

Minutes- Approved: 12.17.2025  
Time/Date: 11/19/2026 at 7:00pm CST,  
Location: County Board Room, Carver County Government  
Center , 602 East 4th Street Chaska, MN 55318 Virtual  
Location: [Teams Meeting Video](#) | [Transcript](#)



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER  
WATERSHED DISTRICT

## 1. CALL TO ORDER

### 1.1 Roll Call

President Barisonzi called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM CST.

**Managers Present:** Joseph Barisonzi, Theresa Kuplic, Carter McNew, Vinitha Viswanathan, Kyle Bakkum

**Staff Present:** Will Lytle, Linda Loomis, Della Young, John Kolb

**Others Present:** Ellen Gibson, Marisa Trapp, Beverly Burnette, Jody Brennan, Lisa Anderson

### 1.2. Oath of Office Carver Co. Appt. Kyle Bakkum

The swearing-in of Kyle Bakkum, newly appointed by the Carver County Commissioners as a manager for the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District took place. Kyle reads the oath of office, affirming support for the U.S. and Minnesota constitutions and pledging to faithfully perform the duties of watershed district manager. His term begins November 19, 2025, and runs through February 28, 2026, or until a new appointment is made. After completing the oath, the board welcomes him, noting his prior involvement with Carver County's Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) and attendance at multiple board meetings. Kyle is thanked and welcomed to the board.

## 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

A memorandum was presented by Barisonzi clarifying the legal status and roles of the watershed district. He emphasized that the organization is a watershed district under Minnesota law, not a joint powers agreement, and that board members serve as fiduciaries for the district rather than representing their appointing counties. The focus is on advancing the district's mission and plan, not county interests. Barisonzi addressed prior questions about dissolution, noting that only the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) can dissolve a watershed district through a formal petition process, which is extremely rare and requires all debts and obligations to be settled. He also explained that boundary adjustments are based on hydrological and geological factors, not political jurisdictions, meaning cities or counties are not included or excluded for political reasons.

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### 3. ACTION ITEMS

#### 3.1. Review and Approve Past Board Meeting Minutes

During the review and approval of past board minutes, the board considered three separate sets of minutes: the October 15 Board Meeting minutes, the November 5 Personnel Meeting minutes, and the Finance Committee Meeting minutes. Lytle explains that the minutes may look different due to a new clerk role being implemented, as a result formatting and templates are still being refined to best fit the needs of the board.

Beginning with the October 15 Board Meeting minutes, McNew notes an error in Action Item 5.1.1, where the names of the mover and seconder were omitted. A motion to table the minutes fails. Instead, a friendly amendment is accepted by directing staff to verify the video and insert the correct names. With that correction, the board votes to approve the October minutes which was moved by McNew and seconded by Kuplic.

Next, the board considers the minutes from the November 5 Personnel Meeting. A motion was made by Kuplic and second by Viswanathan; no issues were raised, and the board votes to approve the minutes as presented.

The Finance Committee minutes were presented to be received and added to the official record. Barisonzi clarified that the minutes are not being approved at this meeting; they will be reviewed and approved at the next Finance Committee meeting. The purpose of receiving them now is to ensure members have access to the information. A motion to receive the minutes was made by Bakkum and seconded by McNew.

- Action: Approve the October 15 Board Meeting Minutes with direction to staff to add the correct mover and seconder for Action Item 5.1.1.
  - First: McNew.
  - Second: Kuplic.
  - Decision: Motion Carried.
- Action: Approve the November 5 Personnel Meeting Minutes as presented.
  - First: Kuplic.
  - Second: Viswanathan.
  - Decision: Motion Carried.

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- Action: Receive the Finance Committee Minutes into the official record (to be formally approved at the next Finance Committee meeting).
  - First: Bakkum.
  - Second: McNew.
  - Decision: Motion Carried.

