out. President Swope believed that would be a good idea.

Manager Ward commented that it would have been nice to tie that release to the adoption of the budget or the budget adoption by the counties. She stated that perhaps there is another window that would make sense to link to.

Manager Aichinger commented that the press release could be sent out and acknowledged that it may not be picked up. Lauren Hazenson commented that the timing could be linked to the upcoming tax season.

President Swope commended staff for the carp removal. Bill Bartodziej provided details on the netting process. He noted that they are not seeing young of the year carp in the removal, which is positive news.

13. MANAGER COMMENTS AND NEXT MONTH'S MEETING (3:01:36)

Manager Aichinger commented that he did not seek reappointment to his position, which expires later this month. He noted that Ramsey County will appoint someone new to fill his position. He noted that he plans to retrofit a van as a camper and travel for much of the next year. He commented that it has been a privilege to serve on the Board and he is looking forward to new things.

President Swope and the Board thanked Manager Aichinger for his contributions and wished him well in his endeavors.

Tina Carstens recognized the contributions that Manager Aichinger has provided to the District over the past 40 years.

14. ADJOURN

Motion: Manager Aichinger moved, Manager Eisele seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 9:37 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.