

elm creek Watershed Management Commission

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Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Notes | August 13, 2025

I. A meeting of the **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** of the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission was called to order on Wednesday, August 13, 2025, in the Plymouth Community Center, 14800 34th Avenue North, Plymouth, MN, by Vice Chair Ben Scharenbroich.

Present: Steven Touney, Champlin; Lauren Letsche, Corcoran; Josh Accola, Stantec, Dayton; Derek Asche, Maple Grove; Dusty Finke, Medina; Ben Scharenbroich, Plymouth; Mike Albers, Rogers; Kevin Ellis, Hennepin County Environment and Energy (HCEE); Brian Vlach, Three Rivers Park District; Diane Spector and Erik Megow, Stantec; and Judie Anderson, JASS.

II. By motion and second the **August 13, 2025, meeting agenda*** and the **minutes of the May 14, 2025, meeting*** were approved as written.

[Asche arrived and assumed the Chair.]

III. **WMWA STRATEGIC PLAN.***

WMWA has existed as a relatively informal collaborative since 2006, when it was simply a “Joint Education Committee” of SCWM and Bassett Creek. In 2010 it was formalized as WMWA through a funding agreement between SCWM, Bassett Creek, and Elm Creek, and the adoption of the West Metro Education and Outreach Plan.

Often referred to as “a committee of who shows up,” a small group of WMWA participants has been meeting as a working group to frame a strategic planning process to better define the organization, its mission and structure, and develop a long-term vision and pathway to that vision. The goals are two-fold: 1) formalize the organizational structure of this ad hoc group; and 2) define and start building a path toward a fully funded full-time coordinator.

The strategic planning working group has defined four planning steps to be completed in 2025. To start the process, they have prepared a short presentation* providing an overview of WMWA’s history and current functions and some questions for discussion. At this meeting they are requesting the TAC’s input and hope that at least one TAC member will volunteer to participate in a focus group to help further flesh out the strategic plan in step two of the process. Step three is implementing a more formal structure for WMWA than just “who shows up,” including bylaws that establish things like membership, leadership, voting rights, authorizations (hire, fire, contract), etc. Finally, the Education and Outreach Plan is almost ten years old and should be updated.

1. Present strategic planning process to TACs and take input (this meeting).
2. Host one or two focus group meetings of 5-6 TAC volunteers from the four member WMOs plus potentially Richfield-Bloomington and Pioneer-Sarah Creek to flesh out the vision and pathway.

3. Discuss organizational structure options and draft bylaws for current WMWA organization.

4. Update the Education and Outreach Plan.

Discussion:

1. Scharenbroich and Talori Dunsworth have volunteered to participate in the planning process.

2. There should be an emphasis on meeting checking all the NPDES II required education and public outreach minimum measures.

3. Members expressed less interest in individual grants for property owners while expressing interest in increasing outreach to renters.

IV. WEBSITE RFP.*

A small group of representatives from Elm Creek, Shingle Creek, West Mississippi, and Pioneer-Sarah Creek met to review a draft RFP prepared by staff for migrating and refreshing the three websites for the organizations. Included in the meeting packet is a draft* that reflects that group's comments. The group plans to meet one last time for a final review; although no substantive revisions are anticipated at that time. Staff hope to finalize the RFP for distribution by the last week of August.

The recommended actions are 1) discuss and provide feedback; 2) approve the RFP subject to any additional modifications by the working group; and 3) authorize Shingle Creek, acting as the Fiscal and Contracting Agent, to proceed with distributing the RFP. In the interim, Staff will request input from the member cities about potential vendors they have worked with that they would recommend.

The members recommended that the Commission approve the actions above as well as the proposed \$10,000-\$15,000 individual Commission budgets.

V. PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS.*

There has been ongoing discussion regarding how to speed up the process of closing out development project reviews. Typically, the project review has been approved contingent on one or more conditions, and the applicant is able to meet most or all the conditions within 60-90 days. However, especially when there has been delay in starting construction or there is continued redesign, some project reviews remain open for several months or longer. There may be multiple rounds of post-approval review as plans are modified, and the engineer and admin staff must spend time checking in with the applicant and the City to check status, incurring additional costs that are difficult to track and recoup.

