



**Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District
Minutes of Regular Board Meeting
May 1, 2024**

The Regular Meeting of May 1, 2024, 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/T5Yqn7uR5RU>. Video time stamps included after each agenda item in minutes.

PRESENT:

Val Eisele, President
Ben Karp, Vice President
Mark Gernes, Secretary
Matt Kramer, Treasurer
Stephanie Wang, Manager

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT:

Tina Carstens, District Administrator	Paige Ahlborg, Project Manager
Nicole Maras, Permit Coordinator	Kyle Kubitz, Water Monitoring Technician
Laurann Kirschner, Attorney for District	Erin Anderson Wenz, Barr Engineering
Paul Erdmann, Natural Resources Program Manager	Brett Hussong, City of St. Paul
Pat Williamson, Natural Resources Specialist	Adriana Atcheson, Washington County
Joe Tillotson, Natural Resources Technician	Gabby Menomin, Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi
Dan Scollan, MnDNR	Dave Vlasin, Watershed Project Coordinator
Matt Hussong, Visitor	

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (1:51)

Motion: Manager Kramer moved, Manager Karp seconded, to approve the agenda.

Motion carried unanimously.

3. CONSENT AGENDA (2:22)

- A. Approval of Minutes from April 3, 2024
- B. Treasurer's Report and Bill List
- C. Permit Program
 - i. 24-18 The Heights – Habitat for Humanity Blocks 3 & 4
 - ii. 24-19 Companion Animal Control, Oakdale
 - iii. 24-20 Little Canada 2024 SIP – Country Drive, Little Canada
 - iv. 24-21 Roers Apartments, Maplewood
 - v. 24-22 Maplewood 2024 SIP – East Shore Drive, Maplewood
 - vi. 24-23 Oakdale Public Works Facility, Oakdale
 - vii. 24-24 Keller Lake Shoreline Restoration, Maplewood
- D. Stewardship Grant Program
 - i. 24-26 CS Denkinger

ii. 24-27 CS Huberty

E. CIP Maintenance and Repair 2024 - Change Order No. 1

F. Woodbury Target Store Targeted Retrofit Project – Change Order No. 1

Manager Gernes questioned if there would be issues or concerns with timing between permit 24-05 3M Granada Soil Remediation and permit 24-23 Oakdale Public Works Facility.

Nicole Maras explained that the current order is how the work will need to be completed. Nicole explained that the wetland and wetland buffer would be restored as the project moves outward and the final grades made to the site would be where Oakdale starts their project.

Motion: Manager Gernes moved, Manager Kramer seconded to approve the consent agenda as amended.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. VISITOR COMMENTS (4:12)

No comments.

5. PERMIT PROGRAM (4:20)

A. Applications – See consent agenda

B. Monthly Enforcement Report

During the month of April, 13 notices were sent to address: general permit requirements (SWPP, inspection logs) (1), install/maintain perimeter control (2), install/maintain construction entrance (1), stabilize exposed soils (1), contain/dispose of liquid or solid waste (2), install/maintain inlet protection (3), maintain/protect permanent BMPs (1), protect wetlands (1), sweep streets (1).

Nicole Maras provided a review of the monthly enforcement report and provided updates on the permit program. Nicole highlighted the start of this season's intern that will be assisting with BMP inspections for closed permits as well as active construction site inspections.

President Eisele asked for more information on a trench mentioned in the enforcement report under permit #22-33, Ramsey County White Bear Avenue – Larpenteur Avenue improvements.

Manager Gernes questioned if the trench was connected to the storm sewer and wondered if there was a way to plug the connection if the trench is removed.

Nicole Maras stated that she was unsure but additional follow up could be done.

Nicole Maras explained how the trench was found at the White Bear Ave. and Larpenteur intersection during an erosion control walk through. Nicole stated that there will have to be sediment and erosion control measures taken until the structure is removed for the project.

President Eisele questioned if the iron filtration discussed in the report, permit #21-33 Owasso Warehouse (Little Canada), passed the one-hour testing.

Nicole Maras stated that it is a 48 hour draw down, which would be required to close the permit and to verify that it is functioning as designed. Nicole explained the if water is able to sit it reduces the ability of the iron to remove phosphorus. Nicole provided details on how inspections are completed for filtration basins.

6. STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROGRAM (10:44)

A. Applications – See consent agenda

B. Budget Status Update

Paige Ahlborg provided an update on the budget status and stewardship grant program.

