



**Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District
Minutes of Regular Board Meeting
August 5, 2020**

The Regular Meeting of August 5, 2020, was held at the District Office Board Room, 2665 Noel Drive, Little Canada, Minnesota, at 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

Marj Ebensteiner, President
Cliff Aichinger, Vice President (arrived at 6:51 p.m.)
Lawrence Swope, Treasurer
Dianne Ward, Secretary
Dr. Pam Skinner, Manager

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT:

Tina Carstens, District Administrator
Tracey Galowitz, Attorney for District
Nicole Soderholm, Permit Inspector
Bill Bartodziej, Natural Resource Specialist
Sam Redinger, Barr Engineering
Erin Anderson Wenz, Barr Engineering

Paige Ahlborg, Project Manager
Brad Lindaman, Barr Engineering
Simba Blood, Natural Resources Specialist
Dave Vlasin, Water Quality Technician
Matt Metzger, Barr Engineering

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Tina Carstens requested to remove Item 3A from the Consent Agenda.

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

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried 4-0. (Manager Aichinger absent)

3. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. ~~Approval of Minutes from July 1, 2020~~
- B. Treasurer's Report and Bill List
- C. Permit Program
 - i. 20-26, Owasso Gardens, Roseville
- D. Stewardship Grant Program
 - i. 20-35 CS, Union Cemetery, Rain Gardens
 - ii. 20-36 CS, Van Heel, Native Habitat Restoration

iii. 20-37 CS, Kohlman Chain LVMP Phase 2, Aquatic VMP

iv. 20-38, Schmidt, Rain Garden

E. CIP Maintenance and Repair Project – Change Order No. 3

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

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried 4-0. (Manager Aichinger absent)

A. Approval of Minutes from July 1, 2020

Tina Carstens noted that the votes show a 4-1 count when they should show a 4-0 count.

A Manager asked why staff and consultants are not being identified. He stated that he understands the issue of not identifying the Managers but believed that the staff and consultants should be identified as it is important for the context. Tina Carstens confirmed that staff names could be included.

Motion: Manager Swope moved, Manager Ward seconded, to change the minute format to identify all speakers with the exception of the Managers.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried 4-0. (Manager Aichinger absent)

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Swope seconded, to approve the minutes from July 1, 2020, as amended.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried 4-0. (Manager Aichinger absent)

4. VISITOR COMMENTS

There were none.

5. PERMIT PROGRAM

A. Applications

Permit #20-27: Pigs Eye Lake Islands – St. Paul

Nicole Soderholm stated that this project is a joint effort between Ramsey County Parks and the Army Corps to create islands. She stated that this will involve fill in the floodplain but explained that given the location there is not an adverse impact to the floodplain and therefore the variance is included to exempt this project from the compensatory storage requirement.

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Ward seconded, to approve Permit #20-27.

Further discussion: A Manager asked if staff ran their own calculations to see if the army model/calculations agreed with the District’s numbers. Nicole Soderholm replied that the Army submitted a model which would be standard for this area of the watershed and Barr Engineering reviewed that to ensure the results were reported accurately. She explained that Barr does not run its own model, but simply checks the results to ensure they are accurate. Brad Lindaman stated that Barr has its own modeling that it can compare against. The Manager asked if there is a need for a variance as there would not be any impact. Nicole Soderholm stated that while there is not impacts on water storage, it is still a variation from the rule and therefore the variance would be needed.

A Manager asked if filling this area of the lake would negatively impact the ecosystem. Nicole Soderholm stated that the applicants had a team of biologists working on the project. She noted that the purpose of the project is to create and improve habitat. Bill Bartodziej commented that this project will create quality habitat and when staff toured the area there was no substantial plant growth. He commented that the upland habitat gained and the emergent plant shelves that will be created will provide benefit. He noted that those elements are fairly nonexistent in the Pigs Eye area. Nicole Soderholm stated that the DNR will also be reviewing the request as this is part of public waters. The Manager asked if this would set a precedent that would allow future floodplain fill projects to be approved. Nicole Soderholm stated that fill here does not cause adverse impacts and therefore the Board has approved similar variances in this area. She noted that the Board has also approved variance requests of this nature when adequate freeboard exists.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried 4-0. (Manager Aichinger absent)

B. Single Lot Residential Permit Adjustments

Nicole Soderholm stated that the requested defined outcomes were included in the Board packet.

Motion: Manager Ward moved, Manager Swope seconded, to approve the adjusted implementation plan, associated conditions, and defined outcomes triggering a District permit for the remainder of year 2020.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried 4-0. (Manager Aichinger absent)

C. Monthly Enforcement Report

During July, 12 notices were sent to address: install/maintain perimeter control (1), install/maintain construction entrance (1), sweep streets (1), contain liquid/solid wastes (1), remove discharged sediment (2), implement proper dewatering (3), install/maintain energy dissipation (1), and maintain temporary sediment basin (2).

6. STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROGRAM

A. Applications – See Consent Agenda

B. Budget Status Update

A Manager commented that they would like to see a line at the bottom showing the pending grants and asked if there is sufficient funding for this program. Tina Carstens noted that this year they will be close to the budgeted amount for the program. She noted that in the past there have been years when additional funds have been allocated to this item. She stated that there is additional funding in the fund balance that was carried over the previous year that could be allocated to this program if additional funds are needed. She stated that typically only smaller residential projects are proposed at this time of the year. Another Manager agreed that this is an odd year where people are at home with time on their hands and agreed that they would not want to see projects denied. Tina Carstens commented that staff will take that direction and if there is a situation where funds from the budget are depleted, staff will bring that forward to the Board.

Manager Aichinger arrived.

7. PRESENTATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

A. Keller Chain Weir and Phalen Outlet Resiliency Modifications

Brad Lindaman noted that these modifications came out of the Beltline Resiliency Study and explained that these modifications would allow additional resiliency in the system. Through development of an operating plan, gates could be opened in each of these structures to allow more water out as it is passing through. He explained that it would attempt to match the storm flows to pass the water more quickly. He provided details on how the gate and outlet structures could be modified. He stated that the plans are at about 90 percent completion and a good cost estimate has been developed, noting that staff is asking the Board to approve the preliminary design and estimated costs and project schedule and direct staff to finalize the design and bidding documents and solicit bid proposals. He reviewed the cost estimates.

Motion: Manager Aichinger moved, Manager Ward 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.

Further discussion: A Manager asked for more details on how the outlet and channel structure would operate. Brad Lindaman explained that they are vertical gates and provided details on how those would operate.

A Manager asked if the gates could be manually closed. Brad Lindaman confirmed that there is a manual operation plan that would act as the backup.

A Manager stated that the comment was made that a drawdown would not be done in advance of a storm and asked if there would be additional discussion on that. Brad Lindaman noted that the operations plan would be discussed further in the future. He reviewed the timeline on which the operations plan would be developed. He stated that the purpose is not to drawdown Phalen, but to allow the stormwater events to pass through more quickly.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried unanimously. (5-0)

B. Flood Risk Reduction and Conveyance Feasibility Studies

Brad Lindaman displayed the Storymap and identified the different feasibility study areas that were identified in the Beltline Resiliency Study.

Matt Metzger provided background information on similar flood risk reduction project experience and the different levels of detail between the Beltline Resiliency Study and the resulting feasibility studies.

Sam Redinger presented details on the scope of the Owasso Basin Feasibility Study, noting that it was divided into four different subprojects. He displayed a table that identifies the individual attributes of each subproject if it was constructed on its own. He reviewed the details of subproject 1A including features, benefits, risks, and cost estimates. The benefits and costs of subproject alternatives were presented in comparison to the property value of 103 flood-impacted properties.

Managers asked how feasible this type of project would be. Brad Lindaman noted that these are large scope, high level projects that would minimize flood risk but would also come with large price tags and would be longer term projects, not something that could be planned for the next year. Implementation of options that reduce flood risk to reduce flood risk at the most properties would require a number of years and funding cycles to accomplish, at a cost of roughly \$25 million or more. Sam Redinger stated that the magnitude of the projects presented tonight are above the level the District could fund on its own and would likely require a funding partner. He provided details on the process the District would follow in attempting to obtain a funding partner, such as the DNR.

Sam Redinger presented details on subproject 1B including features, benefits, risks, and cost estimates. He confirmed that the Gervais Creek improvements are included in all of the large subprojects and provided details on the scope of the creek improvements which would help convey flow through the system as efficiently as possible. He reviewed similar details for the subprojects 2A and 2B.

A Manager commented that it will also be important to review how these projects could impact habitat and ecosystem.

Sam Redinger reviewed a table to summarize the benefits, risks, permitting requirements, implementation timeline, and costs for the different subprojects. He noted that the table also includes alternatives such as land acquisition and a lift station for comparison to project costs of other flood risk reduction alternatives. The buyout/acquisition of impacted properties is a sensitive matter affecting homeowners and businesses in the District. These costs are shown for comparing benefits and costs of flood risk reduction alternatives

Tina Carstens noted that one of the next steps would be for staff to have a similar presentation with Little Canada and to also have discussions with the owners of the manufactured home park.

Matt Metzger stated that the intent was to provide the District with this information so that the District can determine its role. He stated that if the District decides that it would like to be active in this, the recommendation from Barr would be to move into detailed design, pursuing an optimized approach combining a bypass pipe down I-35 and looking at the best opportunities to enhance flood storage and berming around Owasso Basin while looking at potential buy-outs for the most at-risk properties. Detailed design would be aimed at building project definition for an optimal combination of features that maximize benefit to at-risk properties for the cost, and to define options for phasing the work into smaller projects to reduce implementation hurdles. He stated that they would also recommend that the initial feasibility information be brought to potential funding partners, beginning with the DNR and possibly federal agencies to determine their priorities. He noted that the scope could then be designed to include those priority project elements. He stated that they would also want to engage Little Canada and North Star Estates to understand the planning constraints and landowner constraints of any property that could be transferred in ownership or placed under easement.

