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**MISSISSIPPI
WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATION**

MEETING MINUTES

Date: 9 September 2025

Attachment 3

Time: 3:00 PM

Location: 2522 Marshall Street NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418

Attendance

Commissioners: Connie Buesgens, Columbia Heights and Hilltop; Ann Bolkcom, Fridley; Jeff Dains, Lauderdale; Billy Menz, MPRB; Lona Doolan, St. Anthony Village; and Michael Lukes, St. Paul.

Staff and Guests: Emmy Baskerville-Doeckel, Mirae Guenther, Akadia Johnson, Abby Moore, Nixon Pfeiffer, Kevin Reich, Emily Resseger, Michelle Spangler, and Nancy Stowe, MWMO; Glenda Meixell, Anoka Conservation District; Julie Aldrich, MPRB; and Amy Juntunen, JASS.

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chair Buesgens. Buesgens introduced new Board member, Ann Bolkcom.

Approval of Agenda

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

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Doolan, second by Lukes to approve the minutes of the July 8, 2025 regular meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Consent Agenda

2025-021: RBC Wealth Management Investment Account. Motion by Menz, second by Doolan to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Reports from Staff

Equity Strategic Action Plan

Moore gave an update on the MWMO Equity Strategic Action Plan (ESAP) process, which began in 2022 as part of the Watershed Management Plan. A written progress report will be emailed to all Board members. The MWMO area population is ~302,000, with 42% identifying as BIPOC and over 90 languages spoken. Culture Brokers, LLC was hired in 2023 to assist with writing this plan. From May 2023 through February 2024, staff worked with the consultant to develop an equity framework, gather input from stakeholders, and identify MWMO strengths and weaknesses, as well as areas of DEI opportunity. This information was used to develop the ESAP. The purpose of the ESAP is to measure and significantly improve results with diverse constituents. Two high impact areas have been selected for a one-year workplan with measurable goals.

Stakeholder input identified financial transparency as a current weakness of MWMO, so this is one high-impact area chosen for improvement. A DEI spending policy and measurable goals in this area have been developed and implementation has begun. Goals include having 25% of MWMO vendors hired for Admin/Facilities work be DEI-qualified vendors and 50% of grant dollars allocated through the Stewardship Fund meet high-scoring DEI criteria. Next steps include institutionalizing DEI spending, adding steps to the selection and purchase process for vendors to meet DEI goals, and updating language re the Stewardship Fund to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds. Staff have also increased efforts to connect with community groups re Stewardship grants. Future recommendations include creating a process to simplify tracking on DEI spending for admin/facilities work, strengthening relationships with past grantees, and considering ways to expand or adapt the Stewardship fund.

The planning process also identified the Rebuilt Environment as an MWMO area of strength. Staff defined locations for high potential for connection among different cultures in a map of current and past MWMO projects. Additional guidance will be included for future project selection in “cultural corridors” and staff will look for opportunities to increase the number of projects within these cultural corridors with no or few projects, with extra emphasis on increasing community engagement with projects. MWMO will leverage Stewardship Fund grants to fund projects reflecting diverse communities and periodically review these cultural corridors. Recommendations include review and development of specific recommendations for modification to Stewardship Fund budget and procedures. Next steps are to implement recommendations, institutionalize our culture of continuous improvement, and identify strategic improvement, as well as development of the next workplan.

General Business

2025-022: 2026 FY Budget

At today's meeting the upper limit for the annual levy, to be finalized in November, is set. Staff recommends the 2026 levy limit be set at \$8,182,050, a 4.5% increase over the 2025 levy and includes operating funds and capital project funds. There are no major changes to the budget from previous years.

Motion by Dains, second by Doolan to approve Resolution 2025-022 approving the MWMO maximum levy amount for FY 2026 at \$8,182,050. Motion carried unanimously.

2025-023: Stewardship Fund Action and Planning Grants

For the second round of 2025 grants, seven pre-applications were received, with six invited to complete the final application. Staff recommend awarding one Action grant and five Planning grants.

