COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Terry Jeffery, Jessica Vanderwerff Wilson, Liz Stout, Tom Dietrich, Bob Bean, Derek Asche, Erick Francis, Cara Geheren, Mike Kelly, Kristin Larson, Mike Wanous, Randy Anhorn, Steve Christopher, Jennie Skancke, Rachael Crabb, Chris Zadak, and Rich Brasch.

OTHERS PRESENT

James Wisker, Director of Planning & Projects; Becky Christopher, Lead Planner & Project Manager; Anna Brown, Planner & Project Manager; Katherine Sylvia, Permitting Program Lead; and Matthew Cook, Planning Assistant.

COMMITTEE MEETING

Ms. Christopher briefly summarized the topics discussed at the December TAC meeting. She reiterated that a central theme of the new Plan is the integration of land-use and water planning. She added that the District’s two-track approach is an implementation model intended to improve integration and that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss how the approach will work.

Two-Track Approach & Partnership Framework

Focus Track

Ms. Christopher provided a handout which detailed a draft list of factors the District will consider when selecting a focal geography:

- Water resource issues and impairments
- Public value of resources
- Local partnerships and support
- Known opportunities
- System scale and complexity
- Development / redevelopment pressure
- Probability of success
- Past investment by District or others

Ms. Christopher then explained that, in 2014, the Board identified the Six Mile Creek Subwatershed as a priority focal geography and reviewed the reasons why this area was selected. The Six Mile Creek subwatershed – where 58% of the land is covered by open water or...
wetland – includes six impaired lakes. The receiving waterbody, Halsteds Bay, requires the
largest load reduction of any waterbody in the District. Ms. Christopher also noted the significant
development pressure in the area, which presents both a threat to the resources and an
opportunity to make improvements as the land-use changes. Backed by municipal, regional, and
lake organizations in the area, she concluded, the District saw Six Mile Creek subwatershed as a
prime candidate for focused planning, given its high level of need, opportunity, and cooperation
from stakeholders.

Ms. Skancke asked how many focal geographies the District would engage in at a time, and how
long each geography would remain a focus. Ms. Christopher stated that the District would select
one to two focal areas at a time, staying in each area as long as is needed to organize projects and
relationships – a time period, she noted, which would differ from geography to geography.

Mr. Wisker stated that focal geographies are to be District-led ventures, in the sense that the
District convenes stakeholders and helps to align overlapping investment and implementation. In
contrast, he noted, responsive geographies are meant to be partner-led; it is up to the District’s
partners to identify potential areas for cooperation.

Ms. Vanderwerff Wilson stated that anti-degradation or degradation prevention ought to be a
criterion for selecting a focal geography. She asked if the criteria were ranked, and Ms.
Christopher clarified that they were not. Mr. Wisker noted that the criteria were not meant for
value-based scoring, but rather as policy-level guidelines for the District’s Board. He explained
that the focal geography criteria were best looked at as a whole for each subwatershed
considered, rather than one criterion at a time. Ms. Vanderwerff Wilson stated that the list of
criteria implies an order and ranking. She suggested that District staff include clarifying language
in a narrative which would accompany the list of criteria.

Ms. Brown described the planning process for Six Mile Creek subwatershed, the District’s focal
geography. The planning process will focus on integrating District work with local plans and
priorities. Ms. Brown noted that success in this geography will require the District to seek
partnerships with private developers and public agencies and ensure that plans accommodate
community growth and development trajectories.

Ms. Brown then identified the process’s five main tasks:

1. Convene stakeholders
2. Understand natural resource needs
3. Understand the work of others
4. Identify intersections between natural resource and local planning priorities
5. Develop an investment plan

Ms. Brown stated that by comparing stakeholder plans and water resource needs, the District
could more aptly identify opportunities to cooperate on projects and align investment. She noted
that the District would weigh the opportunities identified against external funding possibilities
from independent groups and government agencies at the state and national levels.
Ms. Brown added that the formal planning process laid out would be complemented by informal planning methods. She explained that the District and Six Mile Creek stakeholders would enjoy open communication to provide the District with the local context vital to remaining a responsive planning partner.

Ms. Brown stated that District staff and Managers were continuing to meet with policy makers in the Six Mile Creek area. Once this series of meetings was completed, she noted, the District would be hosting a kick-off meeting in April to begin the formal planning process for the subwatershed.

