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**MISSISSIPPI
WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATION**

MEETING MINUTES

Date: 13 January 2026

Attachment 3

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Location: 2522 Marshall Street NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418

Commissioners in Attendance

Connie Buesgens, Columbia Heights and Hilltop; Ann Bolkcom, Fridley; Jeff Dains, Lauderdale (online); LaTrisha Vetaw, Minneapolis (online), Lona Doolan, St. Anthony Village; Michael Lukes, St. Paul; and Meg Fourney, MPRB (online).

Staff and Guests: Emmy Baskerville-Doeckel, Adam Flett, Shameka Gherau, Akadia Johnson, Abby Moore, Kevin Reich, Emily Resseger, and Nancy Stowe, MWMO; Glenda Meixell, Anoka Conservation District; Sarah Nassif, Artist in Residence; and Amy Juntunen, JASS.

The meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m. by Chair Buesgens.

New Commissioner Meg Fourney, 13-year member on the Minneapolis Parks & Recreation Board, was introduced.

Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Motion by Bolkcom, second by Doolan to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously. Motion by Dains, second by Doolan to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2025 regular meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Consent Agenda

Motion by Bolkcom, second by Lukes to approve the consent agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Reports from Staff

Sacred Water Shared Future

The year 2026 is the launch of the Sacred Water Shared Future outreach campaign. MWMO has been partnering with several organizations for the past five years. Originally the Mississippi Centennial Celebration, this campaign celebrates 100 years of Mississippi River restoration efforts. In 1926, the Mississippi was officially declared “dead” after a survey found only two living fish between Minneapolis and Red Wing. The river is much healthier today thanks to restoration efforts. Throughout 2026, the MWMO and this campaign will acknowledge that progress and educate on more actions to protect and improve the river. Partner organizations from throughout the area will be hosting events directly related to this campaign all through the year, with the goal of creating a community effort to keep the river clean and healthy. The website is now live at <https://sacredwatersharedfuture.org/> and includes a list of partner events. Events are focused in the metro, but partner organizations and cities are able to add events up and down the river. A media kit regarding the Sacred Water Shared Future campaign will be added to the MWMO website, and Moore will send information directly to member cities and Commissioners. Starting this weekend, Met Council will be hosting an art shanty at Lake Harriet in support of the campaign. Fourney noted that MPRB is hosting an open house for North Mississippi Regional Park from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at Webber Recreation Center.

Project Maintenance Initiative

In the late 2010s, MWMO staff recognized a lack of maintenance on BMP installations owned by project partners, which compromised the effectiveness and benefits of these projects, impacting MWMO investments. Staff then explored the gaps and barriers to partners conducting maintenance. Seven key areas were identified: O&M plans, design issues, agreements/contracts, MWMO structure, partner limitations, skilled workforce, and lack of inspections. Staff then considered different approaches to address these areas by impact and viability. Current focus is on support for project owners, strengthening agreements, and workforce development. Each of these foci includes several actions, like: conducting inspections and outreach to owners to learn their barriers. These actions are separated into physical issues like vegetation management, sediment, and conveyance issues or coordination issues such as lack of attention, design problems, and labor needs. MWMO has added a project establishment period to include funding schemes, performance standards, warranties, and long-term agreements/partnerships to strengthen agreements. For workforce development, MWMO has continued sponsoring the Mississippi Green Team, Green Infrastructure Inspection Team (GrIIT), interagency connections, and supporting internal and external training.

In 2024, performance-oriented guiding principles for the program were drafted. MWMO does not own many of the partner projects it supports financially and technically, requiring ongoing

collaboration with project partners. The programmatic framework includes dedicated staff time, embracing the skills, interests and abilities of the whole MWMO team, and exploring MWMO's offerings, risks and funding models. Staffing for this effort is an ongoing conversation. Staff continue to add and hone tools and resources, expand efforts to reach more project partners, define staff roles in this program and adapt for capacity with staff and funding. MWMO currently has about 300 projects installed, so inspecting them all or reaching all partners is a serious undertaking. The Walker Sculpture Garden feasibility study is underway to correct issues with that installation.

MWMO Audit Planning Letter

Reich shared the letter from the Auditor notifying the Board of audit timing. The audit will be moved into the first quarter instead of mid-year.

