



**Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District
Minutes of Regular Board Meeting
January 6, 2021**

The Regular Meeting of January 6, 2021, was held via Zoom web conferencing. A video recording of the meeting can be found at <https://youtu.be/EeLqZma06sY>.

PRESENT:

Marj Ebensteiner, President
Cliff Aichinger, Vice President
Lawrence Swope, Treasurer
Dianne Ward, Secretary
Dr. Pam Skinner, Manager

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT:

Tina Carstens, District Administrator
Laurann Kirschner, Attorney for District
Nicole Soderholm, Permit Inspector
Kyle Kubitza, Water Quality Technician
Dave Vlasin, Project Coordinator
Burt Johnson, Twin Lake Association

Paige Ahlborg, Project Manager
Brad Lindaman, Barr Engineering
Erin Anderson Wenz, Barr Engineering
Bill Bartodziej, Natural Resource Specialist
Lauren Hazenson, Communications Coordinator

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by President Ebensteiner at 6:31 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A Manager requested to remove Item F from the Consent Agenda. It was noted that item would then be considered under the Permit Program.

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Manager Aichinger	aye
Manager Ward	aye
Manager Swope	aye
Manager Skinner	aye
President Ebensteiner	aye

Motion carried unanimously.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes from December 2, 2020
- B. Treasurer's Report and Bill List
- C. District Liability Insurance Coverage Waiver

- D. 2021 BMP Service Agreement – Washington Conservation District
- E. 2021 BMP Service Agreement – Ramsey County
- F. Permit Program
 - i. #21-01 RWMWD 2021 CIP Maintenance/Repairs

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Manager Aichinger	aye
Manager Ward	aye
Manager Swope	aye
Manager Skinner	aye
President Ebensteiner	aye

Motion carried unanimously.

4. VISITOR PRESENTATIONS

Burt Johnson, Twin Lake Association, stated that the lake association was formed with the purpose to prevent flooding and inflow from West Vadnais, to have an outlet at the historically supported level, and to restore water quality. He stated that they would like to thank the Board and staff for the work that has been done on the outlet. He also thanked Paige Ahlborg for her work in coordinating the meetings related to shoreline restoration. He stated that the residents are excited for the shoreline restoration work to begin and anxious to see what the water level will be in the spring. He stated that he looks forward to hearing about what the watershed is doing district wide to prevent flooding and preserve the lakes and parks.

5. PERMIT PROGRAM

- A. Applications – See Consent Agenda
- A. #21-01 RWMWD 2021 CIP Maintenance/Repairs

Nicole Soderholm stated that this is annual CIP maintenance and repairs project.

A Manager stated that the Board approved the projects for bidding in November there were 12 programs and there are now 14 programs. Nicole Soderholm stated that the two additional projects arose from discussion regarding the wetland mitigation area near the Grass Lake berm.

Brad Lindaman noted that the Grass Lake project will address the portion of the trail that washed out when Grass Lake was very high and the overflow occurred. He noted that temporary measures were taken to prevent the entire trail from washing out but now that the water levels have decreased, it is a good time to repair that area. He provided details on the McKnight Basin sinkhole, noting that the issue was observed under inspection and it was determined that the issue should be addressed at this time rather than let it continue to get worse.

Motion: Manager Swope moved, Manager Aichinger seconded, to approve Permit #21-01.

A roll call vote was performed:

Manager Aichinger	aye
Manager Ward	aye
Manager Swope	aye
Manager Skinner	aye
President Ebensteiner	aye

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Monthly Enforcement Report

During December, two notices were sent to address: install/maintain inlet protection (1) and install/maintain construction entrance (1).

C. Permit Summary 2018-2020

Nicole Soderholm provided an update on the permit summary from 2018 through 2020 and identified some of the trends within the report. She stated that only six percent of inspections were found to be noncompliant. She stated that about half of the 64 active sites were responsible for the violations reported. She stated that the most common violations are things that require frequent maintenance. She reviewed some of the safety procedures that were added this year because of COVID. She stated that during the last four months of 2020, the pilot program for single lot residential permits went into place. She requested that the pilot program be continued into 2021, as only three permit requests were received during the four-month period.

Motion: Manager Swope moved, Manager Aichinger seconded, to approve the continuation of the single lot residential permitting evaluation through July 2021, at which time the Board will evaluate the program.

A roll call vote was performed:

Manager Aichinger	aye
Manager Ward	aye
Manager Swope	aye
Manager Skinner	aye
President Ebensteiner	aye

Motion carried unanimously.