Manager Wang asked how people find out about the stewardship grants.

Paige Ahlborg explained that Lauren Hazenson has been doing great outreach work including an article in the Little Canada bulletin as well as the Shoreview bulletin and information will also be included in more upcoming bulletins.

President Eisele asked for more information on the recently approved public art.

Paige Ahlborg explained that the approved art included a piece at Ames Lake as well as a small amount approved for Shoreview's Yard in Bloom signs.

7. **ACTION ITEMS (13:30)**

A. Cottage Place Wetland Restoration Approval of Plans and Authorize for Bid

Paige Ahlborg provided history and updates on the Cottage Place wetland restoration project. Paige explained some of the changes made after public comments included the removal of trails from the plans. Paige detailed the benefits of this project such as debris and buckthorn removal as well as drainage and overall habitat improvements.

Erin Anderson Wenz explained that when debris is found the possibility of contamination is looked into. Erin explained that contingency plans will be put into place in case anything were found during construction and protocols will be followed if that were to happen. Erin noted that the removal of trees may be of concern and explained that it is important to remove the trees so debris can be removed and plant communities can be restored. Erin stated that there will still be a considerable number of trees left and a lot of plantings will be put into the site.

Manager Wang asked what the expected maintenance cost would since the wetland has been overgrown for quite a few years.

Paige Ahlborg explained that the maintenance is something the District would take on as part of the contract or under the maintenance agreement. Paige explained that the contractor could take on the first 3 years of maintenance until it is established.

Erin Anderson Wenz stated that more information would be gathered on the maintenance of the site.

Manager Wang asked for more information on the push back from the residents.

Paige Ahlborg reiterated that most of the push back came from the trail being close to resident's property lines. Paige stated that there was initial concern over the tree removal. Paige explained that tree removal information was provided and expected the concerns to come up since it will be a drastic change.

Erin Anderson Wenz confirmed that the trail was a large point of concern for the residents and explained that once the tree removal was explained it became less concerning.

Manager Wang questioned if there would be any future opportunity for the trail or other passive recreation and educational opportunities for the community.

Erin Anderson Wenz explained that St. Odilia's or the city could install one later if they so wished.

Manager Gernes asked for more information on the project's budget and wondered if money would be coming from a different budget for the next phases. Manager Gernes questioned if debris removal and repair would be coming from that same budget as the wetland restoration.

Tina Carstens explained that the total budget for the project was \$700,000 with \$500,000 being carried over and \$200,000 was levied. Tina explained that all of the aspects of the project are included in the budgeting.

Manager Gernes asked for more information on the hydrology of the location.

Erin Anderson Wenz explained that the inflows would be the same after the project with the difference being the inclusion of culverts and grading to spread the flows out. Erin explained that the outlet would not be changed with the main reason being to not change the 100 year bounce due to nearby homes. Erin went on to provide more details on the hydrology of the site.

Manager Karp encouraged further work on engagement and outreach to gain public access to public lands. Manager Karp noted that he has seen public lands stay cleaner when the public has access.

Motion: Manager Gernes moved, Manager Karp seconded to approve 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. Budget Transfer Request (CIP Contingency Fund to Debt Service Fund)

Tina Carstens provided details on the budget transfer request.

Motion: Manager Kramer moved, Manager Wang seconded to approve resolution 24-01.

Motion carried unanimously

8. ATTORNEY REPORT (45:31)

Laurann Kirchner gave an overview of the tasks being worked on including continuing to get appraisals for the Fish Creek project, noting that it has been difficult.

Manager Gernes asked what was unique about the Fish Creek project that is causing difficulties in getting an appraisal.

Laurann stated that there are a limited number of appraisers that work with easement specific appraisals and explained that the scope of the appraisal is more complicated than a typical appraisal.

9. BOARD DISCUSSION TOPICS (43:34)

Manager Karp provided details on the topics discussed at the April CAC meeting. Manager Karp noted that the CAC would be moving forward with Low Salt No Salt and Adopt-A-Drain topics for the CAC booth at WaterFest.

President Eisele stated that it would be interesting to add education on care of shorelines at a later time.

Manager Gernes stated that he would like to have more discussion on District communications and outreach in the future.