### 3.2. Approve Accounts Payable, Cost Share Reimbursement

The board considered approval of the November accounts payable, which was separated from the usual consent agenda due to concerns about low fund balances. The invoices listed represent authorized contracts and routine expenses but paying them would use roughly half of the district's current cash on hand. The decision to pull this item out was intended to allow the board to review financial reports and cash flow before year-end. Some projects have already been paused, and invoices that could be delayed were removed from the list. While a few reimbursements might be postponed briefly, the intention is to pay them before the end of the month. The board discussed anticipated incoming funds, including approximately \$700,000 in tax revenue and \$480,000 from dredged material appropriations and bond money, ensuring financial stability through year-end. After discussion, the motion to approve payment of accounts payable was carried unanimously.

During the discussion of reimbursements and invoices, Loomis explained that a recent cost-share reimbursement request arrived late and therefore appeared separately from the normal bill.com process. No board action was required for that item. She then reported receiving an invoice from the *Star Tribune* for publishing the legally required public hearing notices. The total cost is approximately \$873.60 to \$904.00, depending on the payment method. Loomis advised that the public hearing notices must be published twice in a newspaper of general circulation covering the entire watershed district, and using the *Star Tribune* is more cost-effective than paying multiple smaller local newspapers.

A motion to approve payment of the *Star Tribune* invoice was made by Kuplic and seconded by Bakkum. The motion passed unanimously.

- Action: Making payments on the accounts payable.
  - Made: A unanimous Board decision.

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- Decision: Motion Carried.
- Action: Approve payment of the Star Tribune invoice.
  - First: Kuplic.
  - Second: Bakkum.
  - Decision: Motion Carried.

### 3.3. Budget and Levy for 2026, Resolution 25-21 Final Certification

The board addressed the 2026 budget and property tax levy under Resolution 2521. The recommended action was to certify the final property tax levy for taxes payable in 2026 and approve the proposed 2026 budget. Lytle explained that the resolution reflects no changes from the preliminary certification and that the vote was scheduled earlier than usual to meet county deadlines before December 15, as the December board meeting falls after that date.

The levy represents an approximate \$400,000 increase in revenue compared to the previous year. Lytle clarified that the entire increase will be used to rebuild cash reserves to create a financial buffer for the coming year. Board members discussed future plans for zero-based budgeting and noted that adjustments to the budget can be made later in the year, like the revisions done in July and August of the current year.

Manager McNew commented that while the increase is significant, it is necessary given the ongoing expenses and expressed hope that future levy increases can be mitigated. The board emphasized the importance of fiscal responsibility and reaffirmed that the levy and budget are essential for meeting statutory obligations and supporting programs, which can be reprioritized as needed. The motion to adopt Resolution 25-21 passed unanimously, confirming the levy and budget as part of the taxing process to secure revenue for operational and programmatic needs.

- Action: Adopt Resolution 25-21 to confirm the levy and budget for operational and programmatic needs.
  - Made: A unanimous Board decision.

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- Decision: Motion Carried.

### 3.4. Authorize payment for EP Low Salt Grant Agreement

The board considered staff's recommendation to authorize the signature of the Eden Prairie Low Salt grant agreement and approve payment upon successful completion of staff review and receipt of reimbursable expenses and a summary of work. The proposed payment was capped at \$9,720, which represents 15% of the project's engineering design costs, based on an earlier estimate of \$64,800. The project, reviewed under the Water Resources Restoration Fund, aims to reduce salt use in a heavily utilized city center parking lot by improving drainage and design. During the discussion, board members sought clarification on whether the reimbursement was tied to a fixed dollar amount or a percentage of actual costs. It was confirmed that the contract will include both conditions: a maximum reimbursement of \$9,720 and a proportional cap of 15%, whichever is less, ensuring savings if the project costs come in lower than expected. It was also noted that if costs exceed the agreed ratio or amount, any additional funding will require a formal amendment. A friendly amendment was added to explicitly include the "or 15%, whichever is less" language in the motion. After confirming these details, the amended motion was moved and seconded and passed unanimously.

- Action: To authorize the signing of the Eden Prairie Low Salt grant agreement upon successful completion of staff review and to allow payment of up to \$9,720 or 15% of the project's engineering design costs.
  - First: Bakkum.
  - Second: Kuplic.
  - Decision: Motion Carried.

### 3.5. Area 3 Update

The board received an update on Area 3 and considered two staff recommendations. The first recommendation was to authorize the board president to sign the notice to proceed for construction, contingent upon successful completion of staff review and confirmation of bond closing. A motion was made and seconded, and after discussion, a friendly amendment was added to explicitly include the requirement for bond closing notification. It was confirmed that bond closing occurred on November 19, and the motion passed unanimously.

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The second recommendation involved authorizing staff to draft a letter responding to the technical aspects of the Scott County resolution submitted during the November 5 public hearing and to invite the Scott County Board to an interagency consultation meeting. The board separated these into two motions. The first motion, to draft the response letter, was moved and seconded, with discussion emphasizing the importance of maintaining constructive dialogue with county partners even when disagreements arise. This motion passed unanimously. The second motion, to invite Scott County to an interagency consultation meeting, was also moved and seconded, and prepared language was distributed to make the intent explicit.

- Action: Authorize the board president to sign the Notice to Proceed for construction, contingent upon successful completion of staff review and confirmation of bond closing.
  - First: Bakkum.
  - Second: Kuplic.
  - Decision: Motion Carried.
- Action: Draft a letter responding to the technical aspects of the Scott County resolution submitted during the November 5 public hearing.
  - First: Kuplic.
  - Second: Bakkum.
  - Decision: Motion Carried.

### 3.6. Zero Based Budget Review

The board considered a request to authorize the Personnel and Finance Committees to initiate a zero-based budgeting (ZBB) review and to direct the administrator to communicate necessary information to staff and cooperating with partners who may be affected. The board discussed the accelerated timeline, noting the intent to bring potential recommendations to the January board meeting and to conduct periodic reviews thereafter. Members reviewed the five evaluation criteria that will be applied to each budget line item. The criteria being whether it is required, working, cost-effective, urgent, and transformative. It was highlighted that vendors and partners will be asked to address each criterion. Board members emphasized the importance of revisiting ongoing expenses, particularly given board turnover and legacy projects, and affirmed that the ZBB approach will strengthen fiscal stewardship. Staff reported

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that while the process will require coordination and input from those with historical knowledge of programs, it is operationally feasible and will align with ongoing development of 2026 work plans. After discussion, the board voted, and the motion to authorize initiation of the zero-based budgeting review was carried unanimously.

- Authorize the Personnel and Finance Committees to initiate a zero-based budgeting (ZBB)
  - Made: A unanimous Board decision.
  - Decision: Motion Carried.

### 3.7. Permits

The board received updates for information only, with no action requested. The board reviewed the MAC LGU Permit Audit Memo, noting significant progress and commending the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) for its strong partnership and performance. The pond sampling results were then presented, summarizing recent joint sampling work conducted with MAC. It was noted that while some concerning compounds were detected, interpreting the findings is challenging due to the complexity of chemical types involved and the lack of established regional, national, or international thresholds for this type of setting outside of drinking-water standards. The board emphasized that although a potential risk has been identified, the scope and source of that risk remain unclear and require further investigation. The next steps will involve developing a follow-up sampling plan to verify results, and at this stage no budget request is anticipated, nor is the issue presumed to fall solely on the watershed to address. The board expressed appreciation for MAC's collaboration and acknowledged MAC representatives for their professionalism and support.

### 3.8. Resonance Visioning Report

The board received the report updates for informational purposes with no action requested. The report summarized the results of the district's initial visioning process, an investment intended to gather stakeholder perspectives to inform upcoming phases of Comprehensive Watershed Management planning. Gibson of Resonance Consulting presented closing comments, noting that she and her colleague stand by the recommendations included in the report and remain available to provide continued support as the district advances this work.

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Board members discussed key themes emerging from the visioning sessions. Emphasizing the importance of continually listening to both long-standing and new voices in the community and acknowledged the substantial amount of insight captured in the report. Managers referenced community interest in restoration and remediation, rethinking partnerships, expanding public engagement, and pursuing innovative financing strategies. A major takeaway highlighted was the broad recognition among stakeholders within the existing system that current property tax-based funding models are insufficient to address known water resource challenges, prompting a need for new financial approaches.

Managers expressed appreciation for the report's rich qualitative data, noting its potential to support sustained conversations with stakeholders rather than serving as a one-time exercise. The discussion also underscored the importance of translating community input into meaningful action, engaging committees such as the CAC and, and possibly using tools created by the consultants; such as engagement artifacts to continue outreach. The board expressed gratitude to Ellen and her team for their work and noted the opportunity to expand engagement methods, including potential small-group community gatherings, as planning efforts move forward.

### 3.9. BVL 3 Gully Report

This report was presented as an informational item with no action requested. Lytle clarified that the primary purpose of the report at this stage is to finalize and close out the work so that findings can be communicated to the adjacent municipality. It was noted that, like several other reports presented during the meeting, the BVL 3 Gully Report contains extensive technical information. Material that could easily warrant a much longer, stand-alone presentation if time allowed. It was emphasized that the report provides valuable baseline data and insights that will inform future work and support the development of new approaches. Board members acknowledged the significance of the findings and expressed interest in revisiting the report during the upcoming budgeting process to consider capacity needs and determine how best to build upon the work completed.

### 3.10. Fen Invasive Species Mapping & Management Approaches Report



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The Board received an extensive report on Fen Invasive Species Mapping, completed as part of the district's Fen Stewardship Program. Lytle explained that the project was conducted by Environmental Consulting Group with subcontractor MNL and additional drone-based mapping support which produced a comprehensive inventory of invasive species across all district fens. The methodology combined on-the-ground surveying with aerial imaging was noted as both innovative and foundational for future ecological restoration work. Lytle emphasized that the report exceeded expectations by not only mapping invasives but also providing detailed management recommendations, including multi-year implementation strategies and best-practice guidance tailored to each fen.

Board members discussed next steps, noting that staff are already coordinating with community stakeholders, including the DNR, private landowners, friends of the Minnesota Valley, and the Metropolitan Council, to translate the report into actionable conservation projects. Questions were raised about financing and the need for the Finance Committee to consider how future fen-related restoration initiatives should be categorized and identifying when the district should serve as project lead, when it should provide financial or technical support, and how to account for staff time as a meaningful financial contribution. Staff acknowledged that restoration efforts will require a combination of internal coordination and external partnership building, and that reports like this one are critical tools for attracting collaboration and advancing projects.

#### **4. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

Barisonzi noted that no action items were required and proceeded to move through each report efficiently while inviting questions from managers attending both in person and online. The first item reviewed was the Budget and Finance Committee report from the October meeting, during which the committee discussed long-standing partnerships with entities such as Seminary Fen, Chaska, and Heber Park. Although the district is not obligated to provide funding to these partners, their strong and historic collaboration was emphasized. As the district moves into a zero-based budgeting process, it remains unclear whether the 2026 budget includes appropriate funding levels, but ongoing work will allow the district to refine future allocations.

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The Board then reviewed three public notice items: the Public Waters Work Permit for Eagle Creek MCE and two Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) notices related to Cargill. The board confirmed that no board action was required for any of these items. No additional comments were provided by the permit team.

Next, the Board received updates on channel maintenance and dredging operations, a key responsibility area for the district. Staff highlighted that dredge sites are nearing capacity, and that identifying an offtake or material buyer is becoming increasingly important, both for operational efficiency and cost avoidance. The late season dredging schedule was attributed to high river levels earlier in the year. Approximately 55,000 cubic yards of material are anticipated; which is higher than pre-Rapidan Dam failure volumes. It was also noted that the district is still awaiting state grant funds to finalize contractor payments. Board members discussed the importance of developing long-term strategies for sediment management and storage capacity, noting the direct relationship between upland sediment reduction projects and dredging needs.

Updates on strategic planning indicated that staff remained on track with drafting the Watershed Management Plan, and no further legislative or regulatory updates were offered. The calendar of events was reviewed, highlighting several upcoming educational opportunities, including wildlife-friendly erosion control, WSW demonstrations, and invasive-species-focused equipment cleaning. Managers were encouraged to use these events as outreach tools when communicating with members of the public.

## **5. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 PM CST.