



**Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District
Minutes of Regular Board Meeting
September 6, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of September 6, 2023, 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/GKi-7St2kt0>. Video time stamps included after each agenda item in minutes.

PRESENT:

Val Eisele, President
Dr. Pam Skinner, Vice President
Matt Kramer, Treasurer
Ben Karp, Secretary
Mark Gernes, Manager

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT:

Tina Carstens, District Administrator
Laurann Kirschner, Attorney for District
Brendan Dougherty, Barr Engineering
Kyle Kubitza, Water Monitoring Technician
Pat Williamson, Natural Resources Specialist

Paige Ahlborg, Project Manager
Nicole Maras, Permit Coordinator
Erin Anderson Wenz, Bar Engineering
Dave Vlasin, Watershed Project Coordinator

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (00:10)

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

3. CONSENT AGENDA (00:28)

- A. Approval of Minutes from August 2, 2023
- B. Treasurer's Report and Bill List
- C. Stewardship Grant Program
 - i. 23-43 CS: Blasena, Rain Garden
 - ii. 23-46 CS: Griffin, Shoreline and Native Habitat Restoration
 - iii. Additional Funding Request: 23-20 CS: Escape Climbing, Rain Gardens
- D. Change Order No. 1 – Arbogast Underground Stormwater Filter

Motion: Manager Gernes moved, Manager Skinner seconded, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Further discussion: President Eisele commented that in the future it would be helpful to have an estimate of different items on change orders when there are multiple things, using the additional funding request for 23-20 CS as an example.

Manager Karp referenced 23-46 CS and asked if items of this nature are reviewed for best practices related to water discharge. He noted that in this instance there is some water discharge onto the neighboring property, but acknowledged that the property also accepts runoff from that neighboring property, so it does seem to make sense. Paige Ahlborg stated that did come up in discussion, but this is not a project the District assisted in design. She stated that a full review of the design was completed and would follow up to ensure the plans were signed off on.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. VISITOR COMMENTS (4:34)

None.

5. PERMIT PROGRAM (4:40)

A. Applications - None

B. Monthly Enforcement Report

During August, 29 notices were sent to address: install/maintain inlet protection (5), install/maintain perimeter control (6), install/maintain construction entrance (2), sweep streets (3), stabilize exposed soils (2), contain liquid/solid wastes (1), remove discharged sediment (4), maintain/protect permanent BMPs (3), install/maintain ditch checks (1), and general permit requirements (2).

President Eisele asked if contractors with multiple issues during a project are tracked. Nicole Maras replied that it depends upon who the site supervisor is, as that can vary and provide different experiences. She noted that staff does remember those that have multiple issues. She stated that the Permit Inspector is going meet with this contractor to follow up because of the multiple issues and inspections and to discuss increased enforcement abilities.

Manager Karp recognized that this has not been a time of heavy rain but one month of noncompliance is an issue. Nicole Maras stated that because this is a municipal road project, the District does not hold escrow, and reviewed some of the enforcement actions that could be considered.

President Eisele stated that it would be nice to see a follow up next month on this permit. He commented that it would be nice to see the City step in as well.

Manager Karp asked if there is a reason the District does not hold escrow on a municipal project, other than being a good partner. Tina Carstens replied that the District has never held escrow for those types of projects in her time with the District. Laurann Kirschner commented that is also her understanding as she did not believe there is anything outright prohibiting that type of action.

Nicole Maras stated that the City will also be at the meeting tomorrow with the contractor and Permit Inspector. She commented that the City has gotten more involved during this past month when there have been chronic issues.

Manager Gernes commented that he was surprised not to see the Heights (former golf course) on this list and asked if the site has been inspected. Nicole Maras stated that she can make a note to have an update on that project next month and confirmed that site is inspected at least twice per month. She provided an overview of the activity, noting that they are currently working on soil remediation. She anticipated that wetland mitigation work would soon begin.

6. STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROGRAM (15:02)

A. Applications – See Consent Agenda

B. Budget Status Update

Paige Ahlborg commented that there are still available funds, and the District continues to receive applications for residential projects.

7. ACTION ITEMS (15:41)

A. Roosevelt Homes Accept Plans and Solicit Bids

Paige Ahlborg stated that staff reached out in 2018/2019 but the property owner was not interested. She stated that staff reached out again last year, and the property owner expressed issues with flooding of the parking lot and maintenance facility. She stated that phase one would modify the existing basin on the west and add a smaller basin to assist with the flood events.

Erin Anderson-Wenz commented that this site is within a District equity area and experiences localized flooding. She highlighted elements that are included in the report including estimated cost, project benefits, and how the project scores with the District prioritization tool.

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Kramer, seconded, to approve the preliminary design, estimated costs, and proposed project schedule, and direct staff to finalize the design and bidding documents and solicit bid proposals. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Permit Rule Amendment Response to Comments and Approval

Nicole Soderholm stated that this process began last year in conjunction with Capital Region Watershed District (CRWD). She noted that the draft changes to the rules were released to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in the winter with an informal comment period during February and March. She reviewed the additional input that was solicited, which wrapped with the official comment period this summer and a public hearing at the July meeting. She stated that staff has prepared the formal responses to comments received and advised of a change that was made to the maximum trail width (from eight feet to ten feet) based on the input of comments received. She reviewed the actions before the Board tonight and noted that if approved, the new rules would be implemented January 1st. She noted that CRWD is also reviewing this item at its Board meeting tonight.