A Manager commented that half of the site accounted for all of the violations and asked if there is a theme to that. Nicole Soderholm replied that there were two sites where a stop work order was almost issued. She stated a site could receive a violation and still be found compliant overall, depending upon the severity or number of violations. She stated that notices would still be sent to address the issues of noncompliance. She stated that a more serious violation could result in noncompliance, even if there is only one violation.

6. STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROGRAM

A. Applications - None

B. Budget Status Update

Paige Ahlborg commented that there are some maintenance grants that carry over in the amount of \$31,500 that were not included in the update.

7. PRESENTATIONS AND/OR ACTION ITEMS

A. 2021 CIP Maintenance and Repair Project Bid Review and Award

Brad Lindaman stated that seven bids were received with a wide spread. He stated that Fitzgerald Excavating was the lowest bidder with a bid of \$518,053.50 while the highest bidder was over \$1,700,000. He stated that is the highest spread that he has ever seen, noting that there were four items that resulted in a wide variety of costs and provided additional details. He stated that the engineer's estimate was \$538,000, which fell between the two lowest bidders. He commented that the District has experience with Fitzgerald over the past few years. He noted that Fitzgerald was the only contractor to visit each of the site and advised that the contractor does have familiarity with many of the sites.

A Manager commented that although the speed was slow on a previous project with Fitzgerald in the beginning, they believe that there have only been good experiences since then. Brad Lindaman confirmed that there were some issues with the schedule in the beginning but following a meeting with staff there have not been any problems with the contractor. Dave Vlasin agreed that the contractor has stepped up since that time and has completed good work for the District. Brad Lindaman noted that staff followed up with Fitzgerald and the contractor is comfortable with the bid they submitted and commented that he needs the work, he likes the work, and he enjoys working with the District. He confirmed that the lowest bidder has met all of the bidding requirements, has proven that he can do quality work, and the bid is consistent with the estimate prepared.

Motion: Manager Aichinger moved, Manager Swope seconded, to accept the bids and award the 2021 CIP Maintenance and Repair Project to Fitzgerald Excavating in the amount \$518,053.50 and direct staff to prepare and mail the notice of award, prepare the draft agreements, and review the required submittals.

A roll call vote was performed:

Manager Aichinger	aye
Manager Ward	aye
Manager Swope	aye
Manager Skinner	aye
President Ebensteiner	aye

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Internal Load Analysis of Shallow and Deep Lakes Report and Discussion

Erin Anderson Wenz acknowledged that this report is very scientific and technical and looked at eight different lakes within the District. She stated that the selected lakes are either considered impaired or at risk of being impaired. She provided details on the phosphorus budget and water quality and the TMDL plans that have been developed for the selected impaired lakes. She also highlighted any work that has been done towards the TMDL plans for those lakes.

A Manager commented that if there is a TMDL plan and a lake is still impaired, would that then mean that the implementation plan did not work. Erin Anderson Wenz replied that the implementation plans involved both watershed reductions and internal load reductions, noting that internal load reductions are not one and done and are long-term strategy. She used the example of an alum treatment, noting that at some point the alum will not have the binding capacity that it once had, and the remaining phosphorus will need attention.

A Manager asked if all the internal loading were taken care of, would the lake become compliant or would the external factors still need to be addressed. Erin Anderson Wenz explained that it is a combination of the two factors. Brad Lindaman stated that the previous direction from the Board was to focus on reducing the external load, so that remains a focus. Erin Anderson Wenz agreed, explaining that if you only focus on the internal load, the external loading will still continue to be a factor and outweigh the work you have done on internal loading.

A Manager referenced Bennett Lake and asked if the spent lime filter has been helping. Erin Anderson Wenz replied that is not online yet because but will come online in 2021. A Manager asked if the impaired lakes impact the water bodies that they flow into. Erin Anderson Wenz agreed, noting that it is a chain of water and to a small degree the impaired water will impact the body of water it flows into.

Erin Anderson Wenz explained how sediment release occurs and how that relates to phosphorus. She also provided examples of different projects that have been done in the District and how they work to reduce the phosphorus levels. She stated that both mobile and organic phosphorus can be released from sediment and provided details on the differences between the two. She provided details on the model that was created to

develop an estimate of the rate of phosphorus release from the lake bottom and sediment during the summer months in the selected study lakes. She reviewed the three different categories that were developed for the studies lakes as shown in the summary table of conclusions within the report.

A Manager commented that they like the work that was done but questioned why alternatives such as plant harvesting in shallow lakes was not investigated. Bill Bartodziej stated that they looked at harvesting in Kohlman, noting that while a substantial amount of phosphorus was removed through harvesting, it should be viewed as a complementary action. He did not believe that harvesting alone would produce the desired result. The Manager commented that they would like to see how much harvesting would work and cost, compared to the other actions. Bill Bartodziej stated that they have a solid idea of that information based on the data they collected through Kohlman and can include that in the analysis. The Manager commented that they are opposed to using a massive amount of chemicals to solve these problems, especially when there are alternatives available. The Manager stated that they are uncomfortable with alum flock and the impact that could have on the organisms within the lake and therefore will never be comfortable with the use of alum.

