

Minutes- Approved: 1.21.2026
Time/Date: : 7:00 pm CST, December 17th, 2025
Location: County Board Room, Carver County Government
Center , 602 East 4th Street Chaska, MN 55318
Virtual Location: [Teams Meeting](#) | [Transcript](#)



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER
WATERSHED DISTRICT

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

President Barisonzi called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM CST.

Managers Present: Joseph Barisonzi, Theresa Kuplic, Carter McNew, Kyle Bakkum

Staff Present: Will Lytle, Della Young, John Kolb, Damaris Canales

Others Present: Beverly Burnette, Jody Brennan, Paul Moline

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No formal public comment was received.

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS, PRESENTATIONS, COMMUNICATIONS

It was noted that the Dakotas Soil and Water Conservation District work plan would be addressed later.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

The board approved the November 19, 2025 board meeting minutes, receipt of draft committee minutes from the December 3, 2026 Finance and Personnel Committee meetings, approval of accounts payable, and approval of the 2026 officers and committee appointments.

5. ACTION ITEMS

5.1.1 2026 Meeting Calendar

During this portion of the meeting, the board considered a proposed motion to approve the 2026 meeting calendar. The proposal outlined that regular board meetings would be held on the third Wednesday of every month, while the ad hoc Personnel Committee and Finance Committee meetings would take place on the second Wednesday of every month. A motion was introduced along with an amendment to adjust the schedule for November and December. The amendment specified that, for those two months, the regular board meetings would be moved up to the second Wednesday, and the Personnel and Finance Committee meetings would be moved to the first Wednesday. A motion incorporating this amendment was formally made and seconded. The motion to approve the 2026 meeting calendar with the specified

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monthly schedule and November and December adjustments was approved unanimously, and the motion carried.

- Action: To approve the 2026 meeting calendar with the specified monthly schedule and November
 - Made: A unanimous Board decision.
 - Decision: Motion Carried.

5.1.2. Educator Mini Grants

The board considered the approval of education mini grants recommended by staff. Two mini grant applications were presented. One grant was for Shakopee Area Catholic School, and the other was for Partners in Education to support the Minnesota Zoo Mobile program. A motion was then requested to place the recommended action on the floor. The motion was made by McMillin and seconded by Kafka, and the motion carried. The board then informed the group that the education mini grant program is a standing program that occurs annually and that board members had previously participated in similar approvals. Further clarification was provided that the applications are reviewed by the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) using a scoring matrix, and only those meeting the required score are forwarded to the board for final approval. Staff also noted that feedback from the board over the years has influenced the evaluation matrix and offered to share the matrix for further input.

- Action: Approval for mini grants for the Shakopee Area Catholic School, and the Partners in Education to support the Minnesota Zoo Mobile program.
 - First: McNew.
 - Second: Kuplic.
 - Decision: Motion Carried.

5.1.3. WOMP 2026-2027 Eagle Creek Contract

The Staff presented a motion to authorize the administrator to execute the 2026–2027 Metropolitan Council (METC) WHOMP agreement and to enter into a contract with Nine Consulting for the preparation of the 2025 program closeout report. Before formally calling the motion, staff provided additional background information, explaining that the funding is

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received from the Metropolitan Council and is used specifically for monitoring activities related to Eagle Creek. The funds are essentially passed through the organization to Scott County, and the agreement functions as a cooperative cost-share arrangement. It was noted that the contract spans approximately two years, does not generate profit for the organization, and may result in a small net cost, but participation is necessary to support regional monitoring efforts. Although the dollar amount involved is not substantial, execution of the agreement is required in order to receive and distribute the funds.

- Action: Approval to authorize the administrator to execute the 2026–2027 METC WHOMP agreement and contract with Nine Consulting for preparation of the 2025 closeout report.
 - First: Kuplic.
 - Second: McNew.
 - Decision: Motion Carried.