10. NEW REPORTS AND/OR PRESENTATIONS

A. Phalen Creek Daylighting Project Update and Request to RWMWD - Gabby Menomin (49:49)

Tina Carstens provided an introduction for Gabby Menomin and provided details on what Gabby would be discussing.

Gabby Menomin started the presentation by providing historical information on the route of Phalen Creek and explained its importance to the Dakota people. Gabby explained that around 100 years ago the creek was put into a pipeline to

make way for development. Gabby provided history on how Wakan Tipi Awayankapi came to be, noting that it started out as the neighborhood group, Lower Phalen Creek Project, in 1997 to support and provide education on bringing the creek back to the surface. Gabby stated that the goals of daylighting the creek are to reconnect with water and nature, reconnect the Phalen chain of lakes to the Mississippi as well as bringing back natural eco systems and plant medicines and foods that have been lost from the landscape that were historically along the creek path. Gabby provided a timeline of community engagement that has been taking place over the last 20 years. Gabby explained the funding that has been received for phase one of the project, noting that this would be a decade long project to connect back to the Mississippi.

Gabby went on to explain the current conditions of the project location, noting that it is currently open lawn space. Gabby provided information on the culvert designs and weir structure of Lake Phalen, noting that the weir would control the flow into the creek. Gabby continued to explain that there would be a proposal to tie into the District's Beltline stormsewer. Gabby stated that they are anticipating 60% design to be completed in July 2024 with a public engagement event at the end of July and 90% design completed in the fall with 100% design to be completed by early 2025 with bidding to follow with construction starting in spring 2025. Gabby explained that a renaming of the creek would be included and provided a timeline and next steps for the renaming process. Gabby continued on to explain details of the feasibility study memo. Gabby reviewed the design criteria that were considered during the design process including headwater elevation, water source, target creek flow rate between 0-6 CFS. Gabby reviewed the alternatives analysis including tying into the stormwater Beltline stormsewer.

Tina Carstens explained that the alternatives analysis was completed because another outlet to Lake Phalen is proposed for the water source. Tina stated that the DNR required an alternative analysis through the permitting process to look at how the water would be drawn from the lake. Tina explained there was a question of if this could be tied into existing structures with opportunities to pull from there. Tina noted that the option Wakan Tipi Awayankapi found the most viable for the project is to put in a new outlet.

President Eisele asked if this was a project that had been provided a grant from RWMWD in the past.

Paige Ahlborg explained that a grant of \$10,000 had been provided for initial planning work.

President Eisele questioned if this will come through permitting.

Tina Carstens provided details on the role the District would play in this project including permitting, requests to look at operations and maintenance of structures and through the process of connecting to the Beltline stormsewer.

Tina Carstens asked for more details on the ownership of the land.

Gabby Menomin explained that St. Paul Parks and Recreation owns the land at the proposed outlet location. Gabby asked the board to consider having the District take on maintenance of the proposed outlet.

President Eisele asked if the District has partnered with cities in the past when they ask for assistance with maintenance.

Tina Carstens explained that the District maintains and operates outlets because they were installed by the District. Tina explained that the current outlets at Lake Phalen are operated and maintained by the District. Tina stated that the operation and maintenance include checking trash racks and checking the outlet for clogging or debris as well as having controls on the lake and making sure those controls are operating.

Manager Gernes questioned if the proposed outlet would have any controls.

Tina Carstens stated the outlet would likely need to include manual controls due to the nature of the flood risk in this area but that there would not be any automatic controls.

Erin Anderson Wenz included that the creek tying into the Beltline stormsewer would be a topic of discussion.

President Eisele question if the proposed tie in would be under District maintenance.

Tina Carstens explained that maintenance would have to come in as another request and it would be talked through at that time. Tina Carstens noted that the tie into the Beltline stormsewer is the bigger concern with this project.

President Eisele asked how many tap ins to the Beltline stormsewer have been approved in the past.

Tina Carstens explained that there are historical city storm sewer systems that connect into the Beltline stormsewer. Tina state that there has not been a private applicant through the permitting program approved to tie into the Beltline stormsewer. Tina explained that Rule G of the District rules addresses connections to the Beltline stormsewer, which would be looked into.

Manager Karp noted that connections would have a potential to back up in a severe event and he believed this would not be the best solution. Manager Karp questioned if this is envisioned as a temporary connection that later gets closed as the project moves further downstream.

Tina Carstens asked for more information on the future timeline.

