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MISSISSIPPI
WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATION

MEETING MINUTES

Date: 12 September 2023

Attachment 3

Time: 3:00 PM

Location: 2522 Marshall Street NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418

Commissioners in Attendance

Connie Buesgens, Columbia Heights and Hilltop; Steve Eggert, Fridley; Jeff Dains, Lauderdale; LaTrisha Vetaw, Minneapolis; Billy Menz, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board; Randy Stille, St. Anthony Village; and Michael Lukes, St. Paul.

Staff and Guests: Nick Busse, Shawn James, Akadia Johnson, Dan Kalmon, Kevin Reich, and Nancy Stowe, MWMO; Glenda Meixell, Anoka Conservation District.

The meeting was called to order at 3:11 p.m. by Chair Eggert.

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Menz, second by Buesgens to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Buesgens requested an update to “Board Updates and Announcements” section of the July 11, 2023, meeting minutes to clarify that she was referring to a map to be displayed at the MWMO, not Columbia Heights City Hall.

Motion by Buesgens, second by Lukes, to approve the minutes of the July 11, 2023 regular meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

Consent Agenda

No consent agenda items.

Reports from Staff

Reich presented an overview of the annual audit results. Commissioners can get full copies of the audit upon request. The audit results indicated a clean audit again, with no anomalies or adjustments — a clean bill of health.

Eggert noted that many government agencies use Redpath, the MWMO's auditor.

General Business

2023-024: FY2024 Draft Levy

Reich presented the MWMO's draft tax levy. Staff is requesting \$7.4 million total levy.

Eggert noted inflation is driving up cost of projects.

Reich noted that the additional levy will help compensate for inflation as well as potential new objectives coming out of ongoing MWMO planning processes.

Stille asked how this compares to previous levies. Reich responded that the levy has been flat for the last several years. Reich added that he hopes to have a "plateauing" soon.

Stille and Buesgens noted their levies have increased by 8 percent in recent years to catch up on investment needs.

Motion by Menz, seconded by Dains, to adopt the maximum levy amount of \$7,407,700 for MWMO fiscal year 2024. Motion carried unanimously.

2023-025: Minnesota Stormwater Research Council Funding

John Bilotta provided a pre-recorded presentation on Minnesota Stormwater Research Council project highlights:

- Stormwater ponds are a prolific type of BMP. Four innovative studies have been chosen.

- A fifth research study examines homeowners associations' and commercial property owners' capacity to maintain green stormwater infrastructure (GSI).
- The MSRC has a diversified approach to funding research.
 - The MSRC has a variety of public and private funding sources, accounting for \$158,500 in 2022.
 - The MSRC also gets \$1.5 million from the Legacy Amendment, which will increase to \$2 million next year.
 - A third funding piece comes from CFANS, USGS, and Minnesota Sea Grant.
 - The MSRC is looking at ways to leverage additional funding sources.
- The MSRC website has info on current and completed research projects.
- Technology transfer efforts ensure that research results are put into practice. The Minnesota Stormwater Seminar Series had more than 1,400 participants in 200. All seminars are recorded and available for later viewing.
- MSRC works to integrate research findings into Minnesota Stormwater Manual.
- MSRC invested in multiple research studies on street sweeping in recent years with the goal of helping cities redesign street sweeping programs to maximize water quality improvements.

Bilotta asked the MWMO to continue to support MSRC by contributing to funding again and to nominate someone to serve on the board beginning in January 2024.

Reich encouraged board to vote yes and emphasized the MWMO's good relationship with the program.

Buesgens said she thinks it's a great program and has asked city manager about contributing to program funding. Said she appreciates street sweeping research.

Reich said practices need to be informed practices. Responding to a question from Stille, Reich said the MWMO has been contributing since 2017, since beginning of organization.

Motion by Stille, seconded by Menz, to provide \$25,000 to the Minnesota Stormwater Research Council for applied stormwater research. Motion carried unanimously.

2023-026: 5th Street Diversion Manhole Construction

Stowe presented a funding request for the 5th Street diversion manhole project in Northeast Minneapolis. The project is part of the 1NE Watershed project, which includes the Columbia Park and Golf Course Stormwater BMPs project. It is part of a collaboration between the MWMO, MPRB, and the City of Minneapolis, who have shared the cost of the project.

Stormwater is conveyed from upstream neighborhoods into three basins located in the golf course and park. A new diversion manhole is needed to redirect water from Columbia Heights neighborhoods to the north into the northwest basin at the golf course. The MWMO previously funded engineering design work for the manhole.

Buesgens asked for clarification on what a diversion manhole is. Stowe said that it will redirect the flow of runoff into the basin. It's sized to help alleviate flooding upstream of the basin.

Commissioner Vetaw joined the meeting remotely.

Stowe noted construction costs have increased over the last several years. The City of Minneapolis Public Works Department will do the construction. The City didn't use a public bidding process. Public works competitively bids out rentals, equipment, machinery, etc. The funding request reflects worst-case scenario for construction. The City provided a range of potential costs. Stowe said this process will help avoid change orders.

Stowe said groundwater has proven to be erratic in the area; she is not sure if pumping will be needed or not.

The diversion manhole project is currently at 90 percent plans, but Stowe wanted to get it in front of the board today. She noted that some changes may be needed in terms of exact location. PVC piping costs have also been extremely volatile. The funding request is for \$320,000.

