



Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

MEMO

To: BCWMC Commissioners and Alternate Commissioners
From: Laura Jester, Administrator
Date: December 7, 2022

RE: Compensating Community Members for Participation in Focus Groups or Interviews

At the meeting last month, the Commission approved the concept of financially compensating individuals for their time and contributions through participation in focus groups or interviews. The Commission requested the development of a policy and a form or agreement for participating. A few commissioners also volunteered to help frame and refine the participation program.

Attached is a draft incentive policy and participation waiver drafted by me and Commission Attorney Anderson. On December 7th, Commissioners Harwell and Gwin-Lenth and Alternate Commissioners Polzin and Pentel met with me to discuss the program and offer suggestions for approaching this work. TAC member Leslie Yetka with the City of Minnetonka also provided helpful information on the differences in input gathering techniques. The commissioners and I discussed and acknowledged that each technique (i.e., interviews with individuals vs. focus groups) has its own pros and cons and each are used to elicit different types of information. Each technique can provide valuable information on knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values that people have. Interviews are good if you hope to understand a person's lived experience while focus groups are effective at gaining community-level thoughts and insights through discussion. Focus groups may be more difficult to schedule. Interviews would be easier to schedule but may require careful selection of key community members.

I am requesting the Commission 1) approve the policy and participation waiver; and 2) approve the approach outlined below with a total budget of \$1,200 from the Watershed Plan Development Budget.

Pre-Interview/Focus Group Communication

Provide participants with a high-level overview of the BCWMC organization structure, responsibilities, and primary activities. Include the definition of a "watershed" as a geographical feature and provide a BCWMC map. Include the water cycle diagram to show how everything is connected.

Native Community

Conduct small focus group meetings (up to 2 meetings each with up to 4 people) with watershed residents who are Native tribal members. Offer \$50 Visa gift cards to each participating member for each meeting. Offer refreshments at the meeting. Total compensation and refreshments = up to \$500.

Connect with Native community members through Golden Valley resident and Dakota tribal member, Jim Rock (who attended the October BCWMC meeting). We may also request the participant list from the

Native Voices Project coordinator to gather more potential participants. Focus group conversations would be facilitated by me; one or two commissioners or city staff members would be encouraged to participate.

Focus group conversations would center on gathering and understanding information such as:

1. A brief history of Native cultures and communities in this area and ideas for honoring that history and the contributions of Native cultures
2. Information on how Native community members continue tribal practices and how water is involved
3. Concerns and issues related to water resources, wetlands, riparian areas and opinions on the most pressing concerns
4. Information on Native practices related to caring for land and water, and how aspects might be incorporated into BCWMC activities
5. Exploring how Native people can be represented on the Board of Commissioners or committees and/or serve as a resource during further Plan development and beyond

Environmental Justice Communities

Conduct either interviews with individuals (by phone, in person, or virtually depending on wishes of interviewee) or small focus group meetings. The best method would be determined through recommendations from community leaders from neighborhood associations, coalitions, or non-profits (e.g., Jordan Area Community Council, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council, Harrison Neighborhood Association, West Broadway Business and Area Coalition, MN Renewable Now non-profit).

Names of potential interviewees or focus group members could be provided by these leaders as well. In some cases, the best interviewee or focus group member may be the community leader themselves. Focus group conversations would be facilitated by me; interviews would be conducted by me. One or two commissioners or city staff members would be encouraged to participate as well.

Up to 6 community members would be compensated for their time participating in a focus group or interview with the offer of a \$50 Visa gift card for each event (up to two events per person). If a focus group is convened, refreshments would be provided. Total compensation and refreshments = up to \$700.

