

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE
BOARD OF MANAGERS
OF THE
NINE MILE CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 2021

I. Call to Order

Chair Cutshall called the Special Meeting of the Board of Managers of the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District to order at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, January 7, 2021. The meeting was conducted by web-based video conference, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes section 13D.021, after the Chair determined that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not prudent for the Board of Managers, or any committee thereof, to meet in person.

Managers Present: Grace Butler, Bob Cutshall, Erin Hunker, Peggy Kvam, and Larry Olson

Manager Absent: None

Advisors Present: Joe Bischoff, Janna Kieffer, and Karen Wold (Barr Engineering)

Staff Present: Randy Anhorn, Lizzy Boor, Lauren Foley, Erica Sniegowski, and Gael Zembal

II. High-Quality Wetland Inventory Analysis Study Update

Engineer Kieffer summarized the District's historical basis for this study, and she introduced Mr. Joe Bischoff of Barr Engineering Company. Mr. Bischoff reminded the group that the District's 10-Year Water Management Plan identifies wetland protection as an important issue and indicates inventories and functional assessments, preserving existing quality and protecting high quality wetlands, seeking opportunities to restore degraded wetlands, and improving and promoting native aquatic species and habitat are priorities. He explained that wetland inventories and functional assessments determine what wetlands are in the watershed and their quality and condition. Mr. Bischoff said the information from the functional assessments can

be used to determine which wetlands' quality should be protected and which wetlands could use enhancement.

Mr. Bischoff explained there are three objectives to this project: compiling the best available information to identify high-quality wetlands and gain a better understanding of the functions of those wetlands, summarizing specific wetland protection and restoration opportunities, and using the best available data to identify the highest quality wetlands and prioritize future management objectives. He described the process of compiling data and shared highlights from the inventory.

Mr. Bischoff went on to talk about the process of assessing wetland quality, including evaluating wetland functions and values. He explained wetland functions are defined as the physical, chemical, and biological processes that characterize the wetland ecosystem. He defined ecosystem services as well, noting they are how well these features might provide value to society, such as how they protect infrastructure and provide habitat and biodiversity. Mr. Bischoff said the most common way in Minnesota to determine functions is through using MnRAM: the Minnesota Routine Assessment Method. Mr. Bischoff noted that BWSR is moving away from using MnRAM and recommended the District be involved when the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources updates or replaces MnRAM.

Ms. Karen Wold of Barr Engineering Company talked about the process of identifying projects based on various sources of wetland quality information. She shared information about high-quality wetlands that would be good opportunities for protection projects and wetlands that might have potential for hydrologic restoration. Ms. Wold reported that eight high-quality wetlands were identified through field assessment for protection, and these wetlands had rare or unique species or native plant communities. She said that eleven wetlands with potential for hydrologic restoration were identified through field assessment. Ms. Wold went into detail about two of the identified wetland areas as examples of potential protection or hydrologic restoration projects.

Mr. Bischoff summarized the compilation of information on wetland functions from city databases and how this information can be used to better characterize the quality of wetlands throughout the watershed. He described how the ratings for individual wetland functions were used in conjunction with the criteria in the District's wetland management rule (Rule 3.0), to identify high-value wetlands throughout the watershed. He noted that since the available wetland functional data varied significantly by city, identification or approximation of high-value wetlands was conducted by city.

There was manager and staff discussion about the information presented. Manager Kvam asked about the wetland restoration opportunity at Carmel Park in Eden Prairie, and whether more open water habitat would harm the current amphibian habitat. Manager Butler said she had hoped the study would provide more

information on whether implementation of the District's wetland management rule has been effective in protecting wetlands from the impacts of development. Manager Kvam expressed particular concern about the impact of invasive species on the high quality wetlands. Manager Cutshall noted the importance of finding stormwater storage areas, which may include wetlands. Manager Butler noted that she would like more information about what happens to wetlands when they are used for short-term flood control.

