



Capitol Region Watershed District

595 Aldine Street

Saint Paul, MN 55104

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August 12, 2026

Community Advisory Committee
Meeting
Approved

Community Advisory Committee Meeting Wednesday, July 8, 2026, 5:30 p.m.

CAC Members Present:

Tori Philippi
Richard Weil
Gwen Willems
Mary Lilly
Barbara Hall

CAC Members Absent:

Lauren Wheeler (Excused)
Mike Trojan (Excused)
Michelle Ulrich (Excused)
Andrew Montain (Unexcused)

Staff/Board Present:

Anna Eleria
Rachele Krivichi
Lindsay Schwantes
Nate Zwonitzer
Hawona Sullivan Janzen

I. Welcome, Announcements, and Updates

Tori Philippi called the meeting to order at 5:31.

II. Public Comment for Issues Not on the Agenda

None

III. Approval of the Agenda

CAC Motion 26-014: *To approve the CAC July 8, 2026 Agenda*

Lilly/Philippi
Unanimously approved

IV. Approval of Minutes

A) Approval of June 10, 2026 CAC Meeting Minutes

CAC Motion 26-015: *Approve the June 10, 2026 Meeting Minutes*

Willems/Weil
Unanimously approved

V. CAC Observer Update

A) June 17, 2026 Board Meeting – Barbara Hall

Permit Applications and Program Updates:

The Board reviewed six permit applications through CRWD's standard review process, ensuring projects comply with District requirements for stormwater management, erosion control, flood protection, and water quality.

Approved Projects:

- HealthPartners Como Medical Office Building – Approved a new medical office with stormwater treatment and detention systems to improve runoff management.
- Fairway Commons Apartments – Approved a senior housing redevelopment featuring expanded infiltration basins and upgraded stormwater infrastructure. A variance was granted where full runoff capture was not feasible.
- Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities Men's Campus – Approved campus renovations and an addition incorporating underground stormwater treatment.
- Highland Park Mississippi River Residences – Approved a redevelopment permit with updated stormwater systems and a variance recognizing site constraints while exceeding treatment standards.
- Highland Bridge Rowhomes – 8th Addition – Approved construction of twelve rowhomes consistent with the Highland Bridge Stormwater Master Plan.
- University of St. Thomas Grotto Refresh – Approved habitat restoration, native plantings, pathway improvements, and a pedestrian bridge. A wetland buffer variance supported restoration benefits.
- Why it matters: These projects demonstrate how development and redevelopment can improve water quality, reduce flooding, restore habitat, and support sustainable community growth.
- Staff also provided updates on ongoing permitting activities and project compliance.

Introduction of New Staff:

The Board welcomed four new employees who strengthen CRWD's permitting and monitoring programs.

- Ava Schimnowski, Regulatory Stormwater Field Technician, conducts construction inspections and supports permit compliance. She previously worked with the City of Bloomington and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
- Sophia Risch, Seasonal Permit Inspector, supports erosion and sediment control inspections. She previously worked for the City of Minnetonka and served with Minnesota GreenCorps.
- Amy Arbetman, Water Resource Technician, joined the Monitoring and Research team after serving as CRWD's seasonal technician and working in environmental laboratory analysis.
- Natasha Gauerke, Seasonal Water Resource Technician, assists with water quality monitoring and previously interned with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Action Items

June 3 Board Meeting Minutes

- The Board approved the June 3 meeting minutes.

May Financial Reports

- The Board approved the District's May accounts payable and receivable, supporting sound financial stewardship.

Chloride Pollution Prevention Plan

- The Board adopted the District's Chloride Pollution Prevention Plan to reduce pollution from winter road salt through education, partnerships, technical assistance, and improved maintenance practices.
- During discussion, a Board member requested that the Community Advisory Committee be recognized for its contributions to development of the plan, and staff agreed to update the acknowledgements.
- Why it matters for CAC members: Implementation will emphasize community education and outreach, creating opportunities for CAC involvement.

2026 Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)

- The Board approved the QAPP, establishing quality standards for environmental monitoring and scientific data used to guide District decisions.
- E. Opti Software Renewal
- The Board approved renewal of the District's Opti software subscription, supporting efficient management of permitting and District operations.

Unfinished Business

Draft 2027 Work Plan

- The Board discussed priorities for the 2027 Work Plan, including regulatory programs, capital projects, monitoring, restoration, education, and climate resilience.

2026 Minnesota Watersheds Resolutions

- The Board reviewed proposed statewide policy resolutions for the upcoming Minnesota Watersheds annual meeting.
- Why it matters: These resolutions help shape legislative and policy priorities affecting watershed districts across Minnesota.

Key Takeaways for the Community Advisory Committee

- The meeting reflected CRWD's integrated approach to watershed management through responsible development, scientific monitoring, sound governance, and community engagement.

