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MISSISSIPPI  
WATERSHED  
MANAGEMENT  
ORGANIZATION

# MEETING MINUTES

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**Date:** 09 January 2024

**Attachment 3**

**Time:** 3:00 PM

**Location:** 2522 Marshall Street NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418

## Attendance

**Commissioners:** Connie Buesgens, Columbia Heights and Hilltop; Tom Tilberry, 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, Abby Moore, Emily Resseger, Dustin McHenry, and Nancy Stowe, MWMO; Glenda Meixell, Anoka Conservation District; Steve Eggert; Sarah Nassif.

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m. by Chair Stille.

## Approval of Agenda

Motion by Dains to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

## Approval of Minutes

Motion by Menz to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2024 regular meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

## **Consent Agenda**

Motion by Dains, seconded by Lukes, to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

## **Reports from Staff**

Emily Resseger introduced Dustin McHenry, the new water resources and instrumentation specialist. Dustin grew up in Rochester, went to school in LaCross, will be working on instrumentation on the MWMO monitoring team.

## **Sylvan Hills Park Feasibility Study**

Shawn James presented update on the Sylvan Hills Park feasibility study. Located at the northern edge of watershed, the park collects water from the surrounding areas. The team looked at various stormwater and habitat options with Houston Engineering. Five different concepts were evaluated, and they're now trying to boil them down to two concepts in order to do a feasibility study. The consultant found an opportunity to bring in 7 additional acres of drainage area for a combination of above- and below-ground treatment. James said he may be coming forward with a funding request for the March board meeting.

Buesgens liked the concept. Stille said he wants to make sure MWMO funds will go for treatment above and beyond city requirements.

## **Upper Harbor Terminal Updates**

Dan Kalmon gave update on southern regional treatment reuse project at Upper Harbor Terminal. They now have updated engineering estimate and have been working on the agreement. They will recommend qualified low bid at the March board meeting. The shoreline grading is done and plant plugs are in. Habitat, public space and stormwater is integrated throughout site, including on private land. Two ephemeral streams are being built. The southern regional treatment system will bring 75 acres of water from North Minneapolis through a pipe and treat it to supply volume for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board stream system. It will go through hydrodynamic separators, Contech Stormfilters, then enter a large storage tank. It will treat water to a level that meets city standards. An ultraviolet (UV) treatment system is also included.

Buesgens asked about auditorium. Kalmon said underground storage is included at the auditorium site. Buesgens asked about water storage capacity. Kalmon said it's 200,000 gallons. He said the ephemeral stream performance standard is to have macroinvertebrates. Buesgens

asked whether it can be connected to buildings for greywater. Kalmon said that is a possibility and that the MWMO offered to put in hook-ups.

Stille asked what the UV treatment does. Kalmon said it's for taking out bacteria; UV treatment keeps people safe if they come in contact with the water. It's a really high level of treatment. He said private developers in the future are responsible for the operation and maintenance of the system. Buesgens asked how long UV system lasts. Kalmon said it's likely 10 years, but at Towerside we had one fail because it was improperly maintained. It was \$16,000 to replace it. They have discussed operations and maintenance costs with the city and how to limit them.

Menz asked whether MPRB will have maintenance costs. Kalmon said MPRB and other partners have agreed to pay their share for maintenance. Menz said it's a good test for MWMO to maintain systems as it's been trying to do.

Kalmon said project cost estimates have increased by \$2,502,512. He is anticipating a bid of \$6,311,906 for the southern regional treatment system and reuse system. He said we'll know more as we get bids in. He plans to meet with city and MPRB partners on the adjusted cost estimate to discuss possible cost reductions, then will finalize the agreement and select a recommended project bid.

Menz said MPRB instituted a new stormwater fee to solidify funding for stormwater. He said MWMO should ask MPRB about how those funds will be used. He's unclear on how MPRB stormwater efforts play into MWMO relationship and says he hopes it's collaborative.