1. Midway Contemporary Art Educational Wing Expansion - \$50,000 Action grant. The expansion will use environmentally-conscious building practices and include solar panels and comprehensive stormwater management for the entire 0.4-acre property, with a new geocell and gravel parking lot featuring an underground stormwater overflow system that connects to the public stormwater system. This will retain more rainwater on-site before overflowing into the storm system. There will also be a native planting and canopy of trees on the north, west and east sides of the property.
2. Riverfront Regional Park NRMP in Anoka County - \$20,000. This is a planning grant to update a native planting and management plan for Riverfront Park to guide restoration efforts. A major initiative to remove invasive buckthorn has been underway since 2016. The 2014 management plan predates this work and offers limited guidance on which native species should be planted to replace buckthorn in the disturbed and undisturbed natural areas of the park.
3. Landings Townhomes Stormwater Planning - \$20,000. This planning grant will assist a 58-unit townhome association on 12 acres adjacent to the Mississippi River and Bassett Creek to better manage stormwater on site. Currently, all stormwater flows untreated into the Mississippi River through the city storm sewer system. This project will evaluate water quality improvements designed to filter, store and infiltrate stormwater on site with the goal to reduce the volume of untreated water discharging directly to the Mississippi.

4. PFG Rain Garden - \$20,000. This planning grant is to help rehabilitate the rear parking lot area at Phelan Manufacturing by removing old asphalt and replacing it with asphalt/concrete with permeable pavers, two raingardens and associated landscaping with trees and turf. Phelan is currently electrically self-sufficient with solar arrays and wants to further help the environment by improving stormwater quality leaving the site.
5. Ecosystem Shifts: Digitally Fabricated Ceramic Structures for Aquatic Restoration - \$16,398.72. This planning grant is to help develop 3D-printed ceramic units that support ecological restoration in impaired freshwater environments. These units are designed to function as regenerative infrastructure to enhance sediment stability, promote growth of submerged aquatic vegetation, and facilitate nutrient uptake within degraded systems.
6. Heritage Park Youth Leadership Raingarden Takeover - \$20,000. This planning grant will support Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI) work in the Heritage Park neighborhood. USI aims to empower residents of distressed urban core neighborhoods to build safe, sustainable neighborhoods. This project focuses on reducing littering, increasing education, and caring for the 22 raingardens in Heritage Park. This will include monthly community engagement surrounding the 22 raingardens in the neighborhood and advocacy for greener infrastructure, operations and maintenance for the raingardens and the neighborhood.

Motion by Lukes, second by Doolan to approve Resolution 2025-023 approving 2025 Action and Planning Grants, committing \$146,389.752 from the Stewardship Fund and authorizing Staff to take all necessary actions to implement the resolution and sign Action and Planning Grant agreements. Motion carried unanimously.

2025-024: Sculpture Garden Reuse Assessment and Repair

In 2016 MWMO awarded MPRB a grant to construct a water reuse system with an 80,000-gallon underground cistern. This would recapture water from the Spoonbridge and Cherry sculpture to be reused for irrigation of the garden and ballfield. A number of operational issues on site, from staff education to mechanical issues, have led to the system not working correctly. Staff have been working with a consultant to develop a scope of work to complete a study including site investigation, documentation and mapping of all components of the reuse system, and evaluation of current functionality compared to design to develop a range of repair and improvement alternatives and prepare an O&M manual for the system. The study will also provide estimated costs for repair.

Motion by Dains, second by Menz to approve Resolution 2025-25 approving up to \$74,500 for the sculpture garden and parade baseball field reuse assessment and repair study.

2025-025: Cedar Ave Feasibility Study

This is a study for structural components for the Little Earth water reuse project in collaboration with Hennepin County. This project is in the Southside Green Zone and inspired by the reconstruction of Cedar Avenue in conjunction with rehabilitation of parks in the area and other street reconstruction projects. The area currently has little or no stormwater treatment. There is a lot of open space on the Little Earth United Tribes property with low quality vegetation offering an opportunity to convert barren areas to rain gardens and pollinator and medicinal plantings. Stormwater from a 7-acre drainage area can be captured for reuse from Cedar Avenue and the southwest parking lot. Little Earth is very interested in pursuing this project. To accomplish this, stormwater components will need to be installed during the reconstruction of Cedar Avenue. Staff are requesting \$260,000 to partner with Hennepin County to install structural components under Cedar Avenue to allow for future hookup to a water treatment and reuse facility on the Little Earth United Tribes property.

Motion by Doolan, second by Menz to approve Resolution 2025-025 approving funding for the installation of Cedar Avenue structural components. Motion carried unanimously.