Gabby Menomin stated that she could not speak to the exact timeline noting that it would depend on funding and how quickly design could be completed. Gabby noted that the engineers they are working with gave a timeline of 5 to 15 years before construction could be started further downstream.

President Eisele questioned what phase two would look like and asked how the water would be managed back into a channel or creek and into the Mississippi.

Gabby Menomin explained that reaches 5 and 6 have 10% of the design completed and stated they are anticipating that certain sections of the creek will need to be piped due to current infrastructure in the area. Gabby explained that designs for the next phase have not been started yet.

Tina Carstens started that part of reach 6 is within the RWMWD and the rest is within Capitol Region Watershed District. Tina noted that once it gets to reach 6 there would need to be changes made to the Beltline stormsewer in order to get the creek to flow over the Beltline stormsewer, so there would need to be future discussions. Tina stated that is has been asked that InterFluve address how that would work so that there are assurances about the future as well.

Tina Carstens asked the board if there were any concerns or red flags that would prevent moving forward with the outlet plan and if they were comfortable with staff continuing those discussions.

President Eisele questioned Capitol Region Watershed District's involvement on this project.

Gabby Menomin explained that Capitol Region Watershed District has been supportive of the project. Gabby provided details of what they have been working on with CRWD.

Manager Karp stated that he believed this is a great project and showed support but wanted to learn more about long term maintenance costs.

President Eisele stated that he is supportive of the project but also sees red flags with tapping into the Beltline stormsewer and explained that he would like to see more detail.

Brett Hussong stated that the City of St. Paul is supportive of the project and the plan has been accepted by the city. Brett explained that partners will have to work together to implement the project and reiterated that the city is supportive. Brett noted that Met Council is also requiring an amendment to the city's parking planning documents.

Manger Gernes stated that he sees great potential for this project but noted there are more details that need to be worked on.

Manager Wang expressed her support for the project. Manger Wang noted more information on tying into the Beltline stormsewer would need to be provided.

Manager Kramer stated that he thought this was a great project. Manager Kramer expressed concerns with the Beltline stormsewer tie in and asked that more analysis be completed. Manager Kramer stated that if it is found that the Beltline stormsewer tie in cannot happen, that should be said as quickly as possible so alternatives can be found.

Tina Carstens explained that the District has been involved in reviewing each phase of the design noting that comments have been provided while reviewing changes that are made to the plans. Tina agreed that the Beltline stormsewer questions would need to be answered.

President Eisele questioned if redirection of the Beltline stormsewer would be needed.

Tina Carstens explained that the creek would flow over the Beltline stormsewer and in order to get enough clearance for the creek to pass over the Beltline stormsewer the Beltline stormsewer would need to change shape which would include digging out and replacing sections. Tina noted that this would happen in reach 6.

President Eisele agreed that having more information on future phases of the project would be important. President Eisele also stated that a tie in to the Beltline stormsewer could be expensive.

Manager Karp questioned if a permanent tie into the Beltline stormsewer had been looked at.

Tina Carstens stated that for permitting purposes it would have to be considered a permanent connection.

President Eisele requested to have this project added to the program status report.

B. RWMWD Shorelands – Past, Present, and Future – Paul Erdmann (1:28:49)

Paul Erdmann provided an introduction to the presentation including an overview of what will be discussed. Paul started by discussing Minnesota's Vanishing Natural Shorelines: A Loss that Contributes to Degraded Lake Quality, a paper created by the Natural Shoreline Partnership, which includes the DNR, BWSR, watershed districts, conservations districts, and non-profits. Paul discussed that it found that Minnesota's natural shorelines are decreasing. Paul provided details on how reduced number of natural shorelines affects lake water quality. Paul provided information on recommendations given in the report that included education and enhanced funding to support shoreland protection. Paul went on to provide history on the District's work with native plantings and shoreline restoration and explained what is currently being done to promote shoreline restorations on public and private lands. Paul provided details on the Lake Phalen shoreland restoration project, stating that it has been one of the most successful restorations to date. Paul noted that maintenance is a large part of keeping it successful. Paul continued on to provide information on research and publication projects that were worked on by the District and explained how those helped to prioritize projects and help fund restorations on private land.