Conversations would center on questions such as:

1. Where do you live and how long have you lived there?
2. What has changed with regards to the environment or natural resources in your community?
3. Do you have any questions on the BCWMC as an organization or the work we do?
4. Have you and your family or neighbors been impacted by flooding or water damage?
5. Do you or your family members use lakes, streams, or wetlands? How and where? Do you have good access to water resources?
6. What concerns you most about the condition of waters in or near your community? What ideas do you have for addressing those concerns?
7. Understanding that systemic racism and injustices have and continue to impact this community what are examples of how organizations like ours may have exacerbated injustices? What are your ideas for incorporating more equitable projects or programs? How can we better serve this community?
8. Do you feel like you have appropriate representation on boards or commissions or in positions of leadership?
9. What are some ways in which you would like to be involved in caring for or managing water resources?



Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

DRAFT Incentive Policy for Participation in Input-Gathering Activities

POLICY STATEMENT AND OVERVIEW

The Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (the “BCWMC”) deems it a priority to seek heightened participation and input from the watershed’s residents and other individuals that represent community groups within the watershed to gain insight, experience, and knowledge about water, natural resources, specific projects, and watershed management. Such input is desired to be sought through various input-gathering activities, such as focus groups or interviews, that will be organized by the BCWMC administrator or another BCWMC identified designee. These activities may be used to assist the BCWMC and its committees when identifying issues and developing and prioritizing policies, including, but not necessarily limited to, formulation of its watershed plan.

The BCWMC deems these focus groups and interviews critical to its ability to accomplish its duties and exercise its powers, and therefore it finds that providing individuals participating with monetary consideration in the form of cash or gift cards (“Incentive”) is a valid public purpose expenditure. Providing such an Incentive is necessary not only to acknowledge that the time and knowledge of those participating is valuable, but furthermore because it is imperative for the BCWMC to reduce financial barriers to participating to make sure that a diverse group of individuals is included in these activities. The Incentive, therefore, will benefit the community as a body, directly relates to functions of BCWMC, and it does not have, as its primary objective, the benefit of a private interest. To be eligible for an Incentive, participants must fully participate in the respective activity and execute a Participation and Waiver form in the general form attached to this policy.

The details and elements of each specific input-gathering activity, whether focus groups, interviews, or otherwise, must be preapproved by the BCWMC Board of Commissioners prior to its undertaking. Such preapproval will include a detailed scope of the activity and summary of the Incentive, including, but not necessarily limited to, the following information:

1. The form and general purpose of the input-gathering activity;
2. The form of Incentive and number of individuals authorized to participate;
3. The method of soliciting participation;
4. The funding source for the Incentive (e.g., BCWMC budget line, grant funding, etc.); and
5. The timeframe for the activity and any reporting expectations.

Approved by the Board of Commissioners of the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission on the ____ day of _____, 20__.



Bassett Creek Watershed Management

DRAFT Waiver and Participation Form

I, _____, wish to participate in one or more focus groups or interviews (each, an “Event”) initiated by the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (“BCWMC”) for the purpose of providing BCWMC with input, insight, experience, and knowledge about water, natural resources, and watershed management. I understand that the information I provide will be used by BCWMC to help develop policy. I understand that my name and any other information that I provide during Events will be part of the public record and may be shared with BCWMC commissioners, committee members, consultants, and the public, and that such data is considered public data pursuant to Minnesota law. I will not be asked by BCWMC to provide any private or otherwise non-public data during my participation.

Additionally, I understand that BCWMC will provide me with compensation in the form of _____ for each Event that I participate in (“Incentive”) pursuant to BCWMC policy. I understand and agree that I am not considered an employee of BCWMC and that I will not be entitled to any additional compensation or benefits in exchange for my participation in the Events. I further agree to waive, release, and discharge any claim against BCWMC and its members, officials, employees and agents for any personal injury or property damage that may arise from my participation in any Event.

Finally, I understand that, while my input and ideas are valuable and necessary as part of BCWMC’s processes and policy-making endeavors, many factors are considered. I acknowledge that my role is only advisory to BCWMC and that, as a member of the public and Event participant, while I have the ability to provide my input, policy-making authority ultimately rests with the BCWMC Board of Commissioners.

Sign _____

Date _____