General Business

2026-002: Artist in Residence 2026

Staff are requesting funding for another year to support the artist-in-residence (AIR) program. Sarah Nassif is a local artist and botanist and has been working as the MWMO AIR since 2021. The art program has helped create connections and conversations in the community through events and exhibitions, which is very important in building public trust and support. Nassif, with MWMO, provides hands-on, engaging, creative experiences, fostering curiosity and allowing for longer conversations and engagements. Since 2021, Nassif has hosted Weaving Water workshops, reaching 4622 individuals. In 2025 alone, there were 2,832 participants with four new community partners. Nassif also had pieces hosted in two long-term exhibitions in downtown Minneapolis. The broader impact includes presenting at the MN Water Resources Conference, attending the Catalyst Professional Conference, and increased press coverage for MWMO, including one article written by Nassif and two about her and her work. In 2025, MWMO also hosted two exhibits and worked to develop the AWE (Art, Water and Ecology) Network and launch the website artwaterecology.org. The 2026 plan includes developing an internal toolkit for staff, implementing an evaluation strategy, hosting more workshops/events, and expanding the AWE network with events and connections.

Motion by Bolkom, second by Doolan to approve Resolution 2026-002 approving \$45,000 for the MWMO artist-in-residence 2026 program. Motion carried unanimously.

2026-003: Demolition of 1720 Marshall Street Building

In early 2025, Hennepin County began planning reconstruction of Marshall Street NE. MWMO completed a feasibility study to identify opportunities for water quality improvements in the area. There are several major trunk storm sewer crossings at Marshall Street NE and 11 outfalls to the Mississippi in the reconstruction area between Lowry and 3rd Avenue NE. The study identified 76 potential BMP locations, which were then narrowed down to the two highest-ranking projects – one on this MPRB-owned property that drains about 40 acres and currently discharges a lot of sediment and TP. MPRB plans to build a park on this property. The building needs to be demolished to allow for site grading in preparation for BMP installation. The park project will include shoreline restoration, connecting to existing bike/pedestrian paths, and a potential pedestrian bridge over the river. Staff are requesting \$500,000 to partner with MPRB on initial site preparation, including building demolition, to allow for future construction of a regional stormwater treatment facility. Altogether, this will be a multi-million dollar project. Reconstruction of Marshall Street is expected to begin in 2027.

Motion by Doolan, second by Lukes to approve Resolution 2026-003 initial site preparation at 1720 Marshall Street in collaboration with MPRB at a cost not-to-exceed \$500,000. Motion carried unanimously.

2026-004: Remediation of UPI Site Improvements

MWMO has partnered with Edison High School to create the Northeast Green Campus Initiative, installing several BMPs on the school campus. Edison and Spark Y have integrated the stormwater BMPs into the school's educational curriculum. Additional aspects of the original Green Campus Plan were not incorporated as they required additional land to the south, the former Universal Plating "UPI" site owned by Hennepin County. This site faces pollution issues that were too costly to address at the time. MWMO has worked with the County to secure funding from the state, Met Council, Hennepin County Environmental Response Fund (ERF), and an EPA grant in partnership with the County. The County has already spent approximately \$1 million on cleanup efforts. Total cost for cleanup is now \$2.6 million. Match for the grants secured is \$306,000, about 11% of the total cleanup cost. Pollution on this site has degraded water quality to the aquifer and surface water. As part of the green campus expansion, a senior housing element and Spark Y youth workforce training center, built by partners Clare Housing, Spark Y, and MPS, are also planned for construction on this site.

Motion by Lukes, second by Doolan to approve Resolution 2026-004 approving funds contributing to the remediation of the former UPI site in the amount of \$308,000. Motion carried unanimously.

2026-005: Jackson Square Park Improvements

Jackson Square Park is the most publicly used space in the NE Green Campus area. This property is adjacent to Edison High School and has planned upgrades to the girls' softball field in 2026 that could allow for the expansion of the green campus. Further upgrades to the park in 2027 could allow for additional projects. Staff is requesting \$490,000 for BMP installation at Jackson Square Park.

Motion by Bolkom, second by Doolan to approve Resolution 2026-005 approving \$490,000 to advance NE Green Campus objectives at Jackson Square Park. Motion carried unanimously.

2026-006: Election of MWMO Officers

Nominations included Buesgens, Chair; Doolan, Vice Chair; and Vetaw, Treasurer.

Motion by Vetaw, second by Lukes to approve officers as nominated and 2026 meeting dates as listed in attachment 6.4. Motion carried unanimously.

Open Public Input

None.

Board Updates and Announcements

Doolan noted that she attended the Watershed Democracy Workshop hosted by the U of M. Reich was a presenter. There were about 60 attendees.

Lukes announced that the Kasota Ponds cleanup will take place on the second Saturday in April. Buckthorn removal is also planned in the area.

Vetaw noted that she believes she will be reappointed to the MWMO Board for 2026, but it is not official yet.

Adjourn

There being no further business, motion by Doolan, second by Bolkom to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m.