A Manager asked what the additional investigation would involve that was mentioned in the report. Erin Anderson Wenz replied that leads into one of the questions included in the memorandum. She explained that aeration is used for internal load management in deep lakes but that can be difficult to prove beneficial in shallow lakes. She stated that the suggestion for more investigation would involve finding a situation in which aeration has been successful in a shallow lake. She stated that there are examples of aeration being successful for fishery management or duck weed management, but she is not aware of success for phosphorus management. She noted that large scale aeration would also be significantly more expensive than alum with less proven results. The Manager asked what the high cost would be attributed to. Brad Lindaman replied that the cost would be due to the equipment that would be needed as well as the constant power supply. Bill Bartodziej replied that aeration is successful in ponds and very small lakes and provided additional details on what would be necessary in order for the equipment to be successful in providing the necessary oxygen.

A Manager referenced the Beaver Lake Management Plan, specifically the idea to spread lime across the entire lake and asked for additional details on that as it was not reflected in this report. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that they will be doing a small-scale lime slurry on Wakefield Pond, which is south of Wakefield Lake, and will provide data. She stated that the lime slurry for lakes was talked about a lot more in the past and was unsure why that is not talked about much anymore. She noted that she could check into that. Brad Lindaman commented that there was an issue with PH, using large scale amounts of lime.

A Manager asked the experience that has been had in East Vadnais Lake. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that they inject a substance that binds with phosphorus, but do that in locations where water is coming in and has oxygen and explained how that works. Brad Lindaman noted that in that lake they have a continuous cycle of treatment because the water is used for water supply.

Erin Anderson Wenz reviewed the biggest takeaways from the study. A Manager commented that the District needs to allow itself to benefit from some of the research that is being done, as more information will be known in one or two years. The Manager commented that they are not very interested in rushing to complete things in some of the at-risk lakes, noting that some of the projects that have been implemented in the watershed are helping to a small degree and demonstrating that those efforts are an overall benefit. The Manager commented that they are concerned with the reduced effectiveness in Kohlman Lake, as it shows that the life of that alum treatment is reaching its end and perhaps an additional treatment will be needed noting that this year will really show whether that is true. Another Manager agreed with those comments.

Tina Carstens agreed that with the research that is going on, it would make sense to wait and see. She asked if there is appetite for experimenting with aeration on a smaller water body. A Manager commented that they would not be opposed to exploring aeration but would like to see an example where it has provided the desired

outcome. A Manager commented that they would perhaps be interested but would want to first see information on cost and possible partners. The Manager commented that West Vadnais continues to impact the downstream water bodies. It was asked if there are any plans for that water body. Tina Carstens stated that she believed the study was scheduled to be completed this year and an implementation plan would then be developed as a result.

A Manager asked if the lakes have been run through the prioritization tool. Erin Anderson Wenz explained that tool looks at specific projects in terms of water quality, flooding, and habitat. She stated that one thing that provides extra credit within the tool is whether the project provides benefit to an impaired water body. Tina Carstens stated that tool is for BMPs, which could provide benefit to those lakes, but the TMDLs are completed as required by the MPCA. She stated that the at-risk lakes have a designation provided by the District and is not a required designation by the MPCA. She noted that there is a cost-share program that provides priority for projects within the priority areas.

A Manager asked if there are any other effects from the impaired lakes that should raise priority, such as fishery damage. Tina Carstens stated that there is water quality monitoring, and a lot of work was done to identify the reasons why, or why not, a water would be considered impaired or at risk. She stated that those factors of swimming and fisheries are factored into that process. A Manager commented that they do not believe that any of the lakes are impaired to the point where they would impact the activities that would typically occur on that body of water. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that the data from 2020 and 2021 will provide additional information for the impaired lakes. She confirmed that the District will continue its efforts and watch the impaired lakes, track the research that is going on, and look to possibly add effort to additional research. It was agreed upon that this could be reviewed again in one year.

C. RWMWD Communications Program Presentation

Tina Carstens stated that Lauren Hazenson has been on staff for eight months and has been doing a great job. She stated that she has been looking at the communications needs and determining the needs and priorities for 2021.

Lauren Hazenson reviewed the traditional method of communication which is typically not used anymore because of the opportunity for miscommunication. She provided information on strategic communications which recognizes that not all audiences are the same. She stated that the benefits of providing communication through the strategic method ensure communications reflect the mission and goals; provide the right messaging using the right tools for the audience; acknowledge context to ensure that communications are clear, consistent, and proactive; and provides the ability to adapt quickly to arising communications needs without losing focus. She reviewed the efforts that she began in 2020.

