



Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

Meeting Notes of the
Watershed Plan Steering Committee
December 11, 2024 @ 8:30 a.m.
Brookview, Golden Valley

Meeting Attendees:

Committee Chair Kennedy; Alternate Commissioner Polzin; TAC Members Eckman and Scharenbroich; Community Member Loomis; Administrator Jester; Commission Engineers Chandler and Johnson

1. WELCOME

Committee Chair Kennedy opened the meeting at 8:43 a.m.

2. REVIEW NOVEMBER 6 MEETING NOTES

There was a consensus that the meeting notes were appropriate as presented.

3. REVIEW UPDATED PLAN DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

Engineer Chandler reviewed the updated, more detailed plan development schedule noting it is important to be looking forward to when various plan components are slated to be discussed by the PSC and then passed along to other groups for consideration including the TAC, Plan TAC, and Commission. She noted that discussions at the December TAC meeting will inform when the Plan TAC would meet. Engineer Chandler noted that when the plan development scope and budget were originally presented, staff (and commissioners) did not anticipate such a significant overhaul of the plan. She noted that plan adoption is now slated for April 2026 (which was originally planned for September 2025). Engineer Chandler reviewed the major milestones remaining in the schedule and walked through the timing of a typical review process. There was a brief discussion on the ramifications of having an out-of-date plan including not being able to apply for state grants. Staff noted that plan amendments are possible and that budget implications of the late schedule will be presented at the January meeting.

4. REVIEW UPDATED EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Administrator Jester noted that the Education and Engagement plan (E&E plan) had been revised following comments at the October PSC meeting. She noted the document now explicitly connects issues and goals to activities in the more detailed E&E plan. Engineer Chandler noted that pending approval of some potential changes to education issue statements and goals, there may be changes needed in the E&E plan. She also reported that some other watersheds are piggybacking water education onto existing events such as organized bike tours. Committee member Scharenbroich noted that coordination with city education events and MS4 requirements seems to be missing from the E&E plan. It was also noted that an education message should be added regarding the impacts of climate change on water fluctuations.

Committee member Polzin cautioned that the Commission should understand its limitations regarding its ability to impact groundwater quantity/conservation. She noted that beyond education, the Commission has no role in addressing groundwater quantity. Administrator Jester noted that groundwater quantity is listed as a low priority issue. She reviewed the goals related to the issue which were previously finalized by the PSC and Commission. It was noted that the Commission's budget and planned activities will reflect the low priority nature of the issue. There was agreement that there should be context in the plan which clarifies the Commission's role in certain areas, including groundwater quantity.

The PSC requested that the Education Committee review the draft E&E plan (after the changes noted above are incorporated.)

5. REVIEW RESULTS OF NOVEMBER WORKSHOP

Administrator Jester reviewed input gathered from small groups at the November 20th Commission workshop. She reviewed where staff are recommending changes to issue statements or 10-year goals and where context within the Implementation section of the plan should include specific content.

There was consensus that the staff-recommended revisions are appropriate and should be presented to the Commission for final approval. There was also discussion about review of the draft plan by the Commission Attorney. Staff noted that unless there is a question about the legality of a particular provision or activity, they don't anticipate requesting attorney review. It was noted that the term "equity" should be clearly defined and that use of the term by other watersheds could be reviewed.

6. DISCUSS STREAM AND WETLAND BUFFER STANDARDS

Engineer Chandler reviewed the current BCWMC triggers for stream buffers and the buffer width standard. She also reviewed the standards of other cities and adjacent watersheds and noted that the Commission standards are much less restrictive. She then presented the Commission Engineers' recommendations for updated Commission triggers and standards. She noted that the trigger should be slightly re-worded so that it matches exactly with the trigger for erosion and sediment control standards. She also noted the recommendation that the Commission consider adopting a requirement for buffers an average of 30 feet with 20 foot minimum. Further, she recommended that buffer requirements for single family lots stay at the current standard of a "at least 10 feet or 25 percent of the distance between the ordinary high-water level and the nearest existing structure, whichever is less."

Committee member Scharenbroich noted that the recommended standard would have made construction of an apartment building project in Plymouth not viable. He indicated that the Commission should think about the impact on redevelopment projects. There was also discussion about impacts to properties with existing parking lots within the recommended stream buffer width and whether or not those property owners would be able to reconstruct their parking lot in the same location. Committee member Eckman noted that existing structures are grandfathered into existing code but they would need a variance to update their structure.

There was discussion about using a variance process similar to Shingle Creek WMC's variance process for stream buffers. Committee Member Scharenbroich noted that the SCWMC variance process allows flexibility for certain situations. There was also acknowledgement that floodplain restrictions would sometimes automatically incorporate buffers and that many buffers in urban areas don't actually filter runoff because it's directed to stormwater pipes instead. There was also discussion about how the science of appropriate/adequate buffer widths for water quality improvements is missing. Committee member Polzin recommended that Commission policies start with scientific reasoning and then work into implementation.

There was consensus that the Commission Engineer's recommended stream buffer standards be updated to incorporate the SCWMC variance process and then be sent to the TAC for consideration. TAC input should be brought back to the PSC.

Turning to wetland buffers, Engineer Chandler reviewed the Commission Engineer's recommendations

for lowering the Commission's trigger for wetland buffer requirements to match the trigger for erosion and sediment control and keeping the actual buffer standards the same, pending updates to the wetland classification system. She reported the State is currently revising their classification system (on which the Commission's current buffers are based) and noted the Commission may need to adopt a new classification system in the future. Committee members Eckman and Polzin agreed with the Commission Engineer's recommendation.

Committee member Scharenbroich was concerned that the significantly lower trigger would result in the need for many more wetland delineations, even by single family homeowners, which can be expensive. There was discussion about having a different trigger for single family homes. There was discussion that the trigger could incorporate language indicating that only projects directly adjacent to a wetland would require buffers. There was consensus that the TAC should review the Commission Engineer's recommendations including language to address buffer requirements on single family lots.

7. REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS TO BCWMC REQUIREMENTS DOCUMENT

Although there was not time to discuss the Commission Engineer's recommendations for revisions to the Requirements Document, there was consensus that the TAC should review and discuss at their December meeting.

8. DISCUSS COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2025

Administrator Jester will send a poll to schedule the January PSC meeting. For the rest of the year the first Wednesday of the month at 8:30 a.m. will remain the regular meeting time.

9. ADJOURN – The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:47 a.m.