Mr. Bean suggested that much of the model for planning and implementing in a focal geography would be developed through executing the process for Six Mile Creek subwatershed. He stated that once the District had experienced its first formally-adopted focal geography process, the Committee would like to receive a report on lessons learned. Mr. Wisker agreed, noting that many of the lessons learned through this process will be incorporated into the District’s 2017 Plan.

Mr. Wanous asked how long the District intended to not only plan, but implement in a focal geography. Mr. Wisker clarified that in formally planning for a focal geography, the District does not intend to set up implementation efforts for the remainder of the 2017 Plan period in Six Mile alone. Rather, he explained, the purpose of planning for a focal geography was more geared towards developing a framework for how the District and the geography’s stakeholders will coordinate on projects and programming for the foreseeable future. Mr. Wisker estimated that the District may spend three to five years of focused capital investment in a focal geography after the formal planning phase, after which the geography may be a responsive geography.

Ms. Vanderwerff Wilson asked how the District will know when a geography’s status ought to transition from “focal” to “responsive.” Ms. Christopher responded that the decision to move on to a new focal geography will be based on an evaluation of when the needs and opportunities in a new area begin to outweigh those in the current geography.

Mr. Zadak asked if the E-Grade program would be used to determine when the District shifts focus from one geography to another. Mr. Bean noted that scientific measures of water resource improvement may take decades to register. Mr. Wisker explained that E-Grade would be used to measure management strategy effectiveness in the long term, rather than determining when to begin or cease implementing management strategies. He clarified that the District would not keep a geography in the focal track until measurable water quality results began to appear. Mr. Wisker stated that the District’s focus on a given geography hinges much more on project availability and partner cooperation.

Mr. Kelly noted that the District had to determine if it would transition a geography from focal to responsive based on an identified breakpoint in either the planning process or the implementation process. Mr. Wisker concurred, adding that the transition point ought to be cooperatively determined with the stakeholders of the respective geography.
Responsive Track

Ms. Christopher stated that in creating a framework to support the responsive model, there are three areas to consider:

- Formal planning – plan, policy, and ordinance changes
- Informal planning – ongoing coordination and communication with partners
- Programs – changes to procedure and practice

Ms. Christopher detailed some of the changes the District has made to its programs.

Planning & Projects

Ms. Christopher explained that the District’s CIP was being changed to not merely a prescriptive list of projects, but a goal-oriented framework that incorporates partner initiatives. She noted that such a CIP would allow the District to remain flexible, able to adapt to the ebb and flow of development.

Ms. Christopher stated that District staff meet with city staff on an annual basis. She explained that while these meetings were useful, the District’s meeting was typically with only water resources staff at the cities. Ms. Christopher noted that in order to stay connected with land use planning, it may be wise for cities to invite their own land use planning staff to their meetings with the District.

Ms. Christopher continued presenting the changes made to the Planning & Projects program, describing the District’s partnership approach. She noted that establishing MOUs with partners has helped both the partners and the District to enjoy increased transparency and trust. Ms. Christopher noted that the District seeks to exchange CIPs with its partners, allowing for more concrete examination of potential opportunities for aligning investments. She added that regular coordination and communication, as just discussed, would help the District to remain a nimble partner for cities and agencies.

Cost Share

Ms. Christopher explained that the grant approval process for the Cost Share program had changed. She noted that in addition to refining scoring criteria, staff established biannual deadlines for project applications and cross-departmental application review teams. The overall aim, Ms. Christopher stated, was to make the grant process more competitive and better prioritize projects.

Mr. Bean suggested that the District send a flyer with information about the Cost Share program to city administrators and policy makers. Mr. Wisker stated that District staff would be developing a “menu” of District services, including the Cost Share program, to be given to city staff and policy makers. He noted that the PAC suggested that the District give presentations annually to city councils.
Permitting

Ms. Christopher noted that the Permitting program, originally focused on issuing permits and monitoring field compliance, has recently undertaken an additional programmatic focus of developing partnerships with applicants. Where possible, she explained, program staff will identify projects with the opportunity for more beneficial natural resource outcomes than can be achieved through following permit requirements.