Administrator Anhorn noted the scope of the project was to prepare a wetland inventory that identifies high-value wetlands within the watershed and identifies opportunities for protection or restoration. He noted that the scope did not include identifying if the wetlands are sufficiently protected by the District's wetland management rules. He added it would be nice to receive a list of the high-value, high quality wetlands that were identified but not part of the group that had field assessments. Engineer Kieffer collected additional feedback from the managers and staff.

There was discussion about the District's next steps, understanding where the high-value wetlands are located, protecting those wetlands, including protecting them from invasive species, ranking the identified high-value wetlands for possible projects and partnership opportunities, educating property owners about high quality wetlands, and addressing flood storage needs.

III. Groundwater Conservation Opportunity Discussion

Administrator Anhorn reminded the Board the District's groundwater conservation cost share budget for 2021 is \$100,000. He said staff has been talking with the cities in the watershed, including about education and outreach, supplemental groundwater conservation funding for the cities, and implementation of projects through the District's cost share program. MN GreenCorps Member Lizzy Boor shared information staff has gathered from its discussions with the cities, including information about Metropolitan Council grants.

Program and Project Manager Sniegowski talked about a model moving forward that could include the areas of education, working through the District's existing cost share structure, and providing supplemental cost share funding to cities. Program and Project Manager suggested that the District's cost share program would need to be updated to better receive groundwater conservation projects, as the existing application structure is not set up well for these types of projects. Program and Project Manager Sniegowski asked for the managers' feedback and said staff will bring back more concrete steps based on the managers' feedback. Program and Project Manager Sniegowski said staff will bring back to the Board more details about possible ways to implement the ideas discussed.

IV. BWSR CWF Grants

Administrator Anhorn stated he needs authorization from the Board to enter into contracts with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to receive the grant funds. He said the Clean Water Fund grant is in the amount of \$750,000 for the Rosland Park Project. Administrator Anhorn said additional grant funding is through BWSR's watershed-based grants and is in the amount of \$40,000 to continue the Lake Cornelia goldfish study and removal,

Administrator Anhorn talked about a potential grant for the Lynmar Park stormwater BMP that was presented to the Board at the same time as the Rosland Park Stormwater Filtration BMP project. He said that staff is working with the City to determine the best options to incorporate bioretention area into Lynmar Park that would reduce phosphorus loading to Lake Edina as well as potentially create some flood storage. He said there are potential funds for that project, but first he will meet with the City to discuss the possible project.

It was moved by Manager Butler, seconded by Manager Hunker, to authorize the Administrator with advice from Legal Counsel to enter into grant agreements for the BWSR Clean Water Fund grant and the BWSR Watershed-Based Funding grant. On a roll call vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

V. 2021 Workplan Discussion

Administrator Anhorn reminded the Board that he presented the draft 2021 workplan at the Board's last meeting. He noted that as part of the District's recent solicitation for professional services the managers created an engineering pool to be used from time to time for select projects. He talked about specific tasks for which the District could prepare request for proposals (RFP) or request for qualifications (RFQ) and send to the engineering pool and others. Administrator Anhorn asked for manager feedback. Manager Butler raised her concern about the amount of staff time it could take to develop RFPs, however she thought that there were numerous items in the 2021 workplan where the District could seek RFPs. There was discussion about the RFP and RFQ process. Managers identified workplan items that would be good ones to consider for sending to the pool. Following discussion, the managers directed the administrator to work with legal counsel to put together an RFQ or RFP for the upcoming stabilization/restoration of the south fork of Nine Mile Creek project identified in the District's water management Plan to be undertaken in 2022-2023. The managers further directed the administrator to put together an RFP or RFQ, when the time is appropriate, to help the managers prioritize the identified opportunities for wetland restorations in the earlier presented Barr high-quality wetland restoration and protection opportunities analysis and develop restoration and/or protection plans for the selected wetlands.

VI. Adjournment

It was moved by Manager Hunker, seconded by Manager Olson, to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m. On a roll call vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Erin Hunker, Secretary

