



# Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

## Meeting Notes of the Watershed Plan Steering Committee March 7, 2024 @ 8:30 a.m. Brookview, Golden Valley

### Meeting Attendees:

Committee Chair Kennedy; Commissioners Cesnik, Welch, Hauer; Alternate Commissioner Polzin; Community Member Loomis; TAC Members Eckman and Scharenbroich; Administrator Jester; Commission Engineers Chandler, Williams, and Johnson

### 1. WELCOME

Committee Chair Kennedy opened the meeting at approximately 8:38 a.m.

### 2. REVIEW FEBRUARY 7 MEETING NOTES

The February 7, 2024 Plan Steering Committee meeting notes were approved by consensus with no changes.

### 3. REVIEW UPDATED PLAN DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR

The committee reviewed the updated plan development calendar that reflects some slippage in the schedule. Staff noted the schedule was also updated to include timeframes for the 60-day and 90-day review periods and estimates the plan will be approved/adopted in February 2026, 5 months past the expiration of the current plan. They noted the current plan will stay in effect until the BCWMC adopts a new plan and that eligibility for grant funding may be impacted.

There was consensus that getting the plan done right is better than rushing through plan development.

### 4. CONFIRM NEXT STEPS TO ADDRESS FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

There was continued discussion about the future funding options and governance structure of the Commission. Staff sought confirmation on the next steps regarding this topic as heard at the February meeting including:

- A. Continue to improve commissioner knowledge and engagement, working primarily through the Admin Services Committee, and to add the ability to compensate Commissioners in the updated JPA.
- B. Consider increasing staff capacity as early as 2025. The Budget Committee is reviewing budget implications of this action.
- C. Include an action within the first two years of watershed plan implementation to perform a comprehensive analysis of the options for organizational structure and funding mechanism(s).

There was agreement that these are appropriate next steps. There was further discussion at this meeting including: the need to better articulate commissioner responsibilities (Chair Kennedy learned a lot from new board member training at MN Watersheds Conference), the likely need for additional staff capacity, the need for considerable groundwork for potential transition in structure or funding, the option for progressing gradually, and the need for much engagement with member cities.

Committee member Hauer asked how implementation actions in the plan can be developed without knowing the structure or funding of the organization. Commission Polzin noted that in the short term additional staff may be needed to coordinate plan implementation, and that in the long term as plan implementation becomes more intense, an organizational change or funding mechanism may need to change.

Committee member Welch commented that the commission is under powered relative to current roles and actions anticipated with the new plan, and that this situation should be acknowledged now rather than later. He noted that the cost of utilizing city staff to carry out commission work should be reflected in the commission's budget. He acknowledged that this is a "chicken and egg" issue but that it's good to have a collaborative

approach in addressing the issue. Committee member Scharenbroich noted that it's difficult to estimate the cost of city staff to carry out commission work and some of that work is understood to be within city staff duties.

There was discussion about simply extending the current JPA by a year and working to incorporate more potential for structural change into a new JPA. Administrator Jester noted her preference for a simple update to the JPA (as already approved by the commission) while also informing cities that the commission is exploring structural questions. Chair Kennedy expressed his agreement that the JPA update should be kept simple so the organization can stay in place. There was discussion about how to structure a flexible or tiered implementation program within the plan to allow for a significant change in organizational structure and how BWSR now requires more accountability for plan implementation. Engineer Williams noted that during plan review, BWSR will want to know how the proposed work will be funded but that a tiered approach is possible. Overall, he noted that organizational capacity will need to be aligned with plan implementation.

It was noted the plan should be flexible and adaptable and that a 5-year check in point would be good timing for having an answer on organizational structure and funding.

Committee Chair Kennedy outlined his ideas for key points: 1) get the JPA done and keep the JPA update simple; 2) engage with cities to gain support for additional staff hours/higher operating budget; 3) build the plan with a tiered approach dependent on staffing and structure; 4) analyze organizational structure early in plan implementation.

Committee member Cesnik requested a mechanism to capture and track discussions on this topic including asking questions such as "what is the issue," "what are the implications," "when should it be addressed," and "how should it be addressed?"

Committee member Welch worried that momentum for a structural change would be lost once the new JPA is approved. He wondered if cities would actually engage in a meaningful analysis of the options for funding and governance. Committee members Eckman and Scharenbroich agreed an analysis of options would be appropriate. There was discussion about bringing this topic to the full TAC. It was noted that while TAC input is important, city staff can't speak for city councils. Chair Kennedy also noted that TAC members may need significant information about the options to be studied before they can be fully engaged.

There was acknowledgement that this committee will discuss this topic within the "Organizational Effectiveness" issue category in the coming months and that commissioners and TAC members will be engaged on this topic in a workshop setting.

**5. REVIEW UPDATED WATERBODY CLASSIFICATION LIST**

Staff presented the table from Appendix C of the 2015 Plan that was updated with current information including new impairments, years when monitoring occurred, and lake size (for nutrient impairment threshold). Engineer Williams noted that MPCA and DNR wetland vs lake classifications are sometimes different. He noted that the 2015 Plan incorrectly listed Turtle Lake as a DNR wetland rather than a DNR lake. Staff recommended keeping the same list of priority waterbodies for the 2025 plan.

There was consensus to: 1) keep the same priority waterbodies; 2) remove the column noting classifications from the 2004 plan; and 3) remove the column noting whether the waterbody is eligible for impairment listing.

**6. REVIEW ISSUE STATEMENTS AND DRAFT GOALS FOR WATERBODY & WATERSHED QUALITY CATEGORY**

The committee reviewed and provided revisions to the Aquatic Invasive Species issue and began reviewing the Groundwater-Surface Water Interactions issue. Revisions were made within the table.

**7. ADJOURN** The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:40 a.m.