



**Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District  
Minutes of Regular Board Meeting  
July 7, 2021**

The Regular Meeting of July 7, 2021, was held via Zoom web conferencing. A video recording of the meeting can be found at <https://youtu.be/eCJBbBrqSM>. Video time stamps included after each agenda item in minutes.

**PRESENT:**

Larry Swope, President  
Cliff Aichinger, Vice President  
Dianne Ward, Treasurer  
Dr. Pam Skinner, Secretary  
Val Eisele, Manager

**ABSENT:**

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Tina Carstens, District Administrator  
Laurann Kirschner, Attorney for District  
Nicole Soderholm, Permit Inspector  
Dave Vlasin, Project Coordinator

Paige Ahlborg, Project Manager  
Erin Anderson Wenz, Barr Engineering  
Bill Bartodziej, Natural Resource Specialist

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion: Manager Eisele moved, Manager Aichinger seconded, to approve the agenda as presented.

A roll call vote was performed:

Manager Aichinger	aye
Manager Ward	aye
Manager Skinner	aye
Manager Eisele	aye
President Swope	aye

Motion carried unanimously.

**3. CONSENT AGENDA**

A. Approval of Minutes from June 2, 2021

B. Treasurer's Report and Bill List

C. Permit Program

i. 21-19 - KMSP Tower Guy Anchor, Shoreview

D. Stewardship Grant Program

i. 20-35 CS – Union Cemetery, budget adjustment request

ii. 21-21 CS – Castellanos, rain garden and native habitat restoration

iii. 21-22 CS – Wang, rain garden

iv. 21-23 CS – 2021 Lake Phalen Aquatic Vegetation Harvesting

- E. CIP Maintenance and Repair 2021 – Change Order No. 3
- F. East St. Paul Target Store Retrofit – Change Order No. 3

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

Further discussion: President Swope referenced the KMSP tower project and stated that he likes that the applicant indicated that they would follow up with the District to further improve the area in the future.

Manager Skinner complimented staff referencing the collaboration with the City of Saint Paul on a project and other entities in order to achieve the goals of the District.

A roll call vote was performed:

Manager Aichinger	aye
Manager Ward	aye
Manager Skinner	aye
Manager Eisele	aye
President Swope	aye

Motion carried unanimously.

**4. VISITOR COMMENTS**

There were none.

**5. PERMIT PROGRAM (4:18)**

A. Applications – See Consent Agenda

B. Monthly Enforcement Report

During June, 13 notices were sent to address: install/maintain inlet protection (2), install/maintain perimeter control (3), install/maintain construction entrance (2), sweep streets (1), stabilize exposed soils (4), and contain liquid/solid waste (1).

Nicole Soderholm stated that because of the pilot program with single lot residential, staff was able to review, approve and close one residential permit since the last Board meeting. She noted that she will be bringing a review of the program to the Board at a future meeting.

**6. STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROGRAM (5:44)**

A. Applications – See Consent Agenda

B. Budget Status Update

No comments.

**7. PRESENTATIONS AND/OR ACTION ITEMS (6:10)**

A. 2022 Budget Planning Memo and Discussion

Tina Carstens stated that this is the typical format of the budget memorandum presented in July looking at the larger budget categories. She noted that the intent is to have a general discussion noting that a lot of work occurs between June and August.

Manager Eisele asked if there would be more details on the prioritizing of the projects.

Tina Carstens stated that staff is still inputting projects into the prioritization tool in order to formalize the priority for those water quality project.

Paige Ahlborg commented that the prioritization tool helps to organize the project opportunities. She noted that some projects would be easier to accomplish because of willing landowners or city owned land.

Erin Anderson Wenz stated that staff created the prioritization tool to evaluate the long list of projects and use a number of different factors in order to provide a ranking. She stated that recently Barr reviewed the top ten or fifteen projects to categorize those and put them into the budgeting memorandum. She stated that the prioritization tool was developed prior to Manager Eisele and offered to send him additional background information.

