



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

Agenda Item

Item 7. C. – Administrative Services Update

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

On Wednesday, November 13, 2024, the LMRWD Personnel Committee held a meeting to develop a plan for finding a new administrator. Managers Kuplic and Salvato held an interview with the current administrator about current services and developed a scope of work. President Barisonzi developed a proposed plan for recruitment of a CEO. The Committee tweaked all the documents, and the final drafts are attached for the Board's review.

The Committee is looking for Board authorization to release advertisements for the position and to oversee the recruitment process. The Committee would like to be ready to post immediately after the Board meeting. In order to make that happen, the Board should identify who will be responsible for posting and where it will be posted.

The Committee would like Della Schall Young to facilitate the Q & A session and would her to attend the January Personnel Committee meeting.

Legal counsel has reviewed all the documents and believes everything is in order, although he believes the timeline is aggressive. He recommends that to make sure the process is objective, the LMRWD should consider retaining an executive search firm.

Attachments

- Proposed Plan for Recruitment of a new Administrator
- Job Title: District Administrator
- Recruitment Timeline

Recommended Action

Motion to authorize release advertisements for recruitment and to authorize personnel committee to oversee recruitment process, including assembling recruitment team, scheduling a Q & A forum during recruitment period, screen candidates, conduct interviews and assessments of candidates, and select a suitable candidate and extend a formal offer.

To: LMRWD Personnel Committee
From: Joseph Barisonzi Chair
Re: Proposed Plan for Recruitment of a New CEO

Recruiting a new Administrator (equivalent to a CEO) for the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) involves a structured process to ensure the selection of a qualified and suitable candidate. I propose the basic steps are as follows:

1. **Personnel Committee as the Search Committee:** The Personnel Committee will take on the responsibility of serving as the search committee to oversee the recruitment process. They will begin by defining the role and establishing the selection criteria. As part of this initial planning, the Committee will identify key individuals or stakeholders they wish to invite to join or advise them during specific stages of the search process. This might include board members, relevant community leaders, or individuals with executive recruitment experience, whose perspectives can enrich the selection process and help ensure a well-rounded assessment of candidates.

2. **Define the Role and Responsibilities:** Develop a comprehensive job description outlining the Administrator's duties, required qualifications, and desired experience. This ensures clarity and attracts candidates aligned with the District's needs. [[See Initial Draft Here](#)]

3. **Develop a Recruitment Strategy**

To attract a diverse and qualified pool of candidates for the District Administrator position, the following recruitment approach will be used:

1. **External Announcement and Advertising:**
 - a. **County and SWCD Notification:** Send a formal announcement of the position to the County, County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), and all existing District vendors and contractors to reach professionals familiar with watershed management and environmental policy. [[Sample Here](#)]

 - b. **Website and Social Media Posting:** Post the job description and application details on the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District's official website and social media channels to increase visibility among a broader audience interested in environmental and watershed management roles. [[Sample Press Release](#)] [[Sample Social Media Posts](#)]

 - c. **Relevant Job Boards:** Share the job posting on relevant job boards, including the Minnesota Watersheds job board, to ensure the

announcement reaches qualified external candidates. [[Draft List of Job Boards](#)]

2. Application Deadline:

- a. Set a 45-day application deadline from the posting date to allow adequate time for candidates to review the position requirements, gather required documents, and submit complete applications. [[Proposed Timeline](#)]

3. Q&A Forum:

- a. Schedule a Q&A forum at least 14 days before the application deadline to provide interested candidates an opportunity to ask questions about the role, responsibilities, and application process. This forum will be held virtually, and details will be shared on the District's website and through other announcement channels. Participation will be anonymous. [[Potential Task List](#)] [[Sample Agenda](#)]

By following this approach, the District aims to reach qualified candidates effectively, support transparency in the hiring process, and encourage applications from a diverse group of professionals aligned with the District's mission and goals.

4. **Screen and Shortlist Candidates:** Review applications to identify candidates who meet the established criteria. Conduct preliminary assessments to create a shortlist for interviews. [[Sample Candidate Screening and Shortlisting Rubric](#)]
5. **Conduct Interviews and Assessments:** Arrange multiple interview rounds to evaluate candidates' competencies, leadership abilities, and cultural fit. Incorporate assessments or presentations to gauge their strategic vision and problem-solving skills. [[Sample First round Interview Questions](#) | [Sample Second round Interview Questions](#)]
6. **Perform Reference and Background Checks:** Verify the credentials and backgrounds of top candidates to ensure their qualifications and integrity.
7. **Make a Selection and Extend an Offer:** The search committee selects the most suitable candidate and extends a formal offer, including details on compensation, benefits, and other terms of employment.
8. **Onboard the New Administrator:** Facilitate a structured onboarding process to integrate the new Administrator into the organization, providing them with the necessary resources and information to succeed in their role.