Stille said he thinks it's important to revisit the project often so they know what's happening.

## **General Business**

### **2024-003: Upper Harbor General Services**

Dan Kalmon introduced a request for an Upper Harbor general services agreement. The work order agreement reflects the time frame of the reciprocal easement and operating agreement (REOA) through 2030. The resolution would transition from a 90-percent agreement to a general services agreement. Would create a three-year agreement ending in 2027. This would allow MWMO to cut new work orders as additional projects require.

Motion by Stille, seconded by Dains, to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

## **2024-004: Art Program Planning and Expansion 2024**

Abby Moore presented a resolution requesting funding to hire Sarah Nassif, the MWMO's artist-in-residence. Nassif does community engagement artwork to spark conversation about water, environment and climate change. Nassif's work has greatly expanded Moore's understanding of ways to connect with people around water. She looks forward to continuing to work with Nassif, who has already engaged more than 1,200 people through workshops and events and partnered with 13 other artists and 10 different organizations. Her 2023 work focused on the Minneapolis Southside Green Zone. Moore presented some participant quotes. She hopes to create a network of artists who are engaged on these topics and create a model for that programming. Moore also wants to develop a plan for interpretive art at MWMO facility to be ready to implement in 2025.

Nassif talked about textile skills and their origins in different cultures. She said it's an example of how human beings can collectively approach managing complex problems. Traditional models of community engagement rely on people having free time to show up and learn information. This is a more inclusive approach. It allows people a chance to learn what a watershed is. Menz said it's work that needs to be done and this is a minimal investment to facilitate real-world learning. Dains said he agrees, that it's the wave of the future. Stille asked if it's a hire or a contract; Abby said Sarah will be hired as a consultant. Lukes asked how program will be promoted. Abby said they're trying to be strategic and targeted but also have some larger events, too.

Motion by Menz, seconded by Lukes, to approve the resolution. Motion approved. (Buesgens absent.)

## **2024-005: Website Improvements**

Nick Busse presented a request for \$35,000 for a series of improvements to the MWMO website. The idea started in board meeting as a result of requests for a fully integrated project map on the website. MWMO is looking at redesigning of a couple of sections, mainly the home page and project page interface, along with some design tweaks to modernize the look of the website and under-the-hood work on SEO and removing duplicative content. Busse presented mock-ups of some new pages. The project page interface currently has a map but no one uses it or knows it exists. It is also cluttered by the number of projects. The mockup of the new project interface resembles real estate websites. It includes drop-down menus to filter project types. Project pages are a significant part of the website where we have project information and news articles, and they receive a significant amount of traffic. The new interface will make navigation easier.

Although it's not in this scope of work, we are also looking to do an accessibility audit in 2024 so people with screen readers can navigate the website. Staff might bring a separate request to the board, depending on the cost and scope of work.

Lukes asked about ArcGIS Story Maps and if we had considered using it for projects and further down the line as a submission for funding so people could submit a story map with their funding request. Busse answered that we did look to use ArcGIS as the platform for our project pages as Shawn has done some work with implementing ArcGIS. In discussions with web developers, we found it didn't make sense. The grants team has driven the conversation about application forms, which are not part of this scope of work but could be talked about in a future conversations. Busse showed the MWMO's story map and Path to the River tool on the website.

Dains asked to clarify the accessibility audit. Busse clarified it is not part of the scope of this work, but later this year we would like to do an accessibility audit with real people who use screen-reading software to tell us where the flaws are in our website to address accessibility needs. It may be a second proposal later for the board, but it is not part of the current RBA.

Tillberry asked how we chose Windmill. Busse explained MWMO has worked with Windmill for the last eight years and they were in the original website redesign RFP. Staff had a conversation about another potential RFP but opted to continue working with Windmill because of the quality of their work and their reliability.