Manager Ward commented that the Board reviewed the first draft of the tool and provided feedback but does not recall seeing it since. She asked if information could be provided to the Board in an update.

President Swope stated that he would find it helpful to see the information within the tool and whether there are key issues that are questionable or relate to ranking.

Erin Anderson Wenz confirmed that she could include that in the packet for the next Board meeting.

Tina Carstens commented that the District has different funds available for different purposes and even though something is identified within the budget, opportunities may change throughout the year.

President Swope asked if there is a goal for reserves.

Tina Carstens replied that the policy is written to have at least 50 percent of the general fund within the reserves, noting that currently the District has about 100 percent of the general fund within reserves.

Manager Skinner stated that she would like more consideration towards groundwater and perhaps a line item be included within education to start to build a website link with information related to groundwater.

Tina Carstens noted that she can highlight a few places that might not be obvious, but funds are included towards groundwater efforts. She confirmed that staff would look to include that in education as well. She confirmed that staff does take advantage of resources already available rather than attempting to duplicate efforts. She provided details on County groundwater plans, noting that Washington County has a plan and Ramsey County is in the process of completing a plan. She confirmed that public art funds have been identified within the Stewardship Grant Program. She commented that the communications program is being increased and staff will provide a more specific outline for the August meeting.

President Swope referenced the concept for a public works forum, asking if funds have been allocated for that purpose and if he could attend.

Tina Carstens stated that the public works forums are regular meetings. She stated that funds are not specifically allocated as it is mostly staff time to support the meetings.

President Swope asked if additional funds should be allocated for maintenance projects that arise from those meetings.

Tina Carstens stated that staff could have more discussions at the public works forum but believes that the municipalities need to hold some responsibility for their systems, which is why they offer to partner on certain opportunities.

Manager Aichinger stated that if the District jumps in and helps a city with an issue they let lapse, other cities would expect the same assistance in return. He stated that the cities are aware of their responsibilities for their own system and have their own requirements on their MS4 permit. He did not believe the District should offer to do something unless it is an issue all cities are struggling with.

## **8. BOARD ISSUES, POLICIES, AND OPERATION**

### **A. PFOS/PFAS/PFCs in the Watershed (28:27)**

President Swope commented that this is a confusing topic and asked if the Board feels it has an obligation on this matter.

Manager Skinner stated that she believed the Board agreed to gather information to determine what is known and what groups are currently completing different actions.

Manager Aichinger commented that he agrees that it is an issue, but the trouble is, it is an issue of federal and state concern, and those entities regulate and remediate that program. He did not believe the District would have a role in that process. He stated that perhaps the District could have an education/information type role. He stated that those chemicals are not heavily regulated or prohibited and therefore did not believe new issues would arise.

Manager Skinner stated that she would still like to gather the information and determine if there are gaps and if there would be a role for the District.

Tina Carstens confirmed that she could share the information staff has gathered with the Board.

President Swope asked if MAWD has discussed this topic.

Tina Carstens replied that MAWD has not as the process is regulated by the state and federal agencies.

President Swope stated that while he agrees there is an issue that exists, he also does not see a clear role the District would have.

Manager Skinner stated that she would like to see a quick ten-minute presentation on how things are regulated and perhaps an informational spot on the website related to groundwater and PFOS.

Tina Carstens confirmed that staff could follow that direction.

### **B. Using Alum for Water Quality (37:38)**

President Swope stated that alum is an effective way to manage phosphorus but there are some risks and asked the Board for input.

Manager Skinner commented that the alum treatment facility was meant to be experimental, and it would be helpful for the Board to recognize the volume of alum that is being added to the system. She stated that the alum treatment facility has been incredibly effective in reducing the phosphorus in Tanners Lake and perhaps it is no longer needed. She commented that there are toxic effects associated with alum and believed there are alternative methods that could be used. She stated that she will not support the use of alum because of the toxic effect it can have on people.

Manager Ward commented that she was not on the Board when the alum facility was created. She stated that she would support a review of all of the options when alum is proposed along with the reasoning as to why alum would be recommended.

