



PRIOR LAKE SPRING LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT

WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 13, 2022

Prior Lake City Hall

4:00 PM

Members Present: Bruce Loney, Frank Boyles, Christian Morkeberg, Matt Tofanelli, Ben Burnett

Staff & Consultants Present: Joni Giese, District Administrator
Patty Dronen, Administrative Assistant
Carl Almer, District Engineer, EOR

Others Present: Tina Carstens, Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District, representing MAWD
Lisa Quinn, Spring Lake Township
Jim Fitzsimmons, SWCD
Maureen Reeder, CAC

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM.

MAWD Draft Strategic Plan and Membership Discussion

Tina Carstens, Administrator with the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District and MAWD representative, attended the workshop to discuss the Strategic Plan MAWD is undertaking to create a contributor versus consumer member base and re-imagine what MAWD can be.

PLSLWD opted out of MAWD membership in 2021. There was board consensus the District was not getting enough value for MAWD membership dues. Concurrently several other Watershed Districts chose not to renew membership. Based on drop in membership MAWD felt the need to modernize the organization's vision in order to build a community that supports one another. The current draft of the strategic plan is member-driven vision.

Currently MAWD has a staff of two. One of the organization's top priorities is to complete the update of the MAWD Handbook.

The goals and objectives of MAWD include:

- Fortify the infrastructure of Minnesota Watersheds (proposed new organization name) to ensure reliable delivery of services

- Build a watershed community that supports one another
- Serve as a liaison to collaborate with statewide agencies and associations
- Ensure strong legislative policies are in place for watershed management
- Enhance the skills of watershed officials

Tina suggested that PLSLWD board members participate in Metro MAWD meetings which are virtual and hosted by Capitol Region Watershed District quarterly.

There is statewide meeting scheduled for December 1-3, 2022, in Alexandria. The agenda for that meeting should be out soon.

Manager Tofanelli stressed that a priority for him is that he'd like to know what other watersheds are doing that are truly innovative and new approaches being used.

Refined 2023 Budget

The proposed final budget will be presented at this evening's board meeting. After the last workshop, \$100,000 was added to the budget to cover CAC-proposed flood reduction studies and 400 hours of intern time next summer.

Other changes include modifications to staff salaries and staff contributions to health plans.

The PLSLWD levy was not raised for three years (2019 – 2021) but then raised last year. A maximum levy will be set at tonight's board meeting. This number can be reduced before final budget adoption in December, but it cannot be increased.

Administration costs are set at \$250,000 which is as high as it can be per state statute.

Manager Tofanelli stated that he would prefer to do a bond rather than fund \$100,000 to a debt payment reserve.

Manager Morkeberg questioned the budget for the Farmer Led Council. The 2022 budget was \$61,000 and 2023 is \$54,000. Administrator Giese noted the 2022 budget included a \$10,000 grant to be used exclusively for the Growing Healthy Soils education sessions, which was a one-time expenditure. Therefore, the 2023 budget reflects a \$3,000 increase from 2022 for typical FLC activities.

The PLOC contribution went up from \$19,500 in 2022 to \$185,000 in 2023. Administrator Giese stated given the current funding formula used to determine PLOC Cooperators' contributions, cost savings can take a full year before they are reflected in the Cooperator's assigned contribution values. For example, 2022 construction bids came in lower than budget but will not be reflected until the 2024 contribution calculation. In addition, the current formula credits back special projects that did not get completed during the budgeted year. All budgeted special projects were completed in 2022, resulting in no credits to contribution values for 2023. The PLOC Cooperators will discuss whether they would like to revise the current funding formula at their meeting on September 15, 2022.

Watershed District Manager Appointment Process

Administrator Giese stated this summer, the Minnesota Supreme Court decided City of Circle Pines v. Anoka County that provides a new interpretation of Minnesota Statutes §103.D.311, subdivision 3 concerning the appointment of watershed district managers in the metropolitan area. Giese conversed with District's legal counsel to gain additional insight on the topic and shared with the managers what she learned. Administrator Giese stated her desire to meet with Scott County to discuss whether the case may influence the County's approach for appointing managers moving forward.