Menz asked if accessibility would be in multiple languages and for people who are blind. Busse explained multiple languages could be part of it. He clarified someone who is visually impaired navigates the website using screen-reading software. We want someone using screen readers to be able to easily browse our site architecture. Menz said the cost doesn't seem excessive but the board should look for a cut-off for where they do need an RFP, said discussion could be for a future time.

Stille agreed that \$35,000 seemed reasonable. Menz and Stille agreed that they really like the website. Busse clarified we initially put \$50,000 into the website. The original website redesign was great and won awards, and we want to set it up for the next 8-10 years of success.

Stille asked if there is more space for a narrative description on the project. Nick clarified we still have to do the actual design work and there is room to tweak those things.

Motion by Menz, seconded by Tillberry, to approve the resolution. Motion passed. (Buesgens absent.)

## **2024-006: Acquisition of Universal Plating, Inc. Site**

Reich presented a resolution to acquire a property adjacent to Edison High School. The project was originally conceived as part of the Phase II Edison Green Campus but had to be curtailed. Plans have come forward now. Edison's flood mitigation basin was improved with help from

Spark-Y. Safe Routes to School bumpouts were installed. Project partners are now looking to address the polluted property next door.

Reich had conversation with county about their objectives. They wanted affordable housing. Need to figure out how Minneapolis Public Schools and Spark-Y fit in. Project partners are looking at creating a permanent youth action laboratory on the site. The MWMO would hold the property as a public entity pass-through to coordinate the various partners.

Lukes asked about a tax forfeiture court case and whether there are any liability issues. Reich said the previous owners before the county went bankrupt, there was no point in a lawsuit. There was extensive legal investigation to make sure MWMO could work with county on this. The sale price is well below market value.

Stille asked how certain the development project is. Reich said it is pretty certain. Hennepin County is eager to work with Spark-Y on intergenerational activities. Menz asked whether this locks us into a particular design or a relationship with Spark-Y. Reich said no on both counts.

Menz asked what MWMO is committing to. Reich responded that we're not required to do any particular type of project. It will have to undergo environmental remediation. Menz asked whether MWMO would be bound to a cleanup cost. Reich said MPCA is doing vapor monitoring on the site. He anticipates getting state grant money for the cleanup. Any funding gaps for the cleanup will be absorbed by future owners. Expectation is that MWMO will receive the \$50,000 investment back from the future property users, along with any costs MWMO could incur in the meantime.

Menz asked about a parking lot at the athletic field. Reich said parking lot is no longer in the design.

Stille said the project is really cool and praised Reich for his work on it.

Motion by Tilberry, seconded by Menz, to approve the resolution. Motion passed without objection. (Dains and Buesgens absent.)

## **2024-007: Election of Officers and Meeting Dates**

Stille proposed himself as the new board chair, Buesgens as vice chair, and Vetaw as Treasurer.

Motion by Vetaw, seconded by Lukes, to approve the resolution. Motion approved without objection. (Dains and Buesgens absent.)

## **Board Updates and Announcements**

Stille recognized former Chair Stephen Eggert in the audience. Eggert said he wanted to take in one more board meeting. He recently moved and downsized; now lives in a cooperative overlooking Rush Lake. Eggert said he was not happy about missing the meeting in November. He really enjoyed working with the board, the staff, and the leaders. He is happy to see Tom Tilberry representing Fridley. He said MWMO has accomplished a lot in the last year, and he sees great opportunities going forward. Stille said Eggert has been a dedicated servant from Fridley and thanked him for his service.

Lukes said a community cleanup is scheduled for the Kasota Ponds; he will try to coordinate with MWMO for some publicity and event attendance.

Reich thanked Eggert for his service, said he was engaged with the staff.

Open public input. Glenda Meixell introduced herself. She said she represents the Anoka Conservation District, has really enjoyed coming here and isn't giving it up.

Vetaw thanked Eggert for his time on the MWMO board.

## **Open Public Input**

None.

## **Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:47 p.m.