Currently, the final review fee reconciliation cannot occur until all the conditions are met and the engineer has reviewed and signed off on them. It is to the Commission's benefit and obligation to close-out these projects as soon as possible, both to collect any outstanding review fees and to refund unused escrow to the applicants in a timely manner.

In July, the Commissioners discussed some procedural changes that would hand over some of the responsibility for post-approval follow-up to the cities. The project review is not a permit, it is a recommendation to the city to be considered as part of the city's own approval process. Cities have

their own lists of conditions for individual developments, so adding any pending watershed conditions should not be onerous, and some cities already include these conditions with their permits. Based on that discussion, Staff suggest modifying the project review administrative process as follows:

1. The reviewing engineer will continue to work with applicants during the project review process to resolve issues with their plans to limit the scope, complexity, and number of conditions of approval. Once a project is approved by the Commission, JASS will continue to send out a Notice of Conditional Approval to the City, cc'ing the applicant and their engineer/representative. This Notice lists pending conditions and will ask for their resolution within 30 days, noting that once all conditions are satisfied the escrow will be reconciled within 60-90 days. Stantec and Resilience Resources will ensure that they bill monthly to provide for that timely reconciliation.

2. After 30 days, the engineer will review conditional items with the City to discuss their resolution and any outstanding items. Unless the City requests the Commission's help with any outstanding conditions, JASS will send the City a Notice of Commission Project Review Closure, cc'ing the applicant and their engineer/representative. That notice will list any pending conditions and notify them that the Commission is handing over their resolution to the City and its development review process.

3. Following confirmation that the engineer has billed all the project review and follow-up time, JASS will begin the escrow reconciliation process.

4. Once the Commission has handed over the project review to the City, re-submittals after 90 days of approval by the Commission will require an additional non-refundable \$1,000 fee.

5. Approved projects that have not commenced within one year will continue to require full re-submittal (including all fees) and re-approval. This is a current requirement that is currently not always enforced depending on the individual circumstances of the development review.

Discussion:

1. Consider extending the application period to two weeks prior to the meeting packet deadline date.

2. Consider omitting step 2, above, regarding the Notice of Review Closure.

The members recommended approving the modifications as outlined in steps 1-5, above.

VI. NORTH FORK RUSH CREEK REMEANDER FEASIBILITY STUDY.*

In April 2023, the Commission authorized the North Fork Rush Creek Remeander Study, funded by a Watershed-based Implementation Funding (WBIF) grant from BWSR, which expires on December 31, 2025. The impetus for this was the pending acquisition by Rogers of a large tract of high-quality maple-basswood forest south of the creek known as Steig Woods. The City intends to manage the site as open space with limited access and is interested in enhancements to the surrounding area, including re-meandering the creek.

The Study Area is between Fletcher Lane (CSAH 116) and Brockton Lane (CSAH 101). The creek in this Study Area is part of County Ditch #21. The North Fork is an Impaired Water listed for low dissolved oxygen (DO) and fish and macroinvertebrate assessments. A future county road extension and regional trail are planned to cross the stream within the Study Area. This Feasibility Study was in-

tended to evaluate potential improvements to the creek, to both address the impairments and to accommodate the future alignment of the county road extension. The full report is posted on the website at [Minutes & Meeting Packets - Elm Creek Watershed](#).

Some potential design options were previously reviewed by the TAC. Those options have been refined and further developed, and probable costs estimated. At this meeting Staff:

1. Presented and discussed the refined design options and their benefits and costs
2. Discussed options for moving forward
3. Discussed TAC recommendations to take to the Commission in September

Staff requested additional comments by August 22.

VII. FOURTH GENERATION WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN.

Formal review comments are due August 16, 2025.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS.

The **next meeting** of the Technical Advisory Committee is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, September 10, 2025.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Judie A. Anderson

Recording Secretary

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