



**Title:** COVID-19 MCWD Return to Work Discussion

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**Purpose:**

To frame a discussion by the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers on the phases, timelines and high-level details of how MCWD might “return to work” in light of new Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Background:**

On Thursday May 6, Governor Walz issued [Executive Order \(EO\) 21-21](#) to “safely sunset COVID-19 public health restrictions.” This EO outlined a three step plan for ending nearly all state COVID-19 restrictions by May 28, and an end to statewide masking requirements once 70% of Minnesotans age 16 years and older get their vaccine, or by July 1. This order came as more than 2.6 million Minnesotans have been vaccinated, and with the state being on track to reach “herd immunity” by vaccinating 70% of Minnesotans by the end of June.

On Thursday May 13 the CDC issued an [Interim Public Health Recommendation for Fully Vaccinated People](#), stating:

- Fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask or physically distance in any setting, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.
- Fully vaccinated people can refrain from testing following a known exposure unless they are residents or employees of a correctional or detention facility or a homeless shelter.
- Fully vaccinated people can refrain from quarantine following a known exposure if asymptomatic.

The updated guidelines for vaccinated and unvaccinated people are summarized in this CDC [infographic](#).

In response to these new CDC guidelines, on May 14, 2021, Governor Walz issued [EO 21-23](#) modifying EO 21-21, to eliminate the requirement for face coverings for fully vaccinated people, except under certain circumstances.

Since May 14 a number of local government units and private businesses have adjusted their COVID-19 plans, with some eliminating mask requirements, and others keeping them and requiring them for local businesses etc. (e.g. City of Minneapolis).

MCWD’s office building is located in the City of Minnetonka, whose Executive Council has [unanimously approved](#) Governor Tim Walz’s order rescinding the statewide face mask requirements. Effective May 14, residents visiting city facilities, including city hall, will no longer be required to wear face coverings. However, Minnetonka has advised its residents and visitors that private businesses and organizations operating within the city may still require face coverings, and patrons should follow these requirements as they visit establishments.

**MCWD Return to Work Framework:**

In light of the most recently issued federal and state guidelines, and after spending 14 months working remotely under a COVID 19 Preparedness Plan, the District must consider recalibrating its operations in ways that will affect the Board, staff, Citizen Advisory Committee, and the public.

Below is a proposed framework for the MCWD Board's consideration and discussion on May 27, 2021.

Effective June 1, 2021:

- Office open to the public
- Minimum staff presence will be required from Permitting and Operations to support public access
- Staff strongly encouraged to return to work in a hybrid capacity, 2-3 days/week, remote/in-office
- Masks required for people, including public, in common areas and meetings
- Break room will remain closed for eating during this time
- Planned meetings encouraged to remain digital
- Board Meetings remain digital until July

Effective July 1, 2021:

- Fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask at MCWD's office
- Unvaccinated people will be expected to wear a mask at MCWD's office
- Staff encouraged, not required, to share their vaccination status with teams and HR
- Vaccination status shared with HR will be confidential and will not be used to make employment decisions
- Board meetings in-person, likely without technology for hybrid meetings initially
- Staff required to attend Board meetings in person
- Potential for CAC meetings in-person, pending feedback and finalization of the CAC Evaluation Process
- Planned meetings encouraged to remain digital

Effective September 1, 2021:

- Mandatory return to hybrid work for staff with minimum three days required in office, and two days optional remote

Not Changing:

- If there is a confirmed case of COVID at MCWD, all unvaccinated employees will be required to quarantine
- Board, CAC, and staff members that are sick should stay at home
- Staff that are sick should stay at home, contact their manager, and use paid sick leave.
- Staff that have had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID, contact HR to discuss next steps which differ based on vaccination status
- MCWD will continue to monitor recommendations from the CDC and MN Department of Health, and adjust policies and plans as needed in response to new information

**Considerations and Questions:**

Masking and Social Distancing:

- The CDC advises that fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask or physically distance in any setting, except where required by other public regulations or private business guidance. MCWD's framework recommends masking for the month of June, to provide a transition from remote work to in-person work, while aligning with Governor Walz's original EO timed with Minnesota reaching "herd immunity." Social distancing and capacity limitations are not presently part of this framework.

Hybrid Work:

- Calibrating towards hybrid work for the MCWD Board and staff allows the organization to capitalize on lessons learned during the pandemic, optimize the tradeoffs between in-office and remote work, and maximize productivity and organizational resilience.
- A framework underpinned by flexibility with a focus on results provides people and teams choices on how to best configure individual or collaborative work to achieve excellent outcomes, and have fun and foster culture

while doing it. Providing this choice will complement MCWD's emphasis on recruiting and retaining high quality talent, while continuing to set the highest possible expectations.

- Staff are currently evaluating existing technology within the Board Room to scope out what adjustments and investments would be needed, on what timeline, to manage hybrid Board Meetings in the future in a manner that complies with open meeting law [MN Chapter 13D.02 Meetings Conducted by Interactive TV](#). Leveraging this technology long term will allow the organization to remain resilient to change, and able to integrate national consulting talent into MCWD's work, like it has done with recent project consulting teams.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

- A joint meeting of the MCWD Board and Hopkins City Council is scheduled for June 17, 2021 related to developer selection on the 325 Blake Road Project. The City of Hopkins is meeting fully in person, and has hybrid meeting capability. The Board of Managers will need to decide whether it wishes to attend that meeting in person at City Hall, participate in a hybrid capacity, or host the meeting at the MCWD office.

**Next Steps:**

This framework is presented for discussion at the May 27, 2021 Board of Managers Meeting.

Following discussion, the Board may opt to implement this framework by resolution and direct the Administrator to begin taking necessary steps to implement it, including drafting the framework into specific administrative guidelines. Alternatively, the Board may wish to make modifications to this framework and/or direct staff to bring back a more detailed plan for final approval at a subsequent meeting.

Questions ahead of the meeting may be directed to James Wisker at [Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org](mailto:Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org) or 952.641.4509.