- Key themes included:
- Advancing sustainable development through improved stormwater management and habitat restoration.
- Launching implementation of the Chloride Pollution Prevention Plan, with opportunities for CAC members to support education and outreach.
- Beginning development of the 2027 Work Plan, which will guide future District programs and projects.
- The Board's recognition of the CAC's contributions to the Chloride Pollution Prevention Plan also reinforced the committee's important role in advising the District and strengthening connections with the community.

B) July 1, 2026, Board Meeting:

- One of the permit applications involved pond cleanup, which included tree removal. Research suggests that in smaller, narrower stormwater ponds, trees reduce or prevent mixing as a result of blocking wind. The consequence is stagnant water and development of an anoxic zone at the bottom of the pond that releases phosphorus from the sediment. This phosphorus, which is highly bioavailable, enters the water column and can exit the pond, creating water quality issues in surface waters downstream. [An MPCA literature review conducted about 5 years ago](#) showed that the majority of stormwater ponds were not performing as expected, with some ponds exporting phosphorus at various times during the year.
- The McMurray bid came in at about \$8 million, about 6% over the estimate. The pump house cost was the reason for this. St. Paul's cost came in a bit under estimate, while CRWD slightly underestimated costs.
- CRWD staff member Lindsay Schwantes will likely get into the details of the We Are Water display and hosting by the District. The overall impression is that events seemed well attended, while walk-ins were on the lower side. Lindsay will likely discuss the continuing efforts of the District on art, workshops, and outreach.
- There was an update on work in the Capitol Area. Improving pedestrian and bike safety along the Rice Street Corridor is scheduled first. The Rondo Community Land Trust bought the Sears property and had Barr Engineering do a feasibility study. The Rice-University intersection is targeted for increased public space with a community focus.
- Proposed changes to the plumbing code would significantly negatively impact water capture-storage-reuse as a stormwater management strategy. There was a public meeting attended by about 60 people from diverse backgrounds (stormwater, golf, cemetery folks) opposing the proposal. A coalition of about 30 groups exists to push back on this proposal. For now, proposed changes have been put on pause. Personal thoughts here: Stormwater capture and reuse is an important management strategy for stormwater organizations. It is an important option in places where soils are not conducive to infiltration (Carver County) and in places where infrastructure limits infiltration options (CHS, Target fields for example). I was involved in some early discussions about stormwater reuse back around 2015-2020, and I was responsible for managing the content development on this topic in the Stormwater Manual. The MN Department of Health had significant concerns related to exposure to bacteria, including in irrigation systems, but they tried to work with folks who want reuse as a management option.

VI. Project and Program Updates

A) McMurray Fields Stormwater Project (Zwonitzer)

In 2016, a feasibility study was conducted for a stormwater infiltration and reuse system beneath McMurray Fields located within Como Regional Park and a diversion structure was installed in Lexington Avenue in anticipation of a future project. In 2022, Houston Engineering (HEI) was contracted to update the feasibility study after learning Saint Paul Parks and Recreation (SPPR) intended to reconstruct the McMurray Athletic Fields in upcoming years. Preliminary engineering plans for a stormwater system consisting of underground storage supplying water to infiltration areas and irrigation systems were completed in April, 2025. Project bidding recently concluded with construction planned for fall of 2026.

The McMurray Fields Project includes stormwater management shown in the enclosed figure as well as park improvements including a new artificial turf field. An additional parking lot, restroom facility, and other park amenities are included as project alternates depending on available budget. Project updates will focus on stormwater elements including underground stormwater capture that will be pumped to infiltration areas and irrigation to achieve the 1.1” runoff volume treatment goal.

CRWD has been managing design and will continue to be the project lead through construction of the roughly \$10 million project. Expenses for design and construction will be shared with the City as outlined in an executed Joint Powers Agreement. Funding for the stormwater management portion of the project will be funded through previously levied funds as well as nearly \$3 million in secured state funding. A recommendation of project award to a qualified bidder went to CRWD’s Board on July 1, 2026.

Tori Philippi asked how big the StormTrap SiteSaver is. It is 8 feet tall. Mary Lilly asked if it is all below the surface. It is mostly below. Mary asked how big the rocks are around the structure. They are up to 2 inches in size – larger than gravel.

Board Manager Hawona Sullivan Janzen asked about the restrooms at the fields and if there’s an opportunity there to provide educational signage about stormwater reuse. The City is not planning on installing restrooms due to budgetary constraints.