- i. Approval of Watershed Management Rules – Resolution 23-01
- ii. Approval of Cost Cap for Linear Projects – Resolution 23-02
- iii. Approval of Stormwater Impact Fund Contribution Amount – Resolution 23-03

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Kramer seconded, to approve the rule revisions and adopt Resolution 23-01, Resolution 23-02, and Resolution 23-03. Motion carried unanimously.

C. 2024 Preliminary Budget and Levy Public Hearing

Tina Carstens explained that the draft resolution before the Board tonight would approve the preliminary budget and levy for 2024. She noted that the carryover numbers shown in the table would continue to be refined as they move forward in the process before adoption of the final budget and levy in December. She stated that at the last review, the proposed levy was seven percent but has since been reduced to 6.55 percent. She reviewed the different projects within the capital improvement projects proposed for 2024. She displayed the percentage of budget spent on each program area, noting that 79 percent of the District budget is spent on projects. She reviewed historical budget and levy trends.

Manager Gernes commented that it seems that the general fund budget remains somewhat stable, and the levy is used to fund projects. He asked and received confirmation that grant funds applied for and received would not be reflected. Tina Carstens explained that the decision on some grant applications would be known prior to December and therefore could reduce the amount needed through the levy for those projects. She stated that additional discussions could also be held if grant funds are not awarded for projects that are grant dependent.

President Eisele commented that the intent for many years has been to keep the levy stable but recently they have completed multiple feasibility studies that identify ways that the District could reduce flood risk and therefore it makes sense that the levy would increase to fund those projects. Tina Carstens noted that there were several years where the District was in planning mode, and it is now ready to execute some of those projects.

Tina Carstens reviewed the impact of the proposed levy on residential homestead taxes. She also provided comparison information on the impact at different levy rates as previously requested by the Board.

President Eisele opened the public hearing.

No comments.

President Eisele closed the public hearing.

President Eisele asked and received confirmation that this would be adoption of the preliminary budget and levy, and final adoption would occur in December. He stated that if there is a grant received, that could reduce the levy but suggested that there be additional discussion because the District is in the execution of project phase and therefore it could help to build those funds that will be needed.

Manager Gernes stated that if the budget were to decrease, would they need to provide additional justification or would that set precedent. Tina Carstens stated that this would be the typical path forward, starting at the highest point that they would be and then refine that lower. She stated that the justification would become important if they desired to increase the budget and levy prior to final adoption.

- i. Approval of 2024 Preliminary Budget and Levy Certification to Ramsey and Washington Counties – Resolution 23-04

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Gernes seconded, to approve the draft budget for purpose of the preliminary levy and approve Resolution 23-04. Motion carried unanimously.

8. ATTORNEY REPORT (40:17)

Laurann Kirschner reviewed the legal activities that she assisted with during the last month including routine maintenance and access agreements and publication of the notice for the public hearing.

9. BOARD ISSUES, POLICIES, AND OPERATION (FOR DISCUSSION AT MEETING) (40:50)

President Eisele asked and received confirmation that the Board is finding value in the tours. Manager Gernes suggested the Roosevelt Homes site as a future tour location.

10. NEW REPORTS AND/OR PRESENTATIONS (42:30)

A. Cottage Place Wetland Restoration Presentation

Erin Anderson Wenz stated that this site was identified in 2018 as a potential site for a retrofit rain garden. She explained that upon further review they discovered area that was wetland and that fell on public property, therefore the intent switched from a retrofit rain garden project to a wetland restoration project.

Brendan Dougherty identified the proposed project location, comparing the property ownership boundaries to the wetland delineation information. He noted that historically the wetland was 9.23 acres and as of 2018 was 2.34 acres. He provided historical information on the wetland and development of the surrounding areas. He reviewed the soil survey map and information learned through the delineation in 2018 related to the existing condition of the wetland area. He provided a summary of the results of the phase one and two environmental assessments that were completed and also provided details on the path water flows in this area.

President Eisele commented that it would seem that they would be expanding the usefulness of the wetland which could help to reduce the potential for flooding in that area. Erin Anderson Wenz commented that they would be adding storage.

Brendan Dougherty identified the current boundary of the wetland compared to the proposed expansion to the wetland.

Manager Gernes commented that it appears that the hydrology would be done more through grading than a change in the way water flows through the system. Erin Anderson Wenz noted that part of the project would be to review the culvert and optimize that.

Brendan Dougherty commented that tree preservation will be a large portion of the project. He stated that they would also be providing a connection through a trail and would create a mound that would serve as an overlook and could include natural play elements. He stated that they would remove the invasive trees and species and would be added native trees and habitat.

Manager Karp asked if they have considered box culverts that could serve as a boardwalk. Erin Anderson Wenz confirmed that could be reviewed as an option.

