



**Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District
Minutes of Regular Board Meeting
June 1, 2022**

The Regular Meeting of June 1, 2022, was held at the District Office Board Room, 2665 Noel Drive, Little Canada, Minnesota, and via Zoom web conferencing, at 6:30 p.m. A video recording of the meeting can be found at <https://youtu.be/6Cx0L3r2Y4I>. Video time stamps included after each agenda item in minutes.

PRESENT:

Larry Swope, President
Dianne Ward, Vice President
Dr. Pam Skinner, Treasurer
Matt Kramer, Manager

ABSENT:

Val Eisele, Secretary

ALSO PRESENT:

Tina Carstens, District Administrator
Nicole Soderholm, Permit Inspector
Kyle Kubitza, Water Quality Technician
Bill Bartodziej, Natural Resource Specialist
Andy Hering, Redpath and Company
Will Forbord, Loeffler Construction & Consulting
Laurann Kirschner, Attorney for District

Paige Ahlborg, Project Manager
Erin Anderson Wenz, Barr Engineering
Sam Redinger, Barr Engineering
Dave Vlasin, Project Coordinator
Mike Brandt, Kimley Horn
Burt Johnson, Twin Lake Association

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (02:52)

Motion: Manager Kramer moved, Manager Skinner seconded, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

3. CONSENT AGENDA (3:12)

- A. Approval of Minutes from May 4, 2022
- B. Treasurer's Report and Bill List
- C. Permit Program
 - i. 22-19 – 796 Bielenberg Office Building, Woodbury
- D. Stewardship Grant Program
 - i. 22-18 CS – Svoboda, Rain Garden
 - ii. 22-19 CS – Kohlman Chain Lake Vegetation Management Plan Phase 4
- E. East Saint Paul Target Retrofit – Change Order No. 4

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

Further discussion: Manager Ward referenced Permit #22-19 and asked if staff was pleased with how the wetland turned out in the earlier stage. Nicole Soderholm replied that it is nice to have the incidental ruling out of the way before it comes to the Board and agreed that is the preferred method for staff.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. VISITOR COMMENTS (4:35)

Burt Johnson, Twin Lake Association, provided background of the Twin Lake Association and the three goals of the group. He referenced the operations plan of the weir, noting that this is the first spring where that plan has been tested. He stated that the operation plan references a water level of the lake but not the pond. He asked that the Board review that plan. He explained that a nearby development has completely changed the land and how things are operating in the pond. He commented that the pond level now rises far faster than Twin Lake and therefore Twin Lake is receiving water from the pond through the railroad culvert. He stated that they want the operation plan to work and are willing to continue cooperating with District staff to resolve the issue. Tina Carstens stated that any operations plan should be reviewed, noting that this is the first season of operation. She commented that the outlet is working as anticipated and noted that although Twin Lake water levels are a bit higher right now, they are decreasing. She did not believe that this would be the time to review the plan and commented that the entire season should be completed before that review is done to ensure there is sufficient data. She also commented on the water quality improvements that were made to the development site, as required through that permit, and therefore did not believe that the water quality would be worse following development. She confirmed that she would follow up with the Twin Lake Association.

5. PERMIT PROGRAM (14:42)

A. Applications

Permit #22-18: Battle Creek Park Improvements – St. Paul

Nicole Soderholm stated that this permit is requesting a variance for temporary wetland buffer disturbance. She stated that this is Ramsey County Parks property and therefore the County will be involved to ensure high quality vegetation is replanted. She stated that the intent is to create a better sledding and skiing destination in the park which will involve grading and wider mowing of the grass trails. She stated that there would also be a small maintenance building and filtration basin as a BMP.

President Swope asked for explanation of a wetland pond filtration bench. Nicole Soderholm explained how that BMP would function to treat the water.

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Ward seconded, to approve Permit #22-18. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Monthly Enforcement Report

During May, five notices were sent to address: install/maintain perimeter control (1), install/maintain inlet protection (1), remove discharged sediment (2), and implement proper dewatering (1).

6. STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROGRAM (20:19)

A. Applications - See Consent Agenda

B. Budget Status Update

Paige Ahlborg provided a brief update on the status of the budget.