2025-026: Central Ave Columbia Heights Feasibility Study

This is a 13-acre site just west of Central Avenue planned for redevelopment. Jackson Pond is a stormwater retention pond serving 158-600 acres on the west side of the parcel. The pond is regularly pumped after rainfalls and provides more flood mitigation than water quality benefit. Staff are requesting not-to-exceed \$80,000 to assess current regional benefits provided by Jackson Pond and feasibility options for redevelopment that will not adversely impact the current benefits and flood mitigation. The development will need to provide its own stormwater management on site to ensure there is no negative impact to flood storage or stormwater quality.

Motion to approve Resolution 2025-026 approving funding for the 4300 Central Ave NE planning level feasibility study. Motion carried unanimously.

2025-027: 1500-1600 Marshall St NE Feasibility Study

This is a shoreline improvement and access study. The site currently has significant existing MPRB amenities including parks and bike/pedestrian trails. Incoming developers of a new apartment building south of this site at 1400 Marshall have agreed to allow trail creation from Marshall Street to the riverfront on that property. This is an opportunity to enhance/stabilize the shoreline and establish new pedestrian connections, river access points and a non-motorized boat

launch. Staff propose hiring SRF at a cost not-to-exceed \$112,000 to determine what is feasible in the area including a biological survey, geotechnical investigation and preliminary design work, with a focus on shoreline restoration, access and continuity in habitat creation.

Motion by Doolan, second by Menz to approve Resolution 2025-027 approving up to \$112,000 in watershed assessment funds to complete this study. Motion carried unanimously.

2025-028: Karst Guidelines Study

Staff are requesting funding for a study of Karst and stormwater infiltration. Significant areas within the MWMO area may be “infiltration limited” due to geologic conditions. This would address changes from a 2014 study that outlined limits to infiltration due to the depth of the groundwater table and provide recommendations for navigating/enhancing MPCA guidelines for infiltrating in Karst areas. The study will determine what is feasible with limitations, without limitations, or not allowable at all due to Karst, which is soluble bedrock. Karst geology typically has a high density of caves and sinkholes due to groundwater forming voids in the dissolvable bedrock. Stormwater infiltration is currently prohibited near active Karst regions in Minnesota. In Tennessee, studies have been conducted to create more specific guidelines regarding sizing of raingardens or other stormwater features in these areas. The goals are to update infiltration suitability mapping, develop recommendations to regulatory agencies for refinement of infiltration limitations in Karst areas, and facilitate a workshop between MWMO staff, TAC and regulatory agencies to discuss findings.

Motion by Doolan, second by Menz to approve Resolution 2025-028 approving up to \$45,000 in watershed assessment funds to complete the MWMO Limits to Infiltration and Karst Guidelines study. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing

10 Year Plan Minor Amendment

Motion by Buesgens, second by Doolan to pause the regular meeting and open the Public Hearing at 4:53 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Part of the MWMO 2021-2031 Watershed Management Plan is the Capital Improvement Project list. This Minor Plan Amendment will add the next five years of Capital Projects into the Plan. This includes new and continuing projects, with a total for all projects of \$28,700,000. Some projects are opportunity-based.

No one from the public was present. Board action will be requested at the November meeting after the 30-day review period following this public hearing.

Motion by Bolkom, second by Doolan to close the public hearing and resume the regular meeting at 5:11 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

[Dains departed 5:12 p.m.]

Board Updates and Announcements

Doolan attended an overview of a collaborative research grant with the U of M, SAFL and the City of St. Paul to overlay flood risk and resilience capacity mapping of the upper Mississippi basin. This study investigated the effectiveness of raingardens, tree plantings, etc. and overlaying that on DEI areas to learn how to build greater tree canopy and greater flood capacity in these areas. They will have occasional workshops as this study progresses. Doolan also attended the MN Watersheds meeting in August that focused on resolutions and petitions they would like to bring to the legislature this year. That meeting was for Board members only.

Lukes noted that Highway 280 will be closed from April-November 2026 for reconstruction with a short opening for the State Fair. This may be an opportunity for improvement to the Kasota Ponds area. PBS aired a two-hour show on the Mississippi from the headwaters to the delta called Tipping Point.

Open Public Input

Meixell requested any milkweed seeds collected for the Anoka Conservation District include labels of where the seeds were collected, the name of the collector, and that the seeds should be submitted in a paper bag.

On Saturday, September 27, MWMO will host an open house from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to celebrate the close of the current artist exhibit, Botanical Impressions, with artist Winna Bernard.

Adjourn

There being no further business, motion by Lukes, second by Menz to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 5:19 p.m.