President Eisele acknowledged that this is a concept and there are a lot of ideas that could come forward that would also help to engage the community.

Brendan Dougherty stated that a major goal of the project is to restore the wetland to more resemble what existed previously. He reviewed the next steps in the process.

Erin Anderson Wenz stated that the scope summary was included in the memorandum and provided an overview of those items and the process, including the points at which staff will check in with the Board. She stated that today they are asking for approval to continue on tasks four, five and six. She reviewed the proposed timeline, with construction to potentially begin in about one year or so.

Tina Carstens provided additional details on the involvement of Shoreview noting that the City Council would be discussing this at a workshop in September. She noted that they would also work with the other stakeholders in the area to ensure input is received from those parties.

Motion: Manager Gernes moved, Manager Karp seconded, to direct staff and Barr Engineering to continue to follow the tasks within the scope summary. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Kohlman Creek Flood Risk Reduction – County Road C Culvert Scope Summary

Tina Carstens stated that this is a result of the Kohlman Creek Feasibility Study. She stated that this was identified and fit within the County road project. She stated that if this is not completed at this time, the County policy would require that the newly paved roadway not be disturbed for six years. She noted that this is a relatively lost cost option. She stated that there is a County meeting tomorrow where more information would be learned on whether the County or the District bid this project element.

Motion: Manager Kramer moved, Manager Karp seconded, to direct staff and Barr Engineering to continue with tasks one and three. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Board Governance Manual

Tina Carstens provided an overview of the updates to the governance manual and noted additional updates that will be made to the document in order to better match up how the Board operates.

President Eisele stated that he had difficulty in finding this type of document for similar watershed districts. Tina Carstens stated that she was able to gain models from the League of Minnesota Cities, received some information from Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, and the Minnesota Watersheds Manual. President Eisele stated that this is a unique organization that has an amazing staff but also has a Board for governance.

Manager Gernes commented that he believes that this is laid out well as a draft.

Manager Karp agreed that this is well laid out.

President Eisele commented that perhaps this is reviewed each year in March.

President Eisele asked for more details on executive sessions. Tina Carstens replied that those are essentially the closed meetings and provided examples such as the Administrator review or discussion of legal matters. Laurann Kirschner noted that a closed session can also be used to discuss real estate offers in addition to staff reviews and matters of litigation.

Tina Carstens welcomed any additional comments via email and noted that if there are additional changes, she can distribute the updated draft to the Board. She also welcomed thoughts on the bylaws to be sent via email.

11. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (1:39:38)

A. Meetings Attended

No comments.

B. Upcoming Meetings and Dates

Tina Carstens noted that the Watershed Excellence Awards which will be held on November 16th.

C. Board Action Log and Updates

No comments.

D. Board and CAC Tour

Tina Carstens asked the Board to respond to the poll to select a date for the event.

E. Minnesota Watersheds Updates

Tina Carstens noted that an update was included in the packet, along with a link to the newsletter.

F. Integrating Natural Hazard Mitigation and Clean Water Act Planning and Project Implementation Workshop

Tina Carstens noted that she will attend this workshop the following week and will report back to the Board.

12. PROJECT AND PROGRAM STATUS REPORTS (1:46:20)

Project Feasibility Studies

A. Interim Emergency Response Planning

B. Kohlman Creek Flood Risk Feasibility Study

C. Ames Lake Area Flood Risk Reduction Planning Study

D. Owasso Basin/North Star Estates Improvements

E. Resiliency Study for Non-Beltline Tributary Areas

Research Projects

F. Kohlman Lake Aquatic Plants and Nutrients Study

G. Shallow Lake Aeration Study

Capital Improvements

- H. Woodbury Target Store Stormwater Retrofit Projects
- I. Roosevelt Homes Targeted Retrofit Projects
- J. Stewardship Grant Program Support
- K. Arbogast Stormwater Filtration BMP
- L. Double Driveway Pond and Fish Creek Tributary Improvements
- M. Pioneer Park Stormwater Reuse
- N. Street Sweeping Pilot Program

CIP Project Repair and Maintenance

- O. Beltline 5-Year Inspection
- P. New Technology Mini Case Study: Comparison of Various Soil Amendments for Water Quality

Program Updates

- Q. Natural Resources Program
- R. Public Involvement and Education Program
- S. Communications and Outreach Program

President Eisele referenced Item D, noting that it seems that there has been back and forth with that group for a while and asked if there would be a plan to begin work in 2024. Erin Anderson Wenz replied that it is a tricky site and therefore they have been working with the stakeholders and site conditions. President Eisele asked if there is a stop gap if there is to be a heavy snow year and there are additional delays. Tina Carstens stated that they did complete emergency response planning that was shared with the property owners prior to moving down this path.

13. MANAGER COMMENTS AND NEXT MONTH'S MEETING (1:54:00)

President Eisele recognized there have been some small tweaks to the agenda and how meetings are conducted and welcomed the Board to send any feedback or additional suggestions to Tina Carstens.

14. ADJOURN

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Kramer seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.