Manager Ward asked if anything is expected from the Master Water Stewards. Paige Ahlborg stated that she is aware of one rain garden project from that program in Maplewood. She also provided an update on areas that are targeted for projects and potential marketing for the equity outreach.

7. ACTION ITEMS (23:58)

A. Review and Accept the 2021 District Annual Financial Audit

Andy Hering reported a clean or unmodified opinion on the 2021 audit and provided a brief summary of the audit results. He provided details on a finding related to cleanup of information from previous years, such as how certain assets are tracked, and values are assigned. He provided more details on the routine inquiries to Board and staff related to potential fraud. He noted that those are standard questions and there were no suspicions that fraud had occurred.

Manager Ward commented that she found the audit management letter very helpful and believed that should be used when discussing the budget.

President Swope asked for details on the retirement program. Mr. Hering replied that because the District is a government entity, it is required to contribute to PERA as are employees and provided additional details on that program and how that is tracked in the audit.

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Kramer seconded, to accept the 2021 Annual Audit Report. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan Annual Report

President Swope opened up the public comment.

No comments from the public.

President Swope closed the public comment.

Manager Ward asked when staff chooses the priorities for the SWPPP, providing certain examples. Nicole Soderholm stated that those relate to MCM 1, and the priorities come from education staff.

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Ward seconded, to accept the 2021 MS4 Annual Report and authorize District Administrator to submit the report to the MPCA.

Further discussion: President Swope commented that the report was nicely done.

Motion carried unanimously.

8. ATTORNEY REPORT (41:00)

Laurann Kirschner did not have anything to report.

9. BOARD ISSUES, POLICIES, AND OPERATION (FOR DISCUSSION AT MEETING) (42:00)

A. Ponds of Battle Creek Golf Course Correspondence from Cliff Aichinger

Tina Carstens stated that Cliff Aichinger sent this information to her and requested that the information be shared with the Board. She stated that the District began involvement in the Battle Creek Golf Course in 2011.

Bill Bartodziej provided a brief history of the work the District had done with the golf course to enhance the wetland buffers on the course and restore some of the natural areas and wetlands.

Tina Carstens stated that the course was closed last year and there has been a lot of talk about what could occur on that property. She stated that Cliff Aichinger proposed that perhaps the District be involved in the purchase of the property to be maintained as open space. She recognized that this is a large tract of land that is undeveloped within the watershed, which is rare outside of park land. She stated that if the Board desired this type of pursuit,

staff would review the plan to ensure it would align with the goals of the District. She stated that in the past the District contributed towards the purchase of the Fish Creek open space.

The Managers agreed that there would be interest in having staff research this concept further and also reach out to other potential partners.

Manager Kramer commented that however in alignment the concerns of Cliff Aichinger are with the Board, his concern was whether the District has a defined policy related to land acquisition, development, and disposal. He stated that if the District is going to become a property owner, they should go into with their eyes wide open. He commented that this land has the potential to be a net deficit to the organization and was concerned that saying this is a good idea in the absence of such policy would be putting the cart before the horse. He stated that he could support researching additional information if the policy is also developed at the same time.

Manger Ward commented that perhaps there is a method in which the District could contribute but not be the landowner. She believed that it was worth looking into.

Manager Skinner agreed that there could be collaboration and perhaps the District does ongoing pond and buffer maintenance. She referenced a piece of property purchased by Oakdale adjacent to Tanners Lake which is a parking lot and noted that perhaps that could be a targeted retrofit project site.

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Ward seconded, to authorize staff and Barr Engineering to further research a policy for land acquisition and use and to review the Ponds of Battle Creek to determine potential opportunities that would make sense for the District. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Board Action Log

President Swope explained the concept of the action log and suggested that be placed on the end of each agenda for tracking. He provided some examples: Alum use; PFOAs. Tina Carstens confirmed that it would be appropriate to place that log at the end of the packet rather than the agenda.

10. NEW REPORTS AND/OR PRESENTATIONS (1:02:54)

A. Watershed Management Plan Wetlands Update

Erin Anderson Wenz explained that this was the first task involved in the review of the Watershed Management Plan wetlands update. She reviewed the memorandum that was provided in the Board packet.

President Swope stated that he would be interested in more definition of certain terms. He was also curious about the District policy of flooding wetlands or using a wetland for storage.