By following these steps [[First Draft of a master task list](#)], it is my belief that the LMRWD can effectively recruit a new Administrator who aligns with our mission and objectives.

Job Title: District Administrator

Reports To: Board of Managers

Location: Chaska, MN

Job Summary

The District Administrator serves as the chief executive for the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD), dedicated to protecting and managing the water resources of the Lower Minnesota River. The Administrator oversees all aspects of District operations, including dredge material management, water quality improvement, flood control, wetland conservation, and habitat restoration projects. Working closely with the Board of Managers, the Administrator collaborates with District staff and manages a consultant team—including the District Engineer, Counsel, and Lobby firm—to advance the District's mission. This position requires skilled vendor management, in-depth knowledge of watershed management principles, and the ability to foster partnerships with stakeholders and agencies, such as the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), to sustain and enhance watershed health for the communities within the District.

Position Structure Options

The Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board is open to considering various structures to fulfill the District Administrator role, recognizing that flexibility can help the District effectively accomplish its goals. We welcome applications from:

- **Individual Employees:** Candidates interested in a traditional employment role with the District.
- **Independent Contractors:** Professionals offering their services as consultants on a contract basis.
- **Principals in a Firm:** Leaders of organizations who can dedicate their time and expertise while leveraging their firm's resources to support the District.
- **Firms or Consulting Groups:** Established firms or consulting groups specializing in watershed management or related fields, capable of providing comprehensive services to meet the District's needs.

The Board is committed to exploring these options to identify the structure that best supports the District's mission and allows for effective, sustainable progress in managing the Lower Minnesota River's resources.

Key Responsibilities

A general overview of the position responsibilities with an estimate of allocated time:

1. **Strategic Leadership and Planning (15%)**

- Develop, implement, and evaluate the District's strategic plan, aligning programs with the LMRWD's mission to protect and manage the Lower Minnesota River's water resources.
 - Oversee and coordinate watershed-specific projects and policy initiatives with vendors, ensuring alignment with the District's goals, particularly in addressing issues such as sedimentation, water quality degradation, flood risk, and habitat preservation.
 - Stay informed on policy and regulatory changes affecting watershed management, particularly those related to BWSR, and proactively develop strategies to address these changes.
- 2. Program and Project Management with Consultant Team (15%)**
- Collaborate closely with the District Engineer, Counsel, and Lobby firm to manage and coordinate water resource projects, including stormwater management, wetland protection, and water quality monitoring, tailored to the needs of the Lower Minnesota River watershed.
 - Manage permitting processes through the appropriate consultants and vendors to ensure project compliance with local, state, and federal requirements.
 - Maintain regular communication with vendors to ensure timely project updates, milestone tracking, and adherence to budgets, providing regular reports to the Board of Managers and key stakeholders.
- 3. Financial Oversight and Budget Management (10%)**
- Develop and administer the District's budget in consultation with the Board, ensuring responsible fiscal management aligned with District priorities.
 - Collaborate with vendors on financial reporting, annual audits, and grant applications to secure funding from state, federal, and private sources to support watershed projects.
 - Identify and pursue innovative funding opportunities in consultation with vendors and staff to sustain and expand LMRWD initiatives and meet evolving environmental challenges.
- 4. Stakeholder and Community Engagement (15%)**
- Establish and strengthen relationships with local governments, community groups, and state agencies, such as BWSR, to promote awareness of the Lower Minnesota River's ecological importance and watershed health initiatives.
 - Represent the LMRWD at public meetings, forums, and collaborative projects, advocating for sustainable practices and educating the public on water quality and conservation.
 - Engage with residents in District programs, policies, and opportunities by District partners
 - Develop a comprehensive communications strategy in collaboration with vendors to engage the community on critical issues, upcoming projects, and volunteer or citizen science opportunities.
- 5. Board Support and Governance (40%)**

- Serve as the primary liaison between the Board of Managers, District staff, and the consultant team, facilitating communication and alignment on goals, strategies, and operational priorities.
 - Prepare and present in-depth reports, project updates, and policy recommendations to inform Board decision-making and maintain clear, effective communication channels with all vendors.
 - Execute Board directives and ensure that all District policies are implemented across District operations and projects managed by the consultant team.
- 6. Organizational and Staff Leadership (5%)**
- Lead, manage, and mentor District staff, fostering a collaborative work environment focused on professional development, accountability, and excellence in public service.
 - Conduct regular performance evaluations, support staff development, and address personnel matters as needed.
 - Ensure all District operations and initiatives comply with local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and policies, and work with consultants to verify compliance.