President Swope asked if there would be a review of the alum treatment plant. Tina Carstens stated that each year staff reviews the monitoring data. She stated that they would need to further evaluate how the lake would react if the alum were reduced or stopped.

Erin Anderson Wenz commented that there is very frequent monitoring data collected and there have been periods when the treatment facility has been offline. She stated that she would like to think more about how additional data could be provided as to what that result could be.

Manager Skinner stated that perhaps there is modeling done replacing the treatment plant with a sand filtration system.

Manager Aichinger stated that this was a known technology and not experimental in nature. He stated that there is a lot of data, and the alum plant has been shown to be the best project the District has done to reduce phosphorus at the lowest cost. He stated that even though alum is being put into the system, a large part of that is captured in the pond and is cleaned out. He stated that there has been a measured increase in alum downstream but that goes into the lake which is extremely diluted. He stated that there is alum in a lot of the system that people are exposed to at a higher level than they would be in the lake and therefore the risks would be extremely low in a lake or storm water. He noted that when alum is used for lake treatment, is it often during times the lake is not being used by people and binds to things at the bottom of the lake. He agreed that other options should continue to be reviewed but noted that those options are not always as effective or cost-effective.

Manager Skinner commented that there is science showing the toxicity of alum and she hopes that policy will eventually catch up with science. She stated that while she agrees that alum is effective, she does not believe water science is fully aware of the potential problems with alum.

President Swope stated that he is aware that Manager Skinner will continue to bring this issue up as she is passionate about it and asked for input from the Board as to their opinion and overall policy.

Manager Ward commented that she is not fully educated on this topic, but science has shown that ever smaller parts of these toxins can have an effect. She believed that the District should be alert for additional information and continue to review different alternatives.

Manager Aichinger commented that it might be useful if the Board, as members of national organizations, put the word out that this is a concern and ask them to also respect that it is a concern and perhaps come out with guidance at some point. He stated that the Board has provided direction that alternatives be considered and presented when alum is suggested for a project and also to spread the word to other organizations.

Manager Eisele asked if it would be within the Board's authorization to release physician's papers. He asked if there would be a timepoint when the Board might consider a position on this issue that would be published and what would drive the decision to take that position.

Tina Carstens stated that if the Board were to make a decision for staff to follow a certain order from the Board, a policy document would be the method. He stated that the policy document could state whether there is support to use alum for projects and that alternatives be provided as well.

Manager Eisele stated that he likes that different opportunities are being reviewed. He stated that although this might be the most cost-effective treatment for taxpayer dollars, it is still good to let people know that the Board and District continues to explore alternatives.

Manager Skinner stated that each year an annual presentation is provided on the alum treatment plant. She stated that perhaps a ten-minute presentation be provided to help bring new Managers up to speed and suggested that modeling also be included as mentioned earlier.

Erin Anderson Wenz stated that staff provided a presentation in the past to review the alternative treatment methods and how expensive and effective they may be. She noted that perhaps that could be shared with the new Managers.

Manager Eisele stated that perhaps there could be an internal website where Board members could find some of this information to bring them up to date.

Tina Carstens commented that there is a Board management website that houses documents, and she is getting a quote to update the site to include additional information.

Manager Skinner asked why that information would only be available to the Board as members of the public may be interested as well.

Tina Carstens commented that most of that information would also be on the website under the document library for public consumption, but this would be more of an internal site for staff and the Board. She commented that this concept includes two separate issues, the Tanners Lake Alum Facility and use of alum as a whole.

President Swope stated that he would like the Board to get to a decision on what should be done with alum. He stated that he realizes that there are lakes that need treatment that would perhaps be cost prohibitive without the use of alum. He stated that he would be interested in knowing how much treating an area with alum would change the natural environment.

Manager Aichinger stated that there needs to be some discussion about the fate of alum, noting that both in lake use and the treatment facility use, the ability of the alum to be involved in the water column and/or with people are different.

**9. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (1:04:35)**

A. Meetings Attended

No comments.