A Manager commented that it would be helpful to have the low hanging fruit for each subproject, items which the District could complete on its own, have lesser implementation hurdles, and the identified benefits that each would provide. A Manager stated that it would also be helpful to have those conversations with Little Canada and the County to learn of their plans and how they would or would not fit with these. Tina Carstens stated that there

is a placeholder in the flood risk reduction fund for elements of these projects or the Willow Creek study. She noted that preliminary discussions can occur during the budget discussions. Brad Lindaman stated that staff wanted to introduce the magnitude of these larger projects tonight, as some of the low hanging fruit will be helpful if the desire is to move forward eventually with the larger project, but others would not be beneficial on their own. He stated that if there is a desire to take a role in this process, some of the smaller elements could be planned for in 2021 and additional funding opportunities could be explored. Tina Carstens stated that she would be interested in the level of detail that would be necessary in order to pursue additional funding opportunities.

Matt Metzger stated that he has spoken with a staff member from the DNR who has stated that the best opportunity would be to engage the DNR early in the process to gather input which could help to further guide the design process. He stated that if the Board wanted to move forward and gather additional information, the conversation with the DNR should be started sooner rather than later. A Manager commented that if the District cannot obtain a funding partner, full implementation of this would not move forward due to the \$25 million+ cost. A Manager commented that there are other subwatersheds in the District and the Board should review this information and the information from the other subwatersheds in order to determine its priorities and what it should bring forward to potential funding partners. A Manager commented that it would be helpful to know how the subwatershed projects interconnect and impact other areas of the watershed. Tina Carstens noted that information is available from the other subwatershed areas that were studied as a result of the Beltline Resiliency Study.

Erin Anderson Wenz presented similar details on the Willow Creek Feasibility Study. She recommended that continued emergency response plans be developed for the two at risk homes to determine what could be done to provide the city guidance.

Brad Lindaman identified the Ames Lake area, noting that the District has been in contact with the City of Saint Paul. He noted that many of the homes within the floodplain have more localized issues and therefore discussions need to occur with Saint Paul on how this could be further analyzed. He stated that any of those improvements would need to be planned into the city's implementation program. He stated that Saint Paul has stated that they would like to delay the meeting with the District until later in the summer or early fall. Erin Anderson Wenz stated that staff wants to meet with Saint Paul before reviewing the individual homes as it did with the Willow Creek study.

8. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

A. Meetings Attended

No comments.

B. Upcoming Meetings and Dates

No comments.

C. 2021 Budget Planning

Tina Carstens stated that preliminary budget information was included in the packet to begin discussions. She explained how carry over funds projected from 2020 are shown and factored into the proposed 2021 budget. A Manager commented that they would not be concerned with a levy increase as there are critical projects that will be necessary in the future that the District would need to build funds to support. A Manager agreed. A Manager commented that the District should have concrete reasons to do so, as other organizations are cutting funds and staff during this time. A Manager commented that they agree that the District should be cautious and prioritize projects in order to have justification. A Manager commented that the District needs to stay true to its water quality goals and not just flood risk efforts. A Manager stated that they would like to see the justification for adding another staff person, specific to the Water Monitoring Technician position proposed in the budget. Tina Carstens provided details on the need for this position and the benefits of having a full-time staff member versus using an intern for this position. A Manager asked if this information would be shared with the cities to review

prior to the Board review and adoption in September. Tina Carstens confirmed that she sends that information to the member cities and counties in August.

9. PROJECT AND PROGRAM STATUS REPORTS

A. Ongoing Project and Program Updates

- i. FEMA Flood Mapping Updates
- ii. Hillcrest Golf Course
- iii. Water Management Plan Updates
- iv. Automated Lake Monitoring Systems
- v. Targeted Retrofit Projects
- vi. Target Store Stormwater Retrofits
- vii. Kohlman Permeable Weir Test System
- viii. Aldrich Arena Stormwater Project
- ix. Twin Lake Outlet
- x. CIP Maintenance and Repair 2020 Project
- xi. Beltline/Battle Creek Tunnel Inspection
- xii. 2020 Tanners Lake Alum Facility Monitoring
- xiii. Internal Load Management Discussions
- xiv. Wakefield Lake Internal Loading Study
- xv. Natural Resources Program
- xvi. Education Program

A Manager requested that time be provided at a future Board meeting to review the list of project and program updates. A Manager commented that it seems that Hillcrest Golf Course could be a real opportunity and would like to discuss that in the future. A Manager asked for details on the Boys and Girls Club project. Paige Ahlborg commented that there were some minor delays, but the project has started and is awaiting the asphalt as there is a delay from that company.

10. REPORTS OF MANAGERS

Tina Carstens noted that the link to the meeting within the Board packet worked but the link on the website was not working for residents to join the meeting. She noted that she would follow up with those residents to advise them of how the recording of the meeting could be viewed. A Manager commented that they would find it helpful to have the previous Zoom meetings posted online so that they, and others, could watch those meetings. Tina Carstens confirmed that staff could post those videos.

11. ADJOURN

Motion: Manager Skinner moved, Manager Aichinger seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried unanimously. (5-0)