

Minutes- Approved: 5.202.2026  
Meeting Type: Board Meeting  
Time/Date: 7:00pm CST, April 15, 2026  
Location: County Board Room, Carver County Government  
Center, 602 East 4th Street, Chaska, MN 55318



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER  
WATERSHED DISTRICT

## 1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

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

**Managers Present:** Joseph Barisonzi, Carter McNew, Vinatha Viswanathan, Kyle Bakkum

**Staff Present:** Will Lytle, Della Young, Damaris Canales

**Others Present:** Lisa Anderson, Della Young, Beverly Burnett, Kati Johngrass, Andrew Edgcumbe, Jody Brennan, Paul Moline

## 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

This portion of the meeting included remarks from Lori Cox regarding an upcoming letter to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and broader concerns about interagency involvement related to regional water management discussions. Cox introduced herself as both a Carver County resident from Dahlgren Township and a citizen member of the BWSR board. She explained that she wished to comment on a letter that was scheduled to come before the board later in the meeting, describing it as likely connected to a draft letter previously circulated by commissioners from Dakota, Scott, and Carver counties. She stated that she had independently sent correspondence to Commissioner Workman, Commissioner Anderson, and Paul Moline, the head of WMO, seeking clarification because she believed the original inquiries and requests were overly vague.

Throughout her remarks, Cox repeatedly emphasized concerns about the lack of specificity surrounding requests being directed toward BWSR and other agencies. Speaking specifically in her capacity as a citizen representative on the BWSR board, she expressed discomfort with what she viewed as requests for agency involvement and allocation of resources without clearly defined goals, reasons, or proposed solutions. While she clarified that she was not directly accusing the Lower Minnesota organization itself of wrongdoing, she indicated concern about the broader process initiated by county commissioners and the uncertainty surrounding the intended outcomes.

Cox also informed attendees that she had asked BWSR Director John Jaschke to place the matter on the agenda for the upcoming full BWSR board meeting scheduled for the 22nd from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. She noted that the meeting would be public and encouraged anyone interested to attend.

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### **3. PUBLIC HEARINGS, PRESENTATIONS, COMMUNICATIONS**

The conversation then shifted into a substantive exchange involving Lytle and Andrew Edgcumbe regarding ongoing monitoring and restoration priorities.

Lytle explained that Andrew Edgcumbe had previously suggested several modifications to the 2026 work plan, and that Della had reviewed and adjusted those recommendations. Lytle emphasized that the intent was not simply to continue existing practices unchanged from 2025, but rather to refine priorities based on available evidence and observed conditions. He noted that the organization had enough information to understand where work should continue and where priorities could evolve. Lytle also remarked that Edgcumbe was being modest about the extent of his contributions and stressed that the proposed refinements reflected meaningful strategic thinking about how resources and effort should be directed moving forward.

As the discussion continued, Lytle referenced presentation materials being displayed in the room that illustrated the geographic boundary area and prior co-investment work across the landscape. He stated that he felt confident the proposed work reflected meaningful ongoing needs rather than activity undertaken merely to stay busy. The emphasis throughout the exchange was ensuring that monitoring and implementation efforts were aligned with measurable environmental objectives and practical outcomes.

Edgcumbe then identified Brickyard as a potentially important project area. He described concerns involving a stormwater inlet where a substantial sediment delta had formed. Drawing on long-term monitoring data, he explained that several indicators in the Brickyard system showed troubling trends over approximately the past decade, including increasing total phosphorus concentrations, worsening chlorophyll-a conditions, and declining water transparency. Based on those indicators, he suggested the location could be an appropriate focus for future restoration or management efforts.

Lytle thanked Edgcumbe for identifying the issue and stated that the board had intentionally prioritized stronger connections between environmental monitoring data and on-the-ground projects over the previous year and a half. He explained that the board

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wanted to ensure data collection directly informed decision-making and project prioritization rather than becoming an exercise in collecting information without practical application. Additional comments reinforced the idea that data should lead to action and measurable improvements rather than simply generating ongoing reporting requirements or paperwork.

The discussion also touched on collaboration with outside groups. Lytle described a recent interaction with a high school group interested in building and deploying environmental sensors. According to Lytle, the Lower Minnesota organization coordinated with Carver County WMO and the City of Chaska to determine suitable locations, identify gaps in current testing efforts, and help channel the students' enthusiasm into productive environmental monitoring work. He characterized these partnerships as examples of how the organization could help translate community interest and technical experimentation into meaningful impact.