B. Upcoming Meetings and Dates

Tina Carstens noted that the MAWD Summer Meeting is occurring on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Manager Aichinger noted that the Metro MAWD meetings are off by a day, meeting on Tuesdays rather than Wednesdays. The Board discussed the MAWD Annual Meeting dates and noted the conflict with the regular Board meeting for December.

Motion: Manager Aichinger moved, Manager Swope seconded, to hold the December Board meeting on December 8, 2021.

A roll call vote was performed:

Manager Aichinger	aye
Manager Ward	aye
Manager Skinner	aye
Manager Eisele	aye
President Swope	aye

Motion carried unanimously.

C. Ongoing Project/Program Updates

No comments.

D. Update: COVID-19 Back to the Office Plans

No comments.

E. Wetlands Board Workshop Outline

President Swope commented that he would like to go light on the education on wetlands and heavy on the regulations to help drive a policy driven discussion.

Manager Eisele referenced the District policy, rules and goals and asked if monitoring tools and how health and wellness of wetlands would be included in that presentation. Tina Carstens confirmed that discussion could lead into that discussion.

President Swope asked for an update on the meeting with the Twin Lake Association. Tina Carstens stated that it was a follow up from the larger meeting and led to discussions with the City of Little Canada. She stated that she is going to provide a contact to the association that could perhaps assist with resources.

Manager Eisele asked if a packet would be sent out prior to the workshop in order to facilitate a better discussion. Tina Carstens confirmed that staff could put together something prior to the meeting.

Manager Eisele stated that in prior meeting the issue of Ramsey County permitting, and the length of time needed for permit approval and asked for an update. Tina Carstens stated that there is a slowdown over the last few summer months and did not see any problems making the necessary progress before it would be needed for the fall CIP.

Manager Ward stated that she likes the proposed workshop agenda and would find it helpful to have the background documents for each discussion item provided prior to the meeting. She noted that would help to ensure that all the Managers are on the same level prior to the meeting and facilitate for better discussion at the workshop.

The Board discussed whether to hold the workshop virtually or in person. Laurann Kirschner provided additional details on what is allowed by statute. President Swope suggested holding the August meeting remotely and holding the workshop as a hybrid format and attempting to hold the September meeting as hybrid. It was determined that there were scheduling conflicts for the workshop and that should be scheduled for September. The Board agreed to attempt a hybrid format for the August Board meeting.

**10. ATTORNEY REPORT (1:27:42)**

Laurann Kirschner asked if the Board has a preference as to how legal counsel attends the meeting. President Swope commented that suggested that legal counsel attends virtually in August as a test. Tina Carstens stated that she will attend in person but would like the ability for the other staff members to attend remotely. Erin Anderson Wenz asked for the Board preference on attendance from Barr Engineering staff.

Manager Aichinger commented that he has been impressed at how well the meetings have been able to be run on Zoom and the Board has been able to have good discussion. He commented that if there were a presentation, he would prefer Barr staff to attend in person, but if just attending as a resource that could be done remotely.

Manager Skinner stated that she uses Zoom every day and it is very simple to setup presentations on Zoom and answer questions and therefore would not be opposed to Barr staff attending remotely, even when there is a

presentation. President Swope suggested that Barr attend remotely in August and September to see how that goes.

Laurann Kirschner stated that at the last meeting she stated that the claimants never followed up on the Target parking lot incident but noted that another claim has been received since that time from a new party.

President Swope asked for an update on the Twin Lake litigation. Laurann Kirschner stated that she does not have an update at this time.