Barbara Hall asked several questions about the presentation. Her first was about using electrodialysis reversal as a water desalination option. Staff member Zwonitzer said he has not heard of that process being used anywhere in Minnesota and we would want that to be proven in our state before we look into that. Barbara asked what kind of sediment the StormTrap Site Saver captures in terms of size. It captures most things except for very fine sediment. Barbara asked what winter maintenance is like for the StormTrap. The District is planning twice a year to start for maintenance checks. Since this is the first time the District is using this system, it will take some time to fine tune. Edina and Bloomington also use these systems. Barbara asked how the Chloride Pollution Prevention Plan (CPPP) is integrated into this infrastructure project. The plan is just aimed at getting people to use less salt, and there is no direct integration with this project. Barbara asked if stormwater reuse would contribute to any kind of pollution on land, ie; vegetation die-off. Administrator Eleria and Zwonitzer said this is not a significant problem to their knowledge.

The District will consider conducting a tour of this site and will invite the CAC to join as well.

B) Watershed Learning Center Activation Update (Schwantes)

CRWD moved into our current building in December 2018. The interior and exterior of our site was designed to demonstrate clean water practices and facilitate watershed education. The 2021-2030 Watershed Management Plan Implementation list and 2024 Communications and Engagement Division program review includes goals for activating our building as a Watershed Learning Center. To further these goals, staff pursued participating in We Are Water MN. We Are Water MN is a traveling exhibit that seeks to deepen community connections to water implemented through collaboration with eight statewide partners and the MN Humanities Center. CRWD hosted the exhibit April 22 – June 14, 2026.

As part of hosting We Are Water MN, CRWD was tasked with identifying and recruiting local storytellers for interviews, providing direction on content for a panel about our work as well as a map, hosting an opening reception, and four community events, and establishing open hours for drop-in visitors. CRWD received a Post-Exhibit Host Site Report from Creation in Common as part of the services provided through hosting that is enclosed for your review.

Hosting We Are Water MN was a fantastic opportunity to explore new ways to activate our Watershed Learning Center. The District saw many new people engaging through our public events that resulted in opportunities to share more in-depth information about our work through hands-on artmaking presentations and staff demonstrations. CRWD successfully increased the diversity of audiences with nearly 80% of the organizations we worked with during hosting represented absent narratives. Staff also learned that drop-in visits didn't generate as many attendees as our group hosting or public events. Staff will review and highlight findings that will be considered as we further program our Watershed Learning Center.

CAC members asked about the languages that Public Art St. Paul chose to be included in the Sidewalk Poetry Contest and why. The languages were chosen based off the City of St. Paul's key languages.

An additional outcome of one of the events, the Open House and Ice Cream Social, was that the CAC was able to recruit three people who were interested in joining the CAC due to the accessible nature of the event. One helpful strategy for increasing attendance to this event was optional RSVPs, because then RSVP'ing was not a limiting factor.

Barbara Hall asked if we have a separate volunteer network for people who want to help with less technical things. The District does not currently have a volunteer program that is managed individually, but that those interested can reach out to Lindsay Schwantes and she can direct them to relevant opportunities in the community.

C) 2027 Work Plan and Budget Development Process and Schedule (Eleria)

Each year, CRWD Board of Managers must establish a plan of work for the upcoming year, establish a budget based upon the work plan as well as adopt and certify a levy for the budget.

At the CAC meeting in August, staff will walk through how CRWD develops the annual work plan and budget. Staff will also review the proposed 2027 Work Plan and Budget development schedule. CRWD welcomes any feedback from CAC as this is part of our public comment period.

VII. CAC Initiatives

- CAC Subcommittees: More time will be carved out for this discussion at the next meeting. A memo will be drafted with some things to consider as part of the discussion for next month. Communications and Engagement – Members are Michelle, Richard, Andrew, Gwen
- Technical and Technology – Members are Barbara, Mike, Tori

VIII. Discussion

A) New & Old Issues –

- Barbara Hall sent an email about a potential funding source from AI companies who are investing in companies to contribute more water than they use. The District will keep this kind of funding on the radar as something to explore. Clean Water funding is set to expire in 2034.
- The StormCon Conference is taking place in Minneapolis this year from August 25-27 and is an opportunity for CAC members to learn more about stormwater management locally and nationally. Interested members should respond to Office Manager Meilina Dalit by Monday, July 13th.

B) CAC Observer for July 15, 2026 Board of Managers Meeting

- Richard Weil will attend this meeting virtually.

C) CAC Observer for August 5, 2026 Board of Managers Meeting

- Mike Trojan will attend this meeting.

D) CAC Observer for August 19th, 2026 Board of Managers Meeting

- Mary Lilly will attend this meeting.

X. Adjourn

CAC Motion 26-016: *To adjourn the July 8, 2026 CAC Meeting at 6:51 PM.*

Willems/Lilly
Unanimously Approved

Respectfully submitted
Rachele Krivichi