The segment concluded with Lytle thanking Edgcumbe for his presentation and noting that many members of the board were new to the information being presented and would likely be interested in seeing future progress updates.

#### **4. CONSENT AGENDA**

Lytle formally transitioned the meeting to the consent agenda portion and requested a motion to place the consent agenda before the board for consideration. A motion was then made by Bakkum and seconded by Geneva. After the motion was placed on the floor, Lytle asked whether any board members wished to remove any individual items from the consent agenda for separate discussion or consideration.

No members requested that any items be pulled from the consent agenda. With no additional discussion raised, Lytle proceeded directly to a voice vote on the consent agenda as presented. Following the absence of opposition, he announced that the motion was carried out.

<b>Action:</b> Approval of the Consent Agenda as presented.
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<b>1<sup>st</sup>:</b>		<b>2<sup>nd</sup>:</b>							
<b>Bak.</b>	Y	<b>Vis.</b>	Y	<b>Bar.</b>	Y	<b>McN.</b>	Y		
Motion Carried									

## 5. ACTION ITEMS

This portion of the meeting addressed several formal action items, including receipt of the Carver County Water Management Plan (WMP) report, discussion of a proposed authorization letter to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) regarding the “Restoring the Minnesota River” proposal, and approval of permit continuation and renewal extensions. The discussion reflected both procedural board action and broader policy concerns regarding regional collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and watershed management strategy.

The first action item involved formally receiving the Carver County WMP report concerning shared activities. Lytle introduced the item and stated that the staff's recommendation was for the board to formally receive the report. A motion was then made by McNew to place the matter before the board. Lytle commented positively on the report materials, specifically highlighting the historical 2023 memorandum of understanding and describing those types of partnerships as the kind of collaborative relationships the organization hoped to continue supporting and investing in. He then invited additional comments from staff, members of the public, and board managers. No substantial additional discussion followed before the board proceeded to a vote on receiving the report.

The meeting then moved to discussion of the authorization letter to BWSR concerning the “Restoring the Minnesota River” proposal. Lytle explained that the item originated from the Finance Committee and Personnel Committee and recognized Manager Bakkum to bring the committee recommendation before the board.

Manager Bakkum then delivered extended remarks explaining the reasoning behind the proposed letter. He stated that although the letter itself was detailed, he wanted to explain why he believed it should be sent. Having served on the board for approximately five months, Bakkum said he had observed a wide range of opinions regarding management of the Minnesota River and which entities should take responsibility for various aspects of

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that management. He referenced recent letters, emails, phone calls, and workshops surrounding the issue and expressed concern that these activities had not yet resulted in a cohesive, collaborative plan to address ongoing concerns.

Bakkum described the proposed letter as a request for BWSR assistance in coordinating a collaborative meeting involving all stakeholders. He emphasized that the timing was important because the watershed management planning process was currently underway. Although acknowledging that he was relatively new both to the board and to the region and therefore unfamiliar with all of the historical context, he argued that the moment was appropriate for extending an invitation to the leaders of the five counties served by the organization to work together toward solutions. He framed the effort as an attempt to move beyond entrenched disagreements and focus on improving the Minnesota River through collaborative dialogue.

McNew then offered supporting comments emphasizing the substantial differences of opinion existing among counties and board managers regarding how the river should be managed, but he stressed that participants generally shared the goal of pursuing what they believed was best for the river system. McNew characterized the proposed letter as an effort to balance and respect differing county perspectives while approaching future discussions in good faith. He further noted that maintaining productive relationships with counties, even during periods of disagreement or contention, had been one of the major priorities associated with his service on the board. McNew also observed that the letter intentionally did not prescribe any single preferred solution, instead leaving all potential approaches open for discussion during future stakeholder meetings.

Bakkum responded again by emphasizing the importance of full stakeholder participation if the convening effort were to succeed. Even though he acknowledged that some of these discussions may have continued for many years, he expressed a desire to at least attempt a renewed collaborative process.

Additional public comment followed by Lori Cox, who spoke in her role as a citizen representative on the BWSR board. Cox reiterated concerns she had raised earlier in the meeting regarding the lack of specificity surrounