



RAMSEY-WASHINGTON

METRO WATERSHED DISTRICT

Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District Minutes of Special Board Meeting December 13, 2023

The Special Meeting of December 13, 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/Yo9hpy2zGhk>. 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	Paige Ahlborg, Project Manager
Nicole Maras, Permit Coordinator	Kristin Seaman, City of Woodbury
Tracey Galowitz, Attorney for District	Erin Anderson Wenz, Bar Engineering
Kyle Kubitz, Water Monitoring Technician	Dave Vlasin, Watershed Project Coordinator
Paul Erdmann, Natural Resources Program Manager	Marcy Bean, Barr Engineering
Kathryn Sarnecki, St. Paul Port Authority	Andrew Hogg, City of St. Paul
Lydia Major, LHB	

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (02:19)

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

3. CONSENT AGENDA (02:36)

- A. Approval of Minutes from November 1, 2023
- B. Treasurer's Report and Bill List
- C. Permit Program
 - i. 23-29 Shoreview Deluxe Phase II – Seven Lakes, Shoreview
 - ii. 23-30 RWMWD 2024 CIP Maintenance & Repairs
 - iii. 23-31 Woodbury Central Park Remodel, Woodbury
- D. Stewardship Grant Program
 - i. 23-51 CS Tragiai, shoreline restoration
- E. BMP Service Agreement – Washington Conservation District
- F. BMP Service Agreement – Ramsey County

President Eisele questioned if rip rap is necessary for Stewardship Grant program 23-51 Tragiai, shoreline restoration. Paige Ahlborg explained that because the rip rap is pre-existing it would be kept. Paige stated there are

other techniques that will be implemented in addition to the rip rap that are more natural. Paige goes on to explain how the slope and lake front were taken into consideration during planning.

Manager Gernes asked for more information on the stabilization of soils and what techniques would be best. Nicole Maras provided more information on soil stabilization and the practices used. Nicole Maras also explained the different rules that apply to soil stabilization.

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

4. VISITOR COMMENTS (7:24)

No comments.

5. PERMIT PROGRAM (7:39)

A. Applications - None

B. Monthly Enforcement Report

During November, 17 notices were sent to address: install/maintain inlet protection (2), install/maintain perimeter control (3), install/maintain construction entrance (2), sweep streets (2), stabilize exposed soils (1), contain liquid/solid wastes (3), remove discharged sediment (1), install up-gradient BMPs (1), and general permit requirements (2).

President Eisele asked for more information in regards to an independent inspector being hired for The Heights project. Nicole Maras explained how this is a normal occurrence on larger projects.

C. The Heights – Proposed Public Amenities Presentation and Discussion

Nicole Maras gave a brief overview of what has been approved so far through permitting and what has been presented in the past. Nicole went on to explain what will be presented at the meeting and introduced the speakers.

Kathryn Sarnecki explained the landscape design plan for The Heights development. This includes gathering spaces, play spaces, and trail systems throughout the natural areas. Kathryn explained that they would like approval to include a boardwalk, which would give the public a chance to experience the wetland.

Manager Gernes asked if the boardwalk would be in a vegetative area or in deeper water. Kathryn Sarnecki explained that it would be kept in the shallow areas near the vegetative edges. Manager Karp asked what style of boardwalk would be used and what the impacts on the wetland would be. Kathryn Sarnecki explained that they are aware of the potential impact and are working to minimize impact with the style of the boardwalk and the timing of installation.

Manager Gernes expressed concern regarding stark corners in certain areas of the wetland mitigation areas. Nicole Maras explained that part of the plan had been approved in phase one and the land is already in the process of being graded.

President Eisele expressed that he liked the plans that provide education elements with play areas and public use space but he is also concerned about the regulatory aspect of the buffers and boardwalks and what the impact on water quality would be. President Eisele questioned if some of these changes are going too far into the wetlands.

Kathryn Sernacki explained that these concerns were kept in mind during planning and explained that the surfaces used were chosen with that in mind.

President Eisele stated that he thinks the planning is great but is unsure of how it will affect the Districts goals. Manager Karp explained that the buffers were adjusted to include public involvement and that he liked the plan and stated that he thought as long as things are kept as soft surfaces the buffer should work as planned.

Manager Kramer stated that the neighborhood The Heights is located in would greatly benefit from the public use aspects and that he likes the proposed plan.

President Eisele questioned if there are potentially too many amenities and how that will affect maintenance.

Manager Karp stated that because of the density of the area that he believed the number of amenities is sufficient.

Manager Gernes explained how he believed the boardwalk trails could help keep people out of the natural areas.

Kathryn Sarnecki explained that they would like to add signage and stated that the community has expressed excitement for having outdoor spaces like those planned. The Board agreed that the information shown in this presentation was a good next step in planning for this site.

6. STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROGRAM (37:41)

A. Applications – See Consent Agenda

No comments

B. Budget Status Update

No comments

C. 2023 Program Overview and 2024 Program Approval

Paige Ahlborg provided an overview of the Stewardship Grant Program in 2023 as well as the Targeted Retrofit and BMP Maintenance programs. Paige went on to explain the future project plans for 2024 and where those projects are in the planning process. Paige stated that more information on some of these projects will be shown to the Board at future meetings.

Paige Ahlborg gave an overview of the proposed priority areas within the District for 2024. Paige explained how there will be an emphasis on trying to implement projects in equity areas within the District and how they can be incorporated into the 2024 Stewardship grant planning. Paige showed the priority water quality subwatersheds and how they overlap with equity areas within the District and the proposed funding levels for those areas.

President Eisele questioned if the budget would be impacted by this funding. Paige explained that there are enough funds in the budget for these proposed funding options and that the impact would be more evident as the projects are implemented in 2024.

Manager Skinner asked if residents in the equity areas would have a greater chance of being funded at the 100% and mentioned that it did not look like the vulnerable areas were in the at-risk water quality subwatershed areas. Tina Carstens gave more detail on the maps shown and how the colors shown on the map relate to areas of concern for the District. Paige Ahlborg explained which areas will be focused on for residential projects and which areas will have more focus on targeted retrofit projects.

Manager Karp questioned if there is a way to determine someone's eligibility for the proposed equity funding level. Tina Carstens explained that the District did not want to implement asking for personal information to determine eligibility. Tina explained that the proposed areas are higher priority areas which would benefit from this funding level. Tina also explained that community outreach would be used to target certain areas that could use extra support.

Manager Gernes questioned if the program has the ability to manage the increase in projects this may cause. Tina Carstens explained that there have been funds remaining in past years and there is room within the program budget.

Manager Gernes asked what type of outreach has been done in the past. Paige Ahlborg stated that there have been different forms of outreach such as public event tabling, working with local organizations and information provided at WaterFest.

Manager Karp asked if multiple models were used when talking about social vulnerability and asked how the index and overlay were created. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that the CDC social vulnerability index was used. Erin indicated that this index is also being used by other watershed districts and is updated when there is a census, it also includes several layers of data that represent different types of vulnerability.

Paige Ahlborg went on to explain the details of the street sweeping program. Paige gave an overview of the five cities who participated in this program. Paige stated that the program was well received by residents in those cities. Paige stated that she is still waiting for numbers to come in from a few of cities but is predicting that the program is coming in under budget and stated that overall it was a big success. Paige explained the plan is to allocate \$250,000 for the street sweeping programs in 2024, working with the same cities and also working to add new cities to the program. Paige explained that ideally sweeping would happen in the spring, late summer and fall.

President Eisele questioned if the program will be sticking with the same cities or if the list will be broadened. Paige Ahlborg confirmed the goal is to broaden the reach of the program.

Manager Skinner questioned how the district is tracking the sweeping to make sure the cities in the program are sweeping more often. Tina Carstens stated that it is based on what they were doing previously and the increase in sweeping that happens and that the District is paying the difference.

Manager Gernes asked if the sweeping locations are left up to the cities. Paige Ahlborg stated that there are priority areas mapped out that are used to focus the sweeping and that the areas can be looked at in more detail as the program progresses. Paige also stated that some cities are working to partner with other watershed districts within their limits to expand to areas outside of our district.

President Eisele asked if cities are continuing to measure their own TMDL removals with respect to the street sweeping.

Manager Skinner agreed that this data should be collected to better track the use of the program. Tina Carstens stated that data is collected.

Paige Ahlborg goes on to explain the changes within the proposed 2024 Stewardship grant coverage that is being considered by the board for approval.

Motion: Manager Kramer moved, Manager Karp seconded to approve the 2024 water quality and equity priority areas, approve the 2024 coverage amounts as shown and table one and to approve staff to move forward with setting funding amount in priority for enhanced street sweeping in 2024.

7. ACTION ITEMS (1:16:46)

A. 2024 CIP Maintenance and repair Project Bid Review and Award

Erin Anderson Wenz explained the bids that were collected last month and stated that Fitzgerald Excavating came in with the lowest bid. Erin gave an overview of the bid received and the differences between Fitzgerald Excavating and the other bids that were received. Erin explained the bid process and how the bid is awarded. Dave Vlasin spoke about his conversations with the owner of Fitzgerald Excavating. Dave explained that there was one math

error in the bid but the contractor has agreed to do the work within his bid amount and has done work for the District in the past and knows what to expect.

President Eisele questioned how change orders would be processed and how they would be looked at being that the bid was lower than the Barr estimate. Erin Anderson Wenz explained that even though the bid is lower than their estimate the change orders are still carefully reviewed and the company is still held to the specifications and language within the contract. Tina Carstens stated that Barr Engineering's estimate was used to create the budget. Erin Anderson Wenz provided more information on what is looked at when awarding a bid and stated that they look for the lowest responsible bidder and because the District has worked with Fitzgerald Excavating in the past, they are well known to the District. Tracy Galowitz commented that it would be difficult to not award Fitzgerald Excavating the contract because they came in with the lowest bid. Tracy stated that change orders would be reviewed like any other change order that comes through.

Motion: Manager Gernes moved, Manager Kramer seconded, to accept the bids and award the 2024 CIP maintenance and repair projects to Fitzgerald Excavating and direct staff to prepare and mail the notice of award and prepare the draft agreements and review the require subs. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Earned Sick and Safe Time Policy

President Eisele asked for the meaning of the statement 'the District goes above and beyond what state law requires' that is included in the action item. Tina Carstens explained that the District is providing more hours per paid period than required by the state.

Motion: Manger Kramer moved, Manager Skinner seconded, to approve the earned sick and safe time policy. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Domestic Partnership Policy

Tina Carstens gave a brief overview of the Domestic Partnership policy.

Motion: Manger Skinner moved, Manager Gernes seconded, to approve the domestic parent and benefits policy. Motion carried unanimously.

D. Metro-INET Acceptable Use Policy

Tina Carstens explained the changes to the Metro-INET policies and that more information will be provided to Board Members in regards to new rules involving emails.

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Gernes seconded to accept the 2024 Metro-INET acceptable use policy. Motion carried unanimously

E. 2024 Board Meeting Dates

Tina Carstens gave an overview of the proposed changed dates.

Motion: Manager Gernes moved, Manager Karp seconded, to approve the above Board meeting scheduled with the proposed changes to the July 2024, December 2024 and January 2025 dates. Motion carried unanimously.

F. Stormwater Impact Fund Budget Transfer – Resolution 23-05

Tina Carsten explained what the resolution entails and why it is needed.

President Eisele asked if there is a plan to support water quality and inundation concerns if the BMP has failed. Tina Carstens stated that the BMP is not being counted for water quality purposed but it still had to meet any flood inundation requirements and the funds would be used to provide water quality elsewhere in the watershed.

Manager Karp asked if the escrow would be held for any other reason. Nicole Maras stated that the permit is closed and there would be no other reason to hold the escrow money.

Manager Gernes questioned if there are any budget implications from this transfer. Tina explained how the storm water impact funds are kept track of and how it relates to the budget.

Motion: Manager Gernes moved, Manager Skinner seconded, to approve resolution 23-05. Motion carried unanimously.

G. 2024 Budget and Levy Final Approval – Resolution 23-06

Tina Carstens provided an overview of the changes made to the proposed levy from the September Board meeting. Tina explained how she was able to lower the proposed levy from a 6.5% increase to a 3.67% increase.

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Gernes seconded, to approve the proposed fiscal year 2024 general fund and CIP budget and adopt resolution 23-06. Motion carried unanimously.

8. ATTORNEY REPORT (1:34:55)

Tracy Galowitz gave an overview of items worked on throughout the month of November. This included the Fitzgerald Excavation bid, West Vadnais and Grass Lake boat ramp agreements. Tracy stated they are continuing on working on the Fish Creek Tributary project and Pioneer Park reuse project.

9. BOARD DISCUSSION TOPICS (1:35:52)

President Eisele and Manager Karp spoke about their experience and what was discussed in the meetings they attended at the Minnesota Watersheds Association annual conference.

10. NEW REPORTS AND/OR PRESENTATIONS (1:42:24)

A. Summary of New Technology Reports and Use of Information

Marcy Bean gave an overview of the history of how the New Technology Reports were created. Marcy provided more information on how new technology is found and what goes into researching these new technologies. Marcy gave more insight into how these reports are used to implement new technology in the District. Marcy explained that the report has been streamlined to make it more useable.

Manager Karp asked if the report is available for public consumption. Tina Carstens explained that it was created for internal use but there may be a way to make it more available to the public. Erin Anderson Wenz mentioned that not all of the technology on the list are recommended, some have been implemented and some are kept for possible later use.

President Eisele stated that having the list more accessible would help highlight the innovative nature of the District.

Manager Gernes stated that it would be helpful to provide links to technology the District has used and how they were implemented for others to see. Tina Carstens stated that there is more work to be done with making the report accessible.

President Eisele stated that he likes having the information provided in a centralized location.

11. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (1:50:37)

A. Meetings Attended

No comments.

B. Upcoming Meetings and Dates

Tina Carstens reviewed the upcoming meetings and dates.

C. Board Action Log and Updates

No comments.

D. Staff Presentations at BWSR Academy and Minnesota Watershed Conference

No Comments.

E. Minnesota Watersheds Updates

No comments.

12. PROJECT AND PROGRAM STATUS REPORTS (1:52:00)

Project Feasibility Studies

A. Interim Emergency Response Planning

President Eisele asked when a formal update would be provided. Tina Carstens stated that a larger meeting is being planned with the cities involved and that information would be brought to the Board after that meeting takes place.

B. Kohlman Creek Flood Risk Feasibility Study

C. Improvements to Phalen Village

D. Ames Lake Area Flood Risk Reduction Planning Study

E. Resiliency Study for Non-Beltline Tributary Areas

President Eisele wanted to know more information to better understand the resiliency study. Erin Anderson Wenz provided more details on what is measured in the resiliency study and how the data is looked at to help plan for future projects.

F. Owasso Basin/North Start Estates Improvements

President Eisele asked if the Board can assist in any way. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that she shared this sentiment with others involved to see if there is anything more that can be done to help move the improvements forward.

G. Street Sweeping

H. Retrofit Inventory

Manager Gernes asked if the retrofit inventory incorporated evaluations of existing ponds and other BMPs for maintenance needs and rehabilitation. Paige Ahlborg stated that it would not. Tina Carstens explained there are other programs that would look at those areas such as the pond prioritization study and CIP maintenance program. Manger Gernes asked if the pond inventory is a standing database that gets revisited with any frequency. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that the study is relatively recent. Erin provided an overview of what was looked at and how critical locations were determined to create prioritized lists that were provided to cities for their use in determining clean outs. Tina Carstens stated that revisiting the list with the cities could be something that is done.

Research Projects

I. Kohlman Lake Aquatic Plants and Nutrients Study

J. Shallow Lake Aeration Study

Capital Improvements

K. Woodbury Target Store Stormwater Retrofit Projects

L. Targeted Retrofit Projects 2023

M. Roosevelt Homes

N. Stewardship Grant Program

O. Arbogast Stormwater Filtration BMP

President Eisele asked when more information will be given on the incorrect concrete testing. Erin Anderson Wenz explained the testing that was completed and what specifications they were testing for. Erin went on to explain things that were missed in the testing and what this means for the design of the project as well as the longevity. President Eisele asked to discuss it further at a future meeting. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that more information can be brought to the January meeting. Tracey Galowitz stated that more information will be needed from the contractor. Dave Vlasin provided more information on the core samples and a letter of confidence that the contractor is working on. President Eisele stated that an update in an upcoming status report would be nice to have. Tina Carstens confirmed that more information can be provided in an upcoming status report.

- P. Pioneer Park Stormwater Reuse
- Q. Fish Creek Tributary Improvements
- R. Cottage Place Wetland Regeneration
- S. County Road C Culvert Project
CIP Project Repair and Maintenance
- T. Routine CIP Inspections and Unplanned Maintenance Identification
- U. Beltline Mississippi Branch Outfall Replacement Project

President Eisele asked for more information and if other funding sources can be looked into. Tina Carstens stated that she is not aware of anything available but can look to see if there are more options. Erin Anderson Wenz brought up the potential PFA low interest loans that could be provided. Tina Carstens confirmed that PFA does offer low interest loans. President Gernes asked if Met Council had anything available. Tina Carstens confirmed that they did not offer funds for these types of projects.

- V. 2024 CIP Maintenance and repairs Project
Program Updates
- W. Natural Resources Program
- X. Public Involvement and Education Program
- Y. Communications and Outreach Program
- Z. Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) Update

13. MANAGER COMMENTS AND NEXT MONTH'S MEETING (2:12:30)

No additional comments.

14. ADJOURN

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Gernes seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.