

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, December 14, 2021

Committee Members Present:

Peter Lindstrom, Chair; Kris Fredson; Phillip Sterner; Susan Vento, Wendy Wulff, Vice Chair; Raymond Zeran

Committee Members Absent:

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Lindstrom called the regular meeting of the Council's Environment Committee to order at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 14, 2021 with the following roll call:

Aye: 6 Lindstrom, Fredson, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran
Absent: 0

Chair's statement was read at the beginning of the meeting as follows:

NOTICE: The Metropolitan Council Chair has determined it is not practical or prudent to conduct in-person meetings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, committee members will participate in this meeting via telephone or other electronic means and the meeting will be conducted under Minnesota Statutes section 13D.021 at the date and time stated above. We encourage you to monitor the meeting remotely. If you have comments, we encourage members of the public to email us at public.info@metc.state.mn.us. We will respond to your comments in a timely manner.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Without objection the agenda was approved.

It was moved by Wulff, seconded by Vento to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2021 regular meeting of the Environment Committee.

Aye: 6 Lindstrom, Fredson, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran
Nay: 0
Abstain: 0
Absent: 0

Motion carried.

CONSENT BUSINESS

Approval of the Consent Agenda (Item 2021-340 JT, 2021-341 JT)

It was moved by Fredson, seconded by Wulff to approve the consent agenda business items.

Aye: 6 Lindstrom, Fredson, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran
Nay: 0
Absent: 0

Motion carried.

2021-340 JT: City of Shoreview 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Comprehensive Sewer Plan, Review File 22168-1

Requests that Metropolitan Council adopt the attached Review Record and take the following actions:

Recommendation of the Environment Committee

1. Approve the City of Shoreview’s Comprehensive Sewer Plan.
2. Require the City to include a reference to the City ordinance that prohibits the discharge of any roof drainage, storm water, surface water or groundwater into the municipal sewer system in the final City adopted Plan submitted to the Council. The City may also include a copy of the applicable ordinance(s) in the final adopted Plan to satisfy this requirement.

2021-341 JT: City of North Oaks 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Comprehensive Sewer Plan, Review File 21796-1

Requests that Metropolitan Council adopt the attached Review Record and take the following actions:

Recommendation of the Environment Committee

1. Approve the City of North Oaks’s Comprehensive Sewer Plan.
2. Advise the City to:
 - a. Adopt local controls prohibiting the discharge of groundwater and stormwater into the sanitary sewer system and submit a copy of said ordinance to the Council as an amendment to its Comprehensive Sewer Plan.
 - b. Take any needed future steps to mitigate excess I/I following a Council-led planning effort in 2022 or 2023 to monitor City wastewater flow for excess I/I.

NON-CONSENT BUSINESS

None at this time

INFORMATION

1. 2020-2021 Water Resources Monitoring Update

Staff provided an update on monitoring activities and results from 2020 and 2021 for MCES’ Water Resources section. Topics covered include adaptations to the pandemic in 2020, results from lake monitoring in 2020, and drought impacts on our rivers, lakes, and streams from 2021’s significant drought over the summer.

Comments and Questions:

Chair Lindstrom inquired how many lake monitoring volunteers there are and how they are recruited. Staff stated that in 2020 we monitored 178 lakes and worked closely with 25 sponsoring organizations who enlisted 122 local volunteers. In some cases, lakes are monitored by sponsoring organization staff.

Committee Member Vento inquired about the monitoring that occurs up and down stream outside of the metro region and whether the findings are similar to the Metropolitan region. Staff stated upstream monitoring, especially on the Mississippi and Minnesota is done by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency primarily as they have statewide programs. At this time, there is data available on upstream evaluations; however, we have not compared the data. The Minnesota River down to Mankato has a robust system of stations which will be evaluated to the Metropolitan area.

Committee Member Vento asked if it has been difficult to find volunteers. Staff stated some lakes turn over volunteers due to retirement or moves. Sponsorship agencies are responsible to recruit volunteers.

Committee Member Sterner asked about the status of Farquar and Long Lakes in Apple Valley. Staff stated he will need to follow up to provide and update.

2. Mississippi Basin Total Phosphorus Permit Update

Staff provided an update on the Mississippi Basin total phosphorus permit. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) assessed Lake Pepin in 2002 and found nutrient levels too high to meet state water quality standards designed to ensure lakes and streams are fishable and swimmable. The MPCA determined Total Phosphorus reductions were required at many wastewater treatment plants in Minnesota, including Metropolitan Council plants, to reduce nutrient loading to the impaired Lake Pepin. At the Metropolitan Council, we were able to work with the MPCA to develop an innovative use of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program to meet reduction goals early, strategically and cost effectively. The process developed, the Mississippi Basin Total Phosphorus NPDES Permit, will be renewed for its second term this winter. Normally, each surface water discharge location has its own NPDES permit. Treatment technology at each plant must meet the discharge requirements specific to that plant and permit. The Mississippi Basin Total Phosphorus NPDES permit treats five Metropolitan Council Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP) including Metro, Empire, Eagles Point, Hastings, and Seneca as a combined unit for controlling discharge of Total Phosphorus. The five WWTPs, as a unit, were able to reduce their total permitted phosphorus discharges by 71% beginning in 2015. In partnership with the MPCA, this multi-plant approach leveraged in-place technology to remove phosphorus earlier than a plant-by-plant approach while avoiding or deferring significant capital investment. This helps Minnesota meet the Total Phosphorus waste load allocation targets associated with our WWTP early and restore Lake Pepin more quickly. Innovative staff at the Metropolitan Council and MPCA continue to find creative ways to wisely invest public funds to benefit public health and the natural resources that make Minnesota a great place to live and recreate.

Comments and Questions:

Chair Lindstrom inquired the type of improvements made at the Plants to assist this process during a high loading event. Staff stated a number of things were done to address. The Hastings Plant accelerated the process of installing an alum system to remove more phosphorus. At the Metro Plant, we removed high strength discharge that was coming in from an industrial user and began trucking it to alternative disposal instead of allowing it to flow into the Plant. We also reviewed our sampling procedures. The entire team pulled together to determine every part of the process that would help.

Chair Lindstrom appreciates the collaboration among staff to address what needs to be taken care of.

Committee Member Vento shared Congresswomen Betty McCollum authoring the Mississippi River restoration initiative that would draw all states together from here to the New Orleans. It would help provide federal funding to assist with restoration to help keep our river healthy. It is an important piece of legislation and shows up and down the Mississippi we are working hard and bodes well for us all.

Chair Lindstrom asked how we are able to clarify to members of the public who may not be familiar phosphorus in the water (what's so bad about phosphorus). Staff stated phosphorus causes algae growth and can become an issue for fish and aquatic recreation. Total phosphorus and nitrogen cause impairment to the water.

Chair Lindstrom summarized: If you care about fish, if you care about fishing, if you care about aquatic life in our rivers and lakes, then you should care about phosphorus.

Committee Member Fredson asked about Lake Pepin being placed on a critical list. Why would it take two decades for a process to play out? Staff clarified there is a great deal of work done when a body of water is identified as being impaired and there will be resistance when requesting total phosphorus reduction to address it. There is a scientific process and a political process, so it took longer than normal to address.

General Manager Thompson shared phosphorus is ubiquitous and comes from many sources. There were efforts to monitor streams contributing to the Minnesota River to determine where it was coming from. We had to determine where the most significant impact was as well as affordability to address it. Figuring out from a systems perspective the best way to address the problem.

3. Federal Fiscal Year 2021 EPA Report Summary for Environmental Services

The Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) is responsible for reporting annual Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) utilization to the Public Facilities Authority (PFA) in October of each calendar year. PFA then forwards the report to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA reviews the yearly utilization and compares it to the Council's aspirational triennial goal. The Metropolitan Council has a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Goal of 11% for the triennial period of 2021 – 2023. In 2019, the EPA did away with Fair Share Goals, but the OEO still breaks it down by Women Business Enterprise and Minority Business Enterprise (WBE/MBE) to better understand the data. The Metropolitan Council achieved 10.58% (3.44% MBE / 7.14% WBE) DBE utilization this reporting period (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021).

Comments and Questions:

Committee Member Zeran asked for clarification on total DBE's by ethnicity and location. Staff stated bidders can be found in the Minnesota Unified Certification Program Directory that is operated by the Metropolitan Council. It shows a breakdown by ethnicity in terms of who is certified in the directory. It is divided by Metro District, Greater Minnesota, and then those located outside of the State of Minnesota.

Committee Member Sterner inquired about minority women and there wasn't much shared. Would like to see additional focus on that as well as more women in the trades fields.

Committee Member Sterner stated he was contacted by suppliers on how to become involved in the DBE program. Staff clarified supplies represent approximately \$1.2 million in the spend. Most is in construction and professional services.

Committee Member Sterner asked if qualified suppliers could be invited to the upcoming outreach event shortly after this meeting. Staff stated they can reach out to Ashanti Payne directly.

4. General Manager Report

General Manager Thompson thanked the committee members and staff for the work done this year. We have had another successful year of compliance. She commented on the umbrella permit was done as a collective ability for us to manage phosphorus. An unexpected benefit that was realized was the collective efforts of all plants working together to obtain the best result rather than separately. We are looking forward to the teamwork continuing.

If Committee members have items they would like brought before this committee, please let leisa.thompson@metc.state.mn.us know.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Environment Committee Meeting of December 14, 2021.

Susan Taylor
Recording Secretary