## **11. PROJECT AND PROGRAM STATUS REPORTS (1:35:00)**

### **A. Ongoing Project and Program Updates**

- i. Interim Emergency Response Planning
- ii. Kohlman Creek Flood Risk Reduction Feasibility Study
- iii. Ames Lake Area Flood Risk Reduction Feasibility Study
- iv. Subwatershed Feasibility Studies for At-Risk Creeks
- v. Special Project BMP Monitoring
- vi. Kohlman Permeable Weir Test System
- vii. Shallow Lake Aeration Study
- viii. Phalen Chain of Lakes Changes in Water Quality
- ix. 2021 Tanners Lake Alum Facility Monitoring
- x. Target Store Stormwater Retrofit Projects
- xi. Targeted Retrofit Projects
- xii. Keller Channel Weir and Phalen Outlet Resiliency Modifications

Manager Aichinger referenced Item xii, noting that the two manholes on either side of the outlet are a lot higher than he anticipated and seem intrusive. He asked if thought has been given as to what could be done to lessen the impact. He stated that perhaps a public art project could be done, or plantings could be added to make that look more pleasant. Dave Vlasin stated that his first initial thought was to paint them to neutral colors. He recognized that it would take some time for the native vegetation to reestablish. Bill Bartodziej confirmed that a mix was planted but noted that there has been a drought and some replanting may be required in the fall. He stated that there was a suggestion for an urban art competition, which he agreed could be a good idea. It was noted that there was a fear of graffiti.

President Swope asked if the Keller Wier and Phalen Outlet are in full operation. Dave Vlasin commented that staff is completing the final walk through on Friday and everything should be fully operational by Monday.

- xiii. Ryan Drive and Keller Parkway Conveyance Project
- xiv. Beltline/Battle Creek Tunnel Five-Year Inspection
- xv. CIP Maintenance and Repair Project 2021
- xvi. Natural Resources Program Update
- xvii. Education Program Update
- xviii. Communications Program Update
- xix. CAC Meeting Update
- xx. WaterFest Update

Tina Carstens and the Board recapped the activities from WaterFest.

President Swope referenced the survey work that was being completed, noting that it appeared less than half of the people agreed to do the survey. He asked if the survey showed a trend versus the lidar. Erin Anderson Wenz commented that they used the laser scanner to develop the topographical area and therefore they were still able



to gather the information even if they were not allowed on a property. She stated that they will go site by site in attempt to make informed use of the lidar data and data that was collected nearby.

President Swope commented that staff was out completing plantings along wetland A, which is going well. He stated that he was also interested in the CAC report and likes the tour of Shoreview BMPs planned by the Master Water Steward. He asked if that information would be shared on Nextdoor. Tina Carstens stated that she would assume that would be part of the communications plan, noting that staff is working to secure a District account for Nextdoor. Paige Ahlborg stated that she and the Master Water Steward live in Shoreview and could share the information. Manager Eisele asked for more information on the Master Water Steward program and staff provided background on the program.

Manager Aichinger commented that the Phalen Chain of Lakes water trail flyer was well done.

## **12. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

### **A. Article Shared by Manager Skinner**

No comments.

## **13. MANAGER COMMENTS AND NEXT MONTH'S MEETING (1:53:25)**

Manager Aichinger commented that he will be out of town for the August meeting but will attempt to attend remotely.

Manager Eisele thanked Dave Vlasin for taking him out on the tour and for his patience with all his questions. He stated that he was made much more aware of how dependent the system is on others. He stated that he likes the idea of socializing between the Board and staff and perhaps the Board and CAC/Master Water Stewards.

Tina Carstens noted that they could have a joint meeting between the Board and CAC in a workshop setting to discuss goals and facilitate that social interaction.

Manager Skinner noted that the Board used to hold a summer tour and the CAC could be invited to join the Board. Tina Carstens confirmed that staff could attempt to plan that for next year. She stated that the Watershed Excellence Awards are planned to take place in person in November and would be an opportunity for socializing between the groups. She noted that she has received input from the Board on project locations the Board may want to visit prior to Board meetings which could be discussed at the next meeting.

President Swope stated that at the next meeting there will be an update on the single lot residential permitting pilot program. He stated that perhaps staff can also provide an update on when the discussion on alum and PFOS could occur. He stated that he found it interesting to see the updates that were made to the interactive map on the website.

## **14. ADJOURN**

Motion: Manager Aichinger moved, Manager Skinner seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Pam Skinner, Secretary