Erin Anderson Wenz noted that this is just the first step, and the next step would be to review the plans of other Watershed Districts and organizations and how they manage wetlands for comparison.

Manager Ward asked that the next steps be listed in the updates.

Erin Anderson Wenz continue to review the memorandum and highlighted where wetlands are found throughout the plan.

President Swope commented that staff did a good job of pulling this information out and believed that this is a good step in the process.

Manager Ward referenced the functions and values and stated that it may be interesting to see which are most articulated as they do comparison.

President Swope stated that he would like to see more precision on the District definitions and division of powers and authority, noting that the Victoria Shores project was a good example where it seemed fingers were pointed at different entities.

Nicole Soderholm stated that staff will also be looking at the rules to determine if there are opportunities for changes to be made, noting collaboration with Capitol Region Watershed District.

B. Owasso Basin Feasibility Study Update

Sam Redinger presented the results of the Owasso Basin and North Star Estates feasibility study. He reviewed the background, highlighted recent projects, reviewed ongoing analysis and flood risk guidance for manufactured homes obtained from FEMA, and shared an update on the overall findings and feedback from the shareholders. He asked for Board direction on the recommended path forward.

Manager Skinner asked the stakeholders that were involved. Sam Redinger reviewed the stakeholders that were involved.

President Swope identified an area and asked why that is low and whether that area was built low. Sam Redinger stated that there is not great information on how that was allowed to be built at that elevation but recognized that this is an old, manufactured home park and may predate the existing codes.

Manager Ward asked how the recommendations would change if the Board pursued the 50-year storm event inundation solution. Sam Redinger provided additional details on that concept.

President Swope asked how fast this water would drain. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that they do not typically factor in the timing of a flood event, although that is considered in an emergency response plan.

Erin Anderson Wenz stated that this is unique in that typically when access could be impaired that would also impact the home, but because the homes are elevated from the ground, this is not the typical situation.

Sam Redinger commented that he just received additional information that to draw down from a 100-year event to the normal level it would take about two days.

Manager Skinner commented that the trend is to have less storm events but more intense storms, therefore the terms of the storms may be changing.

Manager Ward commented that it is all a risk assessment. She commented that she is pleased to see that some of the "low hanging fruit" projects have been completed and are providing benefits. She asked if there are other "easy" fixes that could help them get to the 100-year event inundation. Sam Redinger commented that it may be difficult to achieve that level with lower cost or easier projects but confirmed that there are smaller projects that will be introduced for consideration in the next phase.

Erin Anderson Wenz commented that knowing how high the area can flood with help to dictate the regional approach.

Manager Ward asked the FEMA recommendation. Sam Redinger reviewed the recommendation from FEMA. Tina Carstens reviewed the next steps that would be included in phase three if the Board agrees with that recommendation.

President Swope asked who would be responsible for the projects. Tina Carstens replied that following the path the District has in the past, the District would pursue the project. Erin Anderson Wenz confirmed that this would be classified as a District issue because of the proximity to Owasso Basin.

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Kramer seconded, to follow the recommendations outlined in the report. Motion carried unanimously.

C. New Scope Summaries for Review

i. Lake Emily Subwatershed Regional BMP

President Swope commented that he was a little surprised and received clarification that this is different than the Cottage Place project. Erin Anderson Wenz provided additional information, noting that a surficial project receives more points using the prioritization tool than a below ground project because of the visual impact and educational value. She stated that the feedback requested tonight is whether the approach makes sense and not whether to move forward on a project at this time.

Manager Ward asked why this is being brought up now. Tina Carstens noted that this feasibility study was identified in the approved budget for 2022 as a potential water quality project to address an at risk impairment of Lake Emily.

Erin Anderson Wenz stated that the ranking information from the tool are shown in the proposed projects when those are brought forward. She again clarified that the intent tonight is simply to ask the Board whether there is support to continue to move to the next steps.

President Swope stated that he is still not clear what the two proposals are and why one would rank so much higher on the tool.

Erin Anderson Wenz noted that when they meet with the cities it is helpful to learn their CIP plan in order to coordinate projects. She commented that this would be a good time to reach back out to the city.