Biennial Professional Services Request

Administrator Giese stated that state statutes require watershed management organization at least every two years to solicit interest proposals for legal, professional, or technical consultant services before retaining the services of an attorney or consultant or extending an annual services agreement. The District typically solicits interest proposals for legal, accounting, audit and District engineer services during odd numbered years. Solicitations for legal, audit and District engineer were issued in fall 2021 for 2022 – 2023. The sequence for accounting services was shifted when a new accountant, CLA, was retained in December 2020 for services to be provided in 2021 – 2022.

A solicitation for accounting services will be performed this fall. Staff wants to get accounting services back into the same solicitation sequence as other professional services. Therefore, staff recommended performing a solicitation that will only cover services to be provided in 2023. This approach was agreed upon by all managers.

DNR Boat Ramp Repairs

Two of the boat ramps on Spring Lake and Prior Lake needed repair due to power loading of boats. The Spring Lake Association and Prior Lake Association submitted permit applications to the DNR to repair the boat ramps. As of this meeting, the repairs have been made.

PLOC Flow Discussion

A PLOC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting was held two weeks ago to discuss the feasibility of a study to increase flows in the PLOC to help reduce flooding on Prior Lake. The TAC expressed concern that an increased flow could contribute to downstream erosion. It was clarified that increased flows would only be considered during off peak periods. The TAC inquired who would fund this study. Administrator Giese explained that the study cost would likely be funded by the Watershed District and possibly the City of Prior Lake, as per the PLOC Cooperators Memorandum of Agreement, these are the two primary entities that fund activities located in Segment 1 of the PLOC, where most construction activities to increase flows would likely occur.

Managers stated while flood reduction is not an issue this year, it does need to be addressed if the need arises in the future. It was agreed to pursue additional discussions on this topic with the Cooperators.

Real Estate Assistance

The District is working to retain Paul Kruger, a licensed realtor and a member of the Farmer Led Council, to help facilitate discussions between the PLSLWD and landowners, as needed, regarding potential implementation of water quality or flood reduction projects on their parcels.

District Staffing Updates

Applications were received for the Project Manager position and interviews will now be set up with the strongest candidates.

Administrator Giese was approached by an experienced, semi-retired water resources professional who expressed interest in working for the district on a part-time basis. This person's experience could assist the District in advancing project management and/or rules administration special projects. There also may be opportunities for SWCD to assist the District with select permitting and regulatory tasks. Administrator Giese will pursue both opportunities further.

HR Audit

North Risk Partners, the District's insurance broker has provided a proposal to perform a District HR audit (approximately 8 hours of work). Administrator Giese recommended moving forward with the HR audit and all managers agreed.

Liaison Updates

Manager Boyles – attended the SCALE meeting. Much of the discussion there was commercial/ industrial issues.

Manager Tofanelli – did not attend the CAC meeting as it was cancelled last month. This month's meeting will focus on the budget proposals.

Manager Burnett – attended Lower MN, Sand Creek (for Manager Morkeberg), and Scott County meetings virtually. Nothing to report from any of those meetings.

Manager Morkeberg – attended the Spring Lake Association meeting. A portion of the meeting dealt with the WBIF feasibility study.

Manager Loney – attended Scott WMO online. Discussion was about budget was held at the meeting with a 5.5% levy increase being proposed. The preliminary findings from the current phase of the Scott Watershed Study was also discussed. The preliminary findings will be brought to the PLSLWD October meeting. Manager Loney also attended City of Shakopee meeting – nothing to report. The City is proposing a 5% levy increase.

Jim Fitzsimmons, who represents the SWCD, reported that they will be participating in an Outdoor Education program September 26-29. Kids from the high school will rotate through a number of educational stations.

SWCD has approximately \$138,000 of funds remaining on a Clean Water Fund grant received from BWSR. SWCD received a one-year extension on the grant and wanted to inquire with PLSLWD regarding any potential projects that could make use of the funds. Administrator Giese will discuss potential projects with Troy Kuphal. Currently there are 37 active service requests and 24 of those are conservation projects.

Meeting adjourned at 5:50pm

Respectfully submitted

Patty Dronen