A Manager asked the channels with the most engagement. Lauren Hazenson replied that Facebook is by far the channel with the most engagement and provided additional details on how those audiences can be targeted. She provided examples of efforts she continues to work on in order to tell a consistent story about the organization. She then reviewed the goals for communications that she plans to work on throughout 2021.

A Manager asked if there would be improved communications on the website and whether Lauren Hazenson would be involved in that process. Lauren Hazenson confirmed that the website is at the top of her list. She noted that the website is about three years old, which is the typical time at which the resources are reviewed and updated in order to make information more visible and accessible.

A Manager commented that they like the idea of taking the information generated and work that is being done and making it more accessible to people. The Manager asked for clarity on the email information reviewed, noting that it appears about one third of the people actually opened the email which seems low. Lauren Hazenson replied that the typical rate is about 20 percent, so that rate is actually higher than the typical rate for email interaction.

A Manager expressed appreciation for the presentation and the organized approach to communications.

8. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

A. Meetings Attended

No comments.

B. Upcoming Meetings and Dates

No comments.

C. Annual Meeting Reminder

Tina Carstens stated that the annual meeting is next month and confirmed that everyone would be available to attend virtually.

D. Welcome Kyle Kubitza

Tina Carstens introduced Kyle Kubitza, who has now joined the full-time District staff.

Kyle Kubitza introduced himself noting that he has been an intern with the District for about one year and nine months before being hired as a Water Monitoring Technician. He provided background information on his education and stated that he is excited to continue to be part of the team.

Tina Carstens commented that Kyle Kubitza is a great member of the team and always jumps in to provide assistance whenever it is needed.

E. LMCIT Insurance Dividend

No comments.

9. PROJECT AND PROGRAM STATUS REPORTS

A. Ongoing Project and Program Updates

- i. Owasso Basin Flood Risk Reduction Feasibility Study
- ii. Willow/Kohlman Creek Flood Risk Reduction Feasibility Study
- iii. Ames Lake Area Flood Risk Reduction Feasibility Study
- iv. FEMA Flood Mapping Updates
- v. Targeted Retrofit Projects
- vi. Target Store Retrofit Projects
- vii. Kohlman Permeable Weir Test System
- viii. Keller Channel Weir and Phalen Outlet Resiliency Modifications

A Manager asked if Ramey County has approved the permit to complete the work for the Phalen weir. Brad Lindaman replied that approval has not yet been gained but noted that the project is following the review timeline for the County. He anticipated gaining approval in mid-January. Tina Carstens stated that the item is on the agenda for the January County Board meeting but noted that it is for the Keller Weir, not Phalen. Dave Vlasin provided an update on the construction process. The Manager asked if photographs are being taken of the progress that could be used for education. Dave Vlasin confirmed that he continues to take photos along the way of all projects. He confirmed that a sign could be placed on the construction site that states water improvement project.

- ix. Twin Lake Outlet Construction
- x. CIP Maintenance and Repair 2021 Project
- xi. Beltline/Battle Creek Tunnel Inspection
- xii. Ryan Drive and Keller Parkway Conveyance
- xiii. Tanners Lake Alum Facility Monitoring
- xiv. Automated Lake Monitoring Systems

- xv. Internal Load Management Discussions
- xvi. Wakefield Lake Internal Loading Study
- xvii. Natural Resources Program Update
- xviii. Education Program Update
- xix. Communications Program Update
- xx. Citizen Advisory Committee Update

A Manager referenced the report on impaired lakes and asked if there could be a future discussion related to the accuracy of the modeling and lidar. Erin Anderson Wenz confirmed that they can bring additional information back to the Board.

A Manager asked when the project prioritization tool would be up. Tina Carstens commented that the tool will not be posted on the website, but the report will be shared on the website.

10. REPORTS OF MANAGERS

A. MAWD Annual Meeting Discussion

Tina Carstens confirmed that all of the presentations should be available for viewing on the MAWD website.

A Manager commented that there were technology problems but recognized that this was the first attempt at a virtual meeting. The Manager commented that they enjoyed the groundwater management presentation. Tina Carstens noted that was the presentation that she took the most notes on as well because of the increased interest in groundwater in recent years within the District and overall.

A Manager asked if the awards will still be presented for the year, even though the banquet is not able to be held. Tina Carstens commented that they did not solicit and make choices for the Watershed Excellence Awards this year and instead mailed photo calendars and will keep those suggestions for next year.

11. ADJOURN

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Swope seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.