Motion: Manager Ward moved, Manager Kramer seconded, to direct staff to continue to move forward to the next steps. Motion carried unanimously.

ii. Carver Ponds Improvements Feasibility Study

President Swope asked if these are natural ponds or built ponds. Erin Anderson Wenz replied that these are stormwater ponds that were built. She noted that this feasibility study and the double driveway study came out of the Fisk Creek Feasibility Study. She commented that urban stormwater ponds are often sources of nutrients and phosphorus. She stated that the first step would be to look at the nutrient dynamics in the ponds, the amount of built-up sediment, and whether there are low oxygen conditions. She noted that the following step would be to look for strategies for improvement.

Manager Ward commented that it would seem the direction desired from the Board would be to agree with the field work studies and then bring the results back.

Motion: Manager Ward moved, Manager Skinner seconded, to direct staff to continue to move forward with the studies and field investigation and bring those results back to the Board. Motion carried unanimously.

iii. Double Driveway Pond Improvements Feasibility Study

President Swope asked if the pond is being looked at for potential contamination. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that the pond has a large tributary area. She noted that there is a study being completed by a different entity related to possible pesticides being mobilized off the nursery site. She stated that study may inform additional pieces that other stakeholders may contribute and therefore staff suggests that the full scale not move forward until the full report is available. She noted that some smaller scale data could be collected in the meantime.

Tina Carstens noted that this is meant to be informational, but it was acknowledged that the Board has been making motions on these items tonight.

Motion: Manager Kramer moved, Manager Skinner seconded, to accept the scope summary. Motion carried unanimously.

iv. Kohlman Creek Flood Risk Reduction Feasibility Study

Erin Anderson Wenz commented that this is a continuation from the last year and is the last link in the chain for feasibility studies. She stated that this identifies the timing of the study, noting that the diversion study effects the magnitude of what would happen downstream.

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Ward seconded, to accept the scope summary. Motion carried unanimously.

11. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (2:32:58)

A. Meetings Attended

No comments.

B. Upcoming Meetings and Dates

No comments.

C. Ongoing Project Update

No comments.

D. West Vadnais Lake Boundary Change Update

Tina Carstens provided an update on recent meetings attended and upcoming meeting related to this topic. President Swope commented that everyone seems to be receptive thus far.

12. PROJECT AND PROGRAM STATUS REPORTS (2:36:20)

- A. Interim Emergency Response Planning
- B. Kohlman Creek Flood Risk Feasibility Study
- C. Kohlman Creek/Wakefield Lake Diversion Feasibility Study
- D. County Ditch 17 Improvements Feasibility Study
- E. Phalen Village Feasibility Study
- F. Ames Lake Area Flood Risk Reduction Planning Study
- G. Owasso Basin/North Star Estates Improvements
- H. Double Driveway Pond Optimization Study
- I. Carver Ponds Improvement Study
- J. Annual Water Quality Report Assistance
- K. Special Project BMP Monitoring
- L. Kohlman Permeable Weir Test System
- M. Shallow Lake Aeration Study
- N. Target Store Stormwater Retrofit Projects
- O. Ryan Drive and Keller Parkway Conveyance Project
- P. Targeted Retrofit Projects
- Q. Woodbury Target Stormwater Retrofits
- R. Lake Emily Subwatershed Regional BMP
- S. Beltline Five Year Inspection
- T. District Inspection Standardization
- U. CIP Maintenance and Repair Project 2022
- V. Topic of Emerging Concern: Jumping Worms

- W. Natural Resources Program Update
- X. Public Involvement and Education Program Update
- Y. Communications Program, Website Redesign, and WaterFest Update

Manager Skinner commented that the jumping worm information is scary and interesting.

President Swope asked if educational information on that topic would be put on the District website. Tina Carstens confirmed that could be done. He referenced the website redesign and stated that he would like to see documents from prior to 2018 loaded. He noted that tonight there was discussion on something from 2016 and therefore that information would be helpful to have access to.

13. MANAGER COMMENTS AND NEXT MONTH'S MEETING (2:38:48)

Tina Carstens noted that both Manager Skinner and Manager Eisele would not be present at the July meeting. She asked if the remaining Managers would be in attendance as they would need a quorum to hold a meeting.

14. ADJOURN

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Ward seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.