

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF
THE MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT
BOARD OF MANAGERS**

January 3, 2008

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers was called to order by Vice President Pamela Blixt at 7:00 p.m. at the District office, 18202 Minnetonka Boulevard, Deephaven, Minnesota.

MANAGERS PRESENT

Pamela Blixt, Richard Miller, Lee Keeley, Jeffrey Casale, Mike Klingelhutz, Brian Shekleton.

MANAGERS ABSENT

James Calkins.

OTHERS PRESENT

Eric Evenson, District Administrator; Michael Wyatt, District Environmental Planner; Julie Westerlund, District Education and Communications Manager; Michael Panzer, District Consulting Engineer; Chuck Holtman, District Counsel.

MATTERS FROM THE FLOOR

None.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Manager Keeley, seconded by Manager Miller to approve the agenda. Upon vote, the motion carried 5-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of the 2008 Fee Schedule was removed from the consent agenda. No further items remained for Board action.

Manager Shekleton arrived at this time.

BOARD ELECTIONS AND COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Elections and assignments were postponed until all managers are present.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT

The report was deferred to the later agenda item concerning the District Administrator's annual review.

REGULAR AGENDA

Upper Minnehaha Creek Corridor Plan

Mr. Evenson introduced Roland Aberg and John Larson of the planning firm Hart Howerton. The firm has been working with the District, the City of Minnetonka, the Three Rivers Park District and Hennepin County on initial concept development for the Upper Minnehaha Creek Corridor.

Mr. Aberg made a presentation concerning the landscape and resources, existing uses and potential public use along seven miles of the Minnehaha Creek corridor from Gray's Bay Dam to Hopkins Crossroads. Within the delineated corridor, about 80 percent of the land is publicly owned.

Mr. Aberg began by describing potential additional trails to and through the wetland areas in the vicinity of the Minnetonka Civic Center, as well as plantings and community gathering places. He then reviewed potential means of extending natural forest and woodland plantings throughout the I-494/Minnetonka Boulevard interchange area and restoring both natural connectivity and human movement through the area. This plan fits with the broader concept of recasting this section of Minnetonka Boulevard as a road through a park district.

Mr. Aberg reviewed the corridor section between I-494 and Plymouth Road. The intent north of Minnetonka Boulevard would be to develop and connect park areas, integrate them and create more connections to Minnehaha Creek. Traffic calming would be incorporated on both Minnetonka Boulevard and Plymouth Road and the approach to the Burwell House would be reworked to integrate the house and its surroundings into the development plan. Discrete areas would reflect a range of formality, from natural, largely unmanaged areas to a "central park" in the Mills Park area with a more formalized geometric path system within the existing woodlands. Flowering trees and flowers would be used strategically, with opportunity for rain gardens explored throughout. Mr. Aberg also mentioned the concept of using smaller, decentralized parking areas connected by pedestrian bridges to park and natural areas.

Mr. Aberg then reviewed concepts for the corridor between I-494 and the Burwell House. This area would remain more natural, with less formal trails. An original creek meander north of the present alignment would be opened up and the opportunity for water quality treatment in naturalized basins would be explored. In many areas a trail would be

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separated from the creek, with points of access to the creek and possible docking facilities. The parties also have discussed storytelling of local Native American history within this area. Tribes would be invited to participate in development of this concept.

East of Plymouth Road, Mr. Aberg described a proposed “Big Willow Natural Area.” This part of the corridor is characterized by large wetland areas and would feature interconnecting local and regional trail systems along with an interpretive center that could house the District offices. Parking for the center would be explored south of Minnetonka Boulevard, adjacent to existing ball fields and active recreation areas, with connecting trails and walkways over and under Minnetonka Boulevard. According to Mr. Aberg, a shuttle service for canoe trail users has been suggested. Several managers inquired about expanding the area to include hydrologically connected wetland areas to the north and south of presently drawn corridor boundaries.

Manager Casale asked as to property ownership. Mr. Aberg replied that the City of Minnetonka has made strategic acquisitions and that the plan requires no further acquisition of private parcels. He noted that one property in the Minnetonka Mills area as well as a second in the proposed Big Willow Natural Area would be on a “wish list” for acquisition but are not essential. He also noted limited retail south of Minnetonka Boulevard where parking might be contemplated. There was further discussion concerning the existing small retail area north of Minnetonka Boulevard and east of Plymouth Road, and the potential mutual benefit in opening those businesses toward the creek.

Responding to Manager Keeley, Mr. Aberg emphasized that the plan would be phased and implemented over a period of time. Board members discussed the importance of exploiting site-based stormwater management opportunities. Manager Klingelhutz cautioned that the District would need to focus its participation on water resource-related benefits. Mr. Aberg suggested he might create an overlay of water-related features to assist the Board. Manager Blixt emphasized the desirability of buffers and a naturalized edge, in order to keep foot traffic away from the creek. Manager Miller stated that he sees the District involved in the creek and wetland capital improvements, and not the park improvements. He also would envision the city being responsible to maintain the water-related improvements over time.

In response to Manager Keeley, Mr. Evenson suggested that actual site work could begin in 2008, although the work this year will remain largely planning. He believes that the city may ask the District to provide some support for design work. Such a request would be brought to the Board. Mr. Evenson also noted that a space needs analysis for the District offices is underway. Mr. Aberg added that the city would like to begin work on improvements this year, probably in the Minnetonka Mills area.

Mr. Evenson summarized the next steps as including: continuing participation in the steering committee; starting public outreach; counsel working with the City Attorney to develop cooperative agreement principles; District consideration of contributing to payment of planning costs and the District space needs analysis.

2008 Fee Schedule

Mr. Evenson presented proposed Resolution 004-08. He explained the District policy for charging burdened staff cost and certain engineering/legal consultant costs to permit applicants. ***It was moved by Manager Casale, seconded by Manager Miller to adopt the proposed resolution. Upon vote, the motion carried.***

Hiring Sundays Energy to Develop Interactive Website

Ms. Westerlund presented proposed Resolution 08-001 to hire Sundays Energy at a price not-to-exceed \$12,297 for web development and design services to bring the digital watershed atlas into web-accessible and interactive format.

It was moved by Manager Keeley, seconded by Manager Blixt to approve the proposed resolution. Manager Blixt emphasized that the information should be available not just to teachers but to the public through the District website. Manager Shekleton stated that he wished to delay for two to four weeks pending a better understanding of the District's needs and how this project would fit with those needs. Manager Casale indicated that he would like a presentation on how the work will result in a useable product.

Ms. Westerlund replied that the intent is that the digital library is self-standing and linked to the District website. It can be linked immediately, or after the site modifications are completed. Mr. Evenson added that he does not believe a two- to four-week delay will give the Board a better perspective on the overall website restructuring. Manager Shekleton replied that he would like to move that process along.

Manager Miller said he is not convinced that the digital atlas is or will be used substantially or that further efforts on this project are worthwhile. He suggested that teachers do not have time to incorporate this new material into curricula.

Manager Casale said that he would see value in this project as a prototype if it is done well. Manager Blixt agreed but she does not wish to wait a year until completion of the web redesign, and trusts that staff has analyzed the matter thoroughly. Manager Casale commented that the potential savings of \$2,000 by acting immediately to coordinate the work with the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization is not worthwhile if the product is not optimized.

Responding to Manager Keeley, Ms. Westerlund stated that the purpose of the work are to secure the benefits of the District's earlier investment in the digital atlas and to undertake a discrete pilot effort for this sort of project. Mr. Evenson concurred that if the project does go forward, the District needs to market it properly to teachers. Ms. Westerlund added that usability to the general public is also a key consideration and that the target audiences would be kept in mind as the structure develops.

After Board discussion, it was moved by Manager Keeley, seconded by Manager Blixt to amend the main motion to authorize staff to obtain a proposal for a storyboard and marketing plan. Upon vote, the motion carried 5-1 (Manager Miller opposed). Upon vote, the main motion as amended carried 5-1 (Manager Miller opposed).

The Board also asked the administrator to advise on the timeline of the website redesign.

Manager Miller departed at this time.

Local Water Management Plan Policy

Mr. Wyatt presented proposed Resolution 08-002, authorizing the Administrator to agree on behalf of the District to extend a local plan review period and to disapprove local plans determined by staff to be incomplete. ***It was moved by Manager Keeley, seconded by Manager Casale to adopt the resolution as proposed. Upon vote, the motion carried 5-0.***

In response to a Board request, Mr. Evenson indicated that at next week's workshop staff and counsel would brief the Board in preparation for the local plan approval process.

Minnehaha Creek Infiltration Project Scoping

Mr. Panzer described a proposal submitted by the District Engineer for an amount not-to-exceed \$110,100 for completion of an infiltration diagnostic/feasibility study. Mr. Panzer noted that the City of Minneapolis capital improvement program contains three major anti-flooding projects. The District scoping study would coordinate with the city planning process to address volume, water quality and flooding issues. The District's study would focus on influencing the city process to incorporate infiltration. Mr. Panzer reviewed projects MC-129, MC-147 and MC-170 from the city plan and suggested how District capital funding could supplement city funding to make those projects effective for both city and District goals. The study would also examine other subwatersheds, mostly in Minneapolis, where District hydrologic analysis suggests that efforts could be cost-effective. Mr. Panzer noted that the Board would need to give thought to how to partner with the city and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, would need to assess the feasibility of accomplishing District goals and would need to commit to funding. These all represent decision points as the District moves forward.

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It was moved by Manager Keeley, seconded by Manager Shekleton to adopt proposed Resolution 08-003. Upon vote, the motion carried 5-0.

District Administrator Annual Review

Manager Blixt stated that the personnel committee, consisting of Managers Keeley, Miller and Blixt, met with Mr. Evenson last Thursday and reviewed the year's activity. The committee found that Mr. Evenson either met or exceeded the established goals in all seven areas. Goals for next year were discussed. The committee recommends a four percent salary increase for 2008.

It was moved by Manager Blixt, seconded by Manager Keeley to increase the Administrator's salary by four percent for 2008. Upon vote, the motion carried 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the regular meeting of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers was adjourned at 10:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Keeley, Secretary