5.1.4 Big Hits Development in Burnsville

The board discussed the proposed Big Hits development project in Burnsville. A description of the situation prepared by the district administrator in collaboration with Young Environmental Consulting Group was referenced, focusing on the development known as Big Hits, which is located at and near the freeway dump adjacent to the Freeway Landfill. Board members, particularly newer members, were encouraged to review the report, related news coverage, and to speak with the administrator to better understand the complex legal context, including ongoing lawsuits, regulatory actions, and other related issues. It was emphasized that the recommendation before the board was intended to ensure the district is meaningfully engaged in discussions related to the project, while remaining mindful of limited staff capacity.

Staff recommendation was presented as a motion to authorize district staff to coordinate with City of Burnsville officials regarding future development review processes, statutory mandates, and environmental risk management, specifically to clarify expectations, roles, responsibilities, and protocols related to the quarry landfill and dump properties. Kolb noted that this step was appropriate and could potentially allow the district to support actions currently being pursued by the MPCA, while ensuring the district's role and that of other municipalities is not overlooked in land use decision-making.

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Additional discussion focused on timelines and the practical application of the proposed coordination. It was explained that the City of Burnsville had issued a conditional approval granting the property owner approximately one year to achieve compliance with MPCA requirements or to establish an agreed-upon path forward involving the MPCA, the watershed district, and other permitting authorities. The city hopes the conditional approval will encourage long-stalled negotiations and lead to either redevelopment with remediation or other resolution, as the site has remained unresolved for decades. Staff clarified that the district is not the lead agency in this process and has delegated some permitting authority to the city, which may limit the district's direct influence. However, upcoming watershed management plan rules could impact how the property is redeveloped or remediated if conflicts persist. Board members raised concerns about the proximity of the dump to the river and questioned whether remediation might involve removal or relocation of waste, highlighting the environmental sensitivity of the site.

- Action: Authorization for district staff to coordinate with the City of Burnsville regarding future development review processes, statutory mandates, environmental risk management, and protocols related to the Quarry landfill and dump properties.
 - First: Bakkum.
 - Second: Kuplic.
 - Decision: Motion Carried

5.1.5 LGU Permit Contract Extension

The board considered authorization related to Local Government Unit (LGU) permit contracts. Staff provided a detailed overview of the LGU permitting framework, explaining that the district intentionally relies on municipalities to administer portions of watershed rules such as erosion and sediment control, stormwater management, and in some cases steep slopes; rather than operating a standalone district-run permitting program. These LGU permits are five-year agreements that allow municipalities to act on the district's behalf, provided their official controls meet or exceed district requirements.

Staff further explained that municipalities obtain permits by submitting their official controls for district review, after which staff recommend approval to the board. The need for a 60-day

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extension arose because this is the first renewal cycle under the program and both the district and municipalities lost track of the renewal timeline. Additional background clarified that LGU programs are regularly audited under Rule A to ensure compliance and enforcement. Any deficiencies are documented and addressed, along with recognition of areas where municipalities perform well. Board members asked clarifying questions regarding the number of LGU permits issued, which municipalities are not currently under contract, and what would happen if noncompliance were discovered during the extension period. It was then confirmed that Savage, Chanhausen, and Eden Prairie are not currently operating under LGU permits for various reasons, and reassured the board that compliance is continuously monitored through audits.

This discussion also addressed how upcoming rule changes and a new watershed management plan could affect LGU permits during the next five-year period. Staff confirmed that permit language includes provisions for updating scopes of rules, education, and the option for municipalities to opt out if they choose not to implement new requirements.

- Action: Authorization for staff to issue a 60-day extension on LGU permit contracts and to authorize administrative staff to execute renewals and extensions based on successful explanation and resubmission of application materials.
 - First: Bakkum.
 - Second: McNew.
 - Decision: Motion Carried.