Pat Williamson provided an overview of the stewardship grant program and how it is utilized to motivate landowners to install natural shorelines while also providing education. Pat explained the grant amounts have increased and the program has expanded. Pat highlighted how that it is not just funding the land owners are receiving they also receive help with planning and site consultations as well as guidance after a project is completed. Pat explained that over the 16

years of the program 90 projects have been completed with \$170,000 being awarded for shoreland restoration in 2023 alone. Pat provided information on the maintenance grant that is available to those who were awarded a stewardship grant. Pat explained that depending on the land type the maintenance required is 5 years or 20 years. Pat provided details on the funding available through the maintenance grant and also the support given by the District. Pat continued to explain the importance of maintenance after a restoration.

Paul Erdmann concluded the presentation by talking about the importance of continuing to grow partnerships, continue looking for publicly owned lands where restorations can happen, collaborating with the stewardship grant program and community outreach to continue completing successful private land restorations and achieving healthy ecosystems.

President Eisele requested to see the amount of shoreland that has been restored and how much more there is to go.

Tina Carstens stated that staff will look at a plan for completing that assessment and bring it back to the board.

Manager Gernes stated that it would be great to assess the shoreland to help be in a better position when doing outreach.

Tina Carstens stated that a priority lake could be chosen and then an assessment could be completed of that lake to best plan on how to complete restorations. Tina appreciated the feedback and stated that a plan could be worked on.

Manager Wang questioned what kind of outreach can be done to help landowners understand the importance of shoreline restorations.

Paul Erdmann agreed that communicating the importance is an integral part of being able to complete shoreline restorations. Paul highlighted some programs and outreach that have been done to help land owners gain interest in shoreline restorations.

C. Maplewood Mall Assessment 2024 Scope Summary

Manager Gernes questioned what the intended outcome for this project is.

Erin Anderson Wenz explained that this was a significant project for the District and detailed what has been evaluated so far. Erin explained that there is work that needs to be done and thorough assessment is needed to find what repairs would be appropriate and also to report to those in the greater community who have been watching the project over the years.

11. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (2:09:14)

A. Meetings Attended

No comments.

B. Upcoming Meetings and Dates

Tina Carstens reviewed the upcoming meetings and dates.

C. Staff Anniversaries

No comments.

D. Board Action Log

No comments.

E. Minnesota Watersheds Updates

No comments.

F. West Vadnais Lake Discussion

Tina Carstens provided an overview of the history and current standing of the West Vadnais Lake boundary change and proposed holding off on a boundary change at this point.

President Eisele provided more history on the interactions with Vadnais Lake Area Watershed Management Organization and provided insights into prior board discussions on the boundary change. President Eisele encouraged a purposeful approach to planning. President Eisele expressed support for Tina Carsten’s recommendations with the understanding that our new watershed management plan will clearly identify West Vadnais Lake and its importance in the District flow path as well as the roles and responsibilities between the District and the Vadnais Lake Area Watershed Management Organization. The rest of the board concurred.

12. PROJECT AND PROGRAM STATUS REPORTS (2:25:39)

Project Feasibility Studies

- A. Kohlman Creek Flood Risk Feasibility Study
- B. Ames Lake Area Flood Risk Reduction Planning Study
- C. Phalen Village Flood Risk Reduction
- D. Resiliency Study for Non-Beltline Tributary Areas
- E. Owasso Basin/North Start Estates Improvements
- F. Street Sweeping
- G. Watershed Approach to Retrofit Projects (WARP)

Lake Studies/Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Reports

- H. 2024 Grant Applications

Capital Improvements

- I. Woodbury Target Store Stormwater Retrofit Project
- J. Roosevelt Homes
- K. Targeted Retrofit Projects 2024
- L. Stewardship Grant Program
- M. Pioneer Park Stormwater Reuse
- N. Fish Creek Tributary Improvements
- O. Cottage Place Wetland Restoration
- P. County Road C Culvert Project
- Q. Kohlman Creek Flood Risk Reduction Projects: Final Design

CIP Project Repair and Maintenance

- R. Routine CIP Inspection and Unplanned Maintenance Identification
- S. 2024 CIP Maintenance and Repairs Project
- T. Beltline Mississippi Branch Outfall Replacement Project

Program Updates

- U. Natural Resources Program
- V. Public Involvement and Education Program
- W. Communications and Outreach Program
- X. Citizen Advisory Committee Program

13. MANAGER COMMENTS AND NEXT MONTH’S MEETING (2:28:40)

No comments.

14. ADJOURN

Motion: Manager Karp moved, Manager Gernes seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.