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MEETING MINUTES

Date: 14 July 2026

Attachment 3

Time: 3:00 PM

Location: 2522 Marshall Street NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418

Commissioners in Attendance

Connie Buesgens, Columbia Heights; Ann Bolkcom, Fridley; Jeff Dains, Lauderdale; Lona Doolan, St. Anthony Village; Michael Lukes, St. Paul; and Meg Forney, MPRB.

Staff and Guests: Emmy Baskerville-Doeckel, Aaron Goemann, Shameka Gherau, Dan Kalmon (online), Abby Moore, Kevin Reich, Emily Resseger, and Nancy Stowe, MWMO; Glenda Meixell, Anoka Conservation District; and Amy Juntunen, JASS.

The meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m. by Chair Buesgens.

Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Motion by Dains, second by Forney to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously. Motion by Bolkcom, second by Forney to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2026 regular meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Consent Agenda

None.

Reports from Staff

Reich highlighted a positive MWMO event with former Councilmember Andrea Jenkins, a river champion and author/poet for her poem unveiling event on June 13, 2026. The event filled the MWMO meeting room on a summer weekend. Another great way for MWMO to connect to the community and generate positive feelings toward the river.

Resseger introduced the new intern, Julia Kauth, with the monitoring team.

Moore gave an update on the MWMO Climate Action Framework. The framework is nearly completed. The current Watershed Management Plan included development of the Climate Action Framework. Its purpose is to guide MWMO in addressing impacts related to climate change with goals to identify climate hazards and trends, and intersections between people, environment and infrastructure. Moore reviewed the process of the Framework's creation, identified climate hazards and vulnerabilities, and seven climate action strategies that have been developed. Next steps include sharing the framework with partners and communities, applying the checklist to gauge areas of success and further opportunity, and gathering more information.

General Business

2026-016: Artist-in-Residence Extension

Staff are requesting an extension for the Artist-in-Residence. Sarah Sassif, a local artist, has been working with MWMO since 2021. Nassif has been a fantastic asset and help the MWMO's outreach program grow. Recently Staff have been working with Nassif on the Creative Watershed Plan in 2026 to develop an internal toolkit for staff, develop and implement an evaluation strategy, and create workshops and events for the AWE (Art, Water and Ecology) Network. At this point, it is time for MWMO staff to take on implementation of Creative Watershed using the toolkit in 2027. Nassif will continue to work with Staff to develop and grow the AWE Network, a mutually beneficial network of artists and environmental organizations to attract and activate diverse audiences, and nurture the network between art, science and the community. AWE began in 2024 as a pilot with the official network and website launch (artwaterecology.org) in 2025. This year AWE is making connections between members and volunteers through a series of events. In 2027 working groups will be initiated along with member-led excursions and workshops. Staff anticipate engaging 500-600 people through the AWE Network. The plan is to have four meetings per year with the working groups identifying barriers to artists and organizations working together, then paving the way to eliminate those barriers with sample contract language, insurance needs, and examples of the impacts of this work. This program is having a great positive impact on ecological literacy across the watershed. MWMO's contract with Nassif currently ends on December 31, 2026. Staff are requesting an extension of this contract at a cost of \$25,000 to December 31, 2027.

Motion by Forney, second by Dains to approve Resolution 2026-016 approving the artist-in-residence contract extension at a cost not-to-exceed \$25,000. Motion carried unanimously.

2026-017: Storage Closets Upgrade

Staff are requesting approval to renovate three closet spaces at the MWMO facility. These closet spaces were originally open spaces. With expanded programs and equipment, the spaces have been filled and in some cases may cause safety hazards. Improving the spaces will allow greater safety, accessibility, and efficiency with maximized vertical storage and organization. Renderings are available in the meeting packet. Buesgens requested before and after photos.

Motion by Forney, second by Bolkcom to approve Resolution 2026-017 approving the 2026-2028 Upper Harbor general services agreement approving Barr's proposal in the amount of office maintenance/storage closet upgrades at a cost not-to-exceed \$36,805.68. Motion carried unanimously.

2026-018: Digital Asset System Design and Implementation

This is a request to procure and implement a digital asset storage system, mainly for photos and videos. This can make documentation and data including changes in water bodies, construction progress, maintenance inspections, ribbon cuttings and other events, monitoring and equipment deployment, long-term performance tracking, and education and outreach efforts available to all staff. Currently this data is stored across several platforms, some of which are only accessible by certain staff members. The data in it's current format is not easily searchable and no staff member owns the process of where data is stored, resulting in staff members using their own systems.

Modern digital asset platforms leverage machine learning/AI to enhance searchability. Staff would like to hire a consultant to review the over 50 systems available to help select, migrate data, create processes and assist in implementing these processes. Staff have selected Stacks out of Nashville to consult on a five-part process: discovery, match, prepare, build, launch and sustain. After this process MWMO may continue working with Stacks if necessary, or manage the process internally. This request is for \$95,000 in Administrative funds to cover the fees for this five-part process with Stacks. This does not cover the cost of the new platform or any ongoing fees associated with the platform. Staff will take into consideration ecological impact via data centers.

Motion by Dains, second by Forney to approve Resolution 2026-018 approving funding for the digital asset management system procurement and implementation project at a cost not-to-exceed \$95,000. Motion carried unanimously.

2026-019: Increase in Rani Engineering's Upper Harbor Budget

MWMO is responsible for the installation and management of the district systems and pipes until January 31, 2031, including managing current easements. Since the original easements were established, changes have been necessary due to shifts in concept and final plans, including utility easements. It is expected that, as each parcel comes up for development, future easement shifts will likely be necessary. MWMO has a current contract with Rani Engineering of \$60,000 for survey and easement modification. Of that amount, only \$1,286.25 remains. Staff is requesting an additional \$60,000 for professional services to continue this contract with Rani Engineering. Funding for this would come out of the \$2.3 million in professional services costs in the REOA.

Motion by Doolan, second by Dains to approve Resolution 2026-019 approving Rani Engineering's Upper Harbor Professional Services Agreement not-to-exceed amount increasing to \$120,000. Motion carried unanimously.

2026-020: SART Phase I Improvements

In 2016 MWMO and partners collaborated to install the St. Anthony Regional Treatment facility, an underground stormwater treatment system for a 600 acre watershed. Partners included the cities of St. Anthony and Minneapolis, Hennepin County and MWMO. The project included a secondary research chamber championed by MWMO. While the main swirl chamber is performing well, the secondary chamber has had performance issues from the start. MWMO worked with Barr Engineering to complete a performance assessment that identified five main issues and a feasibility study to develop retrofit scenarios to alleviate those issues. The chosen retrofit includes installation of a backflow preventer, a change in the filter media to handle low oxygen conditions and adjusting the pump setpoints.

Phase I will complete an as-built of the system, elevation of the bottom of the system, pipes into and out of the system, bypass pipes, etc. Then include the design, contractor selection and observation of installation of a backflow preventer from the primary treatment system and finally provide monitoring recommendations and operations support. The goal is to see better water quality coming out of the system. After phase I is complete, assuming improvement in stormwater exiting the system, phase II – improving the media in the secondary chamber, will be considered. Staff will collect six months of monitoring data after installation of the backflow preventer.

Motion by Lukes, second by Forney to approve Resolution 2026-20 approving funding for the St. Anthony Regional Treatment Facility Phase I improvement project design at a cost not-to-exceed \$42,000. Motion carried unanimously.

2026-021: Little Earth Stormwater Improvements 90% Design

This project was identified in the East Phillips Feasibility Study and in conjunction with street reconstruction projects. Partners include Hennepin County, Minneapolis, MPRB, and the Little Earth community. The Little Earth Stormwater and Habitat Improvement project recently completed the 30% design/concept phase, including on-site stakeholder engagement sessions. The result is a concept plan for the nearly 10-acre site that incorporates a suite of stormwater management and habitat improvements. The concept design includes a reuse tank with drip irrigation, infiltration tank, tree trenches, tree plantings, native vegetation and edible shrubs, bioretention basins and permeable pavers. The reuse tank will be installed under parking lot E with diversion structures from Cedar Avenue directing about 15 acres of stormwater runoff into the tank. Parking lot C will include an infiltration tank to alleviate flooding and improve water quality. The lot E tank is anticipated to cover 70-75% of irrigation needs. The community requested farm plots and edible shrubs, as well as tough design play areas to handle foot traffic. Additional work is needed to bring the design to 90%, including determining where native plantings are most appropriate. The next phase is to advance the plans from 30% to 90% design to include soil borings, site surveys, utility locates, flood mitigation and water quality improvement estimates, along with continued coordination with residents/board members. Staff are requesting \$330,000 to advance to 90% design.

Motion by Forney, second by Doolan to approve Resolution 2026-21 approving funding for Little Earth stormwater improvements 90% concept design at a cost not-to-exceed \$330,000 in capital project funds. Motion carried unanimously.

Open Public Input

Glenda Meixell introduced herself for new Commissioners as the Anoka Conservation District Conservation Supervisor for the 610 South regions, which has some areas that cross into MWMO boundaries.

Board Updates and Announcements

Lukes reported that the Kasota Ponds buckthorn removal event on June 2 had 18 participants and thanked MWMO for the Community Grant awarded for this project.

Doolan noted that MPR had a Buckthorn Removal Singles Club article.

Buesgens commented that a new developer is looking at the Medtronic site. MWMO, MnDOT and the city are talking about the need to treat stormwater from that site and the MnDOT site. FEMA floodplain issues have held up a project at the former Rainbow Foods site but the project is moving forward with construction hopeful in 2027.

Bolkcom noted that Commons Park recently opened and includes a large public art installation as part of a \$15 million project to improve all parks within the city.

Forney stated that The Overlook at Ole Olson Park has become very popular with a gorgeous view of downtown.

Adjourn

There being no further business, motion by Bolkcom, second by Forney to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 5:09 p.m.