Qualifications

- **Education:** Bachelor's degree in finance, business administration public administration, environmental science, natural resources management, hydrology, or a related field. A master's degree or equivalent experience is preferred.
- **Experience:** Experience in water resources management, watershed management, or environmental policy, with at least three years in a senior leadership role. Experience in managing consultant teams and familiarity with BWSR programs and policies is highly preferred.
- **Knowledge:**
 - In-depth knowledge of watershed management principles, environmental policy, and regulatory frameworks, including those administered by BWSR and other Minnesota agencies.
 - Familiarity with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), BWSR, Army Corp of Engineers and other relevant agencies, as well as grant funding processes.
- **Preferred Qualifications**
 - Certification in water resources management, public administration, or a related field.
 - Prior experience working with a Board of Managers, especially in a public or government setting.
 - Knowledge of Minnesota's environmental regulatory landscape, especially BWSR, and experience leading public engagement or community outreach programs related to watershed health.

If you do not fit all of these qualifications but are passionate and committed to these issues we urge you to apply.

Skills and Abilities

- **Leadership and Strategic Vision:** Demonstrated ability to lead strategic planning and inspire others to work toward the mission and goals of the LMRWD.
- **Vendor and Project Management:** Proven experience managing complex environmental projects with a consultant team, particularly those focused on watershed health, from concept through to successful completion.
- **Financial Acumen:** Strong skills in budgeting, financial management, and grant writing to secure funding for District initiatives.
- **Communication and Collaboration:** Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, with a proven track record of working effectively with diverse stakeholders, including public officials, community leaders, consultants, and the general public.
- **Problem-Solving and Decision-Making:** Strong analytical and problem-solving skills, with the ability to make sound decisions and adapt to evolving environmental challenges and community needs.
- **Self-Motivation and Independence:** Highly self-motivated with a strong work ethic, able to prioritize and accomplish tasks efficiently with minimal direction, demonstrating resourcefulness in addressing challenges and driving initiatives forward independently.

Compensation and Benefits

Competitive compensation commensurate with experience and qualifications.

Application Process

To apply, please submit a cover letter, resume, and three references to the Personnel Committee [Personnel@LowerMNRiverWD.org]. Applications deadline is

November 2024

- **Wednesday, November 13: Personnel Committee Meeting**
 - Finalize job description, recruitment strategy, and timeline. Confirm roles and responsibilities within the Committee.

December 2024

- **Wednesday, December 4: Finalize Posting and Distribution Details**
 - Complete all posting and distribution materials.
- **Tuesday, December 10: Prepare Announcement for Website and Social Media**
 - Ensure all announcement materials are ready for publication.
- **Wednesday, December 11: Board Meeting**
 - Approve the recruitment plan and authorize the Personnel Committee to initiate the hiring process.
- **Thursday, December 12: Job Posting Launch**
 - Post the position on the LMRWD website, social media, and relevant job boards.
- **Monday, January 27, 2025: Application Deadline**
 - Deadline for applications, 45 days from the posting date.

January 2025

- **Thursday, January 9: Special Personnel Committee Meeting**
 - Confirm logistics for the Q&A session and finalize criteria for applicant screening.
- **Monday, January 13: Q&A Forum for Candidates**
 - Host a virtual Q&A session 14 days before the new application deadline to provide information and answer applicant questions.
- **Monday, January 27: Application Deadline**
- **Wednesday, January 29: Special Personnel Committee Meeting**
 - Begin the initial review of applications within 48 hours of the deadline.
 - Cull applications and shortlist candidates for the first round of interviews.
- **Monday-Tuesday, February 3-4: First Round Interviews**
 - Conduct initial interviews with shortlisted candidates.

February 2025

- **Monday, February 10: Special Personnel Committee Meeting**
 - Review first-round interview feedback and select 2-3 finalists.
- **Wednesday-Thursday, February 12-13: Second Round Interviews**
 - Conduct final interviews with selected finalists and begin reference checks.
- **Wednesday, February 19: Board Meeting**
 - Approve the offer to the selected candidate.

March 2025

- **Wednesday, March 12: Personnel Committee Meeting**
 - Finalize onboarding preparations, including terms and contract, if still need to be completed.
- **Wednesday, March 19: Board Meeting**
 - Approve the final contract for the new District Administrator.
- **Thursday, March 20: Official Start Date for the New Administrator**

April 2025

- **Wednesday, April 9: Personnel Committee Meeting**
 - Review and adjust the onboarding process as needed.
- **Wednesday, April 16: Board Meeting**
 - Celebration and recognition of Linda's service.