5.1.6 2026 Work Plans and Contracts

The board took time to address several action items related to administrative planning, staff compensation, and contract matters. The discussion began with covering the 2026 administrative and engineering work plans, which closely overlap. Staff requested authorization for the administrator to execute consultant and contract work plans for 2026 based on zero-based budgeting valuation assumptions, specifically aligning with staff-recommended budget allocations. It was emphasized that these work plans are necessary due to annual staff contracts but must remain flexible, as the Finance Committee is concurrently conducting a zero-based budgeting review that could result in changes. The board acknowledged that final scopes may be adjusted through contract negotiations or midyear budget amendments. After

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extended discussion to ensure clarity, particularly that work plans would be formally approved before payments are made the board voted to approve the request, and the motion carried.

The board then considered a semiannual fund development compensation framework. A board memo prepared following Finance Committee discussions outlined a proposal to incentivize staff, particularly the administrator, for securing new funding sources such as grants and nonprofit dollars. A motion was introduced to pivot the semiannual fund development compensation framework for an initial six-month period, enable compensation ranges to be determined by the Personnel Committee in January 2026, and authorize inclusion of the framework as an addendum to the administrator's contract. Discussion clarified that the compensation would be funded by district dollars; not as a percentage of grant awards, and would not involve levy funds. The Personnel Committee will return with a detailed framework for board approval. The board voted in favor, and the motion carried.

Next, the board addressed a recommendation from the Personnel Committee to terminate the TimeSaver service agreement. A motion was made and the board unanimously approved the termination, carrying the motion. Following this, the board considered acknowledgment of the termination or non-renewal of the Park Street Public contract. The board voted to formally acknowledge receipt of this termination. The motion passed unanimously, and staff were directed to work with the Personnel Committee to bring forward alternative options for government affairs services.

- Action: Authorization for the administrator to execute 2026 consultant and contract work plans based on zero-based budgeting assumptions, with flexibility for future adjustments.
 - First: Bakkum.
 - Second: McNew.
 - Decision: Motion Carried.

- Action: Approval to pilot the semiannual fund development compensation framework for an initial six-month period; authorize the Personnel Committee to set compensation ranges in January 2026; and include the framework in the administrator's contract addendum.
 - First: McNew.

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- Second: Kuplic.
- Decision: Motion Carried.

- Action: Authorization to terminate the TimeSaver service agreement.
 - First: Bakkum.
 - Second: Kuplic.
 - Decision: Motion Carried.

- Action: Acknowledgment of receipt of termination / non-renewal of the Park Street Public contract.
 - First: McNew.
 - Second: Kuplic.
 - Decision: Motion Carried.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

The board covered multiple operational updates, training opportunities, and upcoming events in detail. They began by discussing efforts to enhance the site used for bulk materials, aiming to keep it as clear as possible to efficiently receive new materials. There was a suggestion to modernize outreach, including using classified ads or other communication methods, to better share this resource with interested groups.

Next, the board discussed planning an Open Meetings training session. This session could be held either remotely or in-person and would be open not only to board members but also to new managers and staff from other watershed districts and WMOs, ensuring full participation. The board emphasized the importance of inviting a broader audience to maximize engagement. The proposed timing was 5:45 to 6:45 p.m., and while costs are minimal if hosted on a small scale, a larger workshop would require additional funding. This training is part of the board's commitment to providing ongoing orientation and educational opportunities for members.

The board also highlighted new orientation and board training resources recently released, which are particularly recommended for new managers. These resources include online modules that build familiarity with watershed district processes, vocabulary, and procedures.

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Julie Westerlund, who is managing the development of these resources, requested feedback to improve usability. While there is no formal timeline for completing the modules, the board encouraged members to access them to enhance their understanding of district operations.

Finally, the board discussed the “For Love of a River” event, which had been relocated from Bloomington to Henderson due to logistical considerations. This event is scheduled for late winter or early spring, likely in March, and aims to engage communities affected by river hydrology changes. Henderson was highlighted as a key community upstream that has experienced significant impacts and has active political and governmental involvement. The board encouraged members to attend to support community engagement efforts. As a side note, Henderson is also home to the International Ruby-throated Hummingbird Center, which may be of interest to attendees.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 PM CST.