Ms. Christopher stated that the Permitting program provides the following value-added services for applicants who engage the District as a partner:

- Project-specific technical and planning assistance
- Streamlined regulation for applicants through District-held general permits with the Minnesota DNR and the USACE
- Flexibility – offering regional treatment instead of site-by-site treatment

Ms. Christopher mentioned that the District was exploring the possibility of establishing a wetland bank for mitigation credit as a service to applicants.

Mr. Bean noted that he believed state and regional agencies were more open to regional wetland banking than on-site mitigation. Ms. Skancke stated that on-site mitigation was not off the table for the DNR and the USACE, noting that the agencies’ preferences would differ from site to site.

Mr. Brasch asked if the District was planning on re-writing its permitting rules. Mr. Wisker clarified that the District would not be overhauling rules or standards, but shifting more towards a service-focused Permitting program. He explained that most permits will undergo the same process as always, as most applications are for small-acreage, low-impact projects. Mr. Wisker stated that the permitting process would only change for larger-scale projects, where there was increased potential for significant water resource improvement.

Mr. Bean stated that the best time for annual meetings with city staff to coordinate on large projects would be in late September or October, when cities would be gearing up for springtime projects.

Mr. Wisker stated that the American Planning Association (APA) recently published a water policy guide which called for, among other things, the integration of water planning with land use planning. He noted that the District’s shift in direction matches this call action.

Education

Ms. Christopher listed the services of the District’s Education program available for cities.

- MS4 education requirements support
- Fee-for-service events, trainings, and materials
- Concerned citizen response
- Coordination with Lake Associations and Master Water Stewards
Ms. Vanderwerff Wilson noted that Master Water Stewards had to spend 25 hours per year on approved activities to maintain their certification. She explained that perhaps the District could provide an opportunity for MWSs to accumulate creditable hours through serving as a liaison to private salt applicators on behalf of cities or the District.

Ms. Christopher asked the Committee what the District could do to better coordinate with cities, and vice versa.

Mr. Bean stated that cities would be beginning their respective Comprehensive Plan drafting processes, and that such a time would be ideal for the District to meet with city staff and policy makers to weave coordination with the District into city policy.

Ms. Geheren stated that quarterly meetings between District and city representatives would be useful. Mr. Bean concurred, noting that he meets with Carver County Watershed Management Organization as much as six to eight times a year.

Ms. Christopher asked the Committee whether the District should contact policy makers, land use planning staff, or water planning staff.

Ms. Skancke stated that city and agency water planning staff ought to invite internal land use planning staff to meetings with the District. Mr. Kelly agreed, noting that having a city planner at the annual meetings between the District and cities would be useful.

Mr. Bean suggested that District staff present to city councils annually on the District’s approach and available services. He explained that explaining to policy makers the added value that partnership with the District brings is the key to establishing the District as an asset for cities, leading to more frequent cooperation.

Ms. Stout asked how the permitting process would change for cities that have kept permitting authority. She noted that for more independent cities, District partnership may not be as enticing as maintaining that independence. Mr. Wisker acknowledged that such cities will likely prefer to operate within a responsive geography, where the city would initiate project coordination.

Mr. Jeffery stated that the same presentation on the District’s approach and services which may be given to city councils may be as useful when given to land use planners. Mr. Bean suggested that District staff tailor their presentation and audience for each city.

Mr. Wisker asked the Committee when the best time to begin these presentations would be. The Committee generally suggested that the District begin presenting as soon as possible. Ms. Geheren noted that the timing of the presentations would be slightly different for each city.

Updates
Ms. Christopher presented the District’s new Vision, Mission, Goals, and Guiding Principles to the Committee. She stated that the new guiding documents were meant to bring focus and clarity to the District’s approach of partnership and integration.

Ms. Christopher stated that the District was developing a brochure summarizing the approach of the District’s 2017 Comprehensive Plan. She noted that the deliverable would be sent out to District partners in April.

Ms. Christopher stated that the District would be sending out an information request to cities on the following information:

- City CIPs, land use projections, and goals/priorities
- Progress towards 2007 load reduction goals
- Relevant ordinances

Ms. Christopher noted that at the next PAC, the Committee would be discussing the role of LGUs in protecting water resources through load reductions, best management practices, and ordinances.

The Committee agreed to meet on the 27th of April.

The Committee meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Cook
Planning Assistant