Eggert noted the drought should help move the project along. He asked about basin redesign. Stowe replied that basin will be reconstructed in the second half of September. She noted we're still within budget on that project. The new design is ecologically enhanced stormwater basin.

Stille asked for follow-up on what the ultimate project cost was. Stowe said they would mention it in a future staff update.

Eggert asked whether the project was unique. Stowe noted the existence of continuous deflective separation (CDS) units upstream of the project.

Motion by Dains, seconded by Buesgens, to approve up to \$320,000 in capital project funds for the construction of the 5th Street NE Diversion Manhole. Motion carried unanimously.

2023-027: Sylvan Hills Park Feasibility Study

James presented on the Sylvan Park feasibility study. He showed location of the study area within the local subwatershed. The park is in northernmost part of subwatershed and will be redesigned by city next year. The concept plan shows areas for water quality improvements. It is a traditional neighborhood park. The lower portion of the neighborhood collects a lot of water.

The project is on the MWMO's CIP list. The timeline is tight. The study needs to be finished before January. The goals are to improve water quality, create habitat, and alleviate flooding. The scope of the study is to review existing information and modeling data, survey the site, do soil borings, evaluate potential opportunities, and include public meeting attendance.

An RFP was sent out, and three proposals were received. Staff have been working closely with City of Fridley. Houston Engineering's proposal stood out. The consultant would begin work next week, pending board approval.

The funding request is for \$68,000.

Menz asked about history of flooding at the spot. James said there is flooding to some extent, with various causes. They will look more closely with the feasibility study. Modeling shows flooding in 10- and 100-year events.

Eggert noted some recent extreme rain events and said stormwater has become an issue in Fridley. He said more people are also getting involved in neighborhood parks because of COVID. Fridley has funding to redesign parks. The park is in a low spot.

Menz said it's great that Fridley is investing more in their community parks.

James said MWMO has been working with both planning and public works staff.

Motion by Lukes, seconded by Buesgens, to approve up to \$68,000 for the Sylvan Hills Park Stormwater and Habitat Enhancement Feasibility Study. Motion carried unanimously.

2023-028: East Phillips Feasibility Study

Stowe presented. Staff identified a subwatershed encompassing the East Phillips Neighborhood, with potential to do a science-based approach to stormwater. Located in the Southside Green

Zone. The hydrologic boundary discharges to the north to the Mississippi River untreated, including 207 pounds per year of phosphorus. There are a series of upcoming transportation and park projects in the area. The City is interested in upgrading the Little Earth pedestrian bridge, including public spaces at each end.

The proposed feasibility study with Hennepin County, MPRB, and the City serving on the technical advisory committee will identify opportunities to improve water quality and enhance ecology in the area, reduce urban heat island effect, add pollinator habitat, and identify local equity and public health improvement opportunities.

Staff is asking for \$178,000 for the feasibility study.

Reich mentioned challenge of getting multiple jurisdictions together at the table to talk about MWMO goals. He said Stowe has been diligently and patiently working with partners. He said this is an important step and, in many ways, a first. He added it is also in line with the MWMO's work on DEI initiatives.

Stille said it seems like a lot of bang for the buck in serving an underserved area. Reich responded that he agrees and thinks project can be a new model for how MWMO evaluates where its resources go.

Menz asked about the MPRB's role. Reich said MPRB is conducting an open spaces study. East Phillips Park was not included in city-wide sweep of design and community input. The Little Earth landscape is a unique situation. Menz said the MWMO would be using public engagement work by MPRB. Said lots of discussion is going on about how to manage land in that space. Stowe said feasibility study will help make decisions. The county needs to understand by the middle of next year what they will be building. The City has not started any design with the roads around Cedar Avenue, but did a good transportation study and collaborated with Little Earth.

Reich said we're taking the strong lead on the science, but the other entities are taking the lead on communications with their communities. Stowe said we want to be helpful if we can and incorporate whatever they're learning.

Motion by Menz, seconded by Buesgens, to approve up to \$178,000 for professional engineering services to complete the East Phillips Neighborhood Water Quality Improvements and Habitat Enhancement Feasibility Study. Motion carried unanimously.

Board Updates and Announcements

Eggert praised the use of the new audio/visual system for the meeting.

Menz mentioned the Graco Park groundbreaking event and said he's excited to see the project come to light. The project offers quality, necessary stormwater management by the river.

Stille mentioned St. Anthony Village's sister city, Salo, Finland. He hosted someone in an exchange program for a week. Stille took him to MWMO for a tour.

Reich said a professor from Israel also came for a tour recently. Her objective is to prove that a soft approach to nature can be effective compared to hardscape.

Eggert mentioned redevelopment of Moore Lake Park. It has a sizeable beach and picnic area. The lake became polluted, but Fridley is now able to clean it up. The beach is smaller now, and the park will be programming more for nature.

Open Public Input

Glenda Maxwell: Anoka Conservation District hopes to fund a groundwater specialist. Blaine and Andover have groundwater issues. The League of Women Voters is behind them.

Eggert says county wants zero tax increase for third year in a row.

Adjourn

There being no further business, motion by Buesgens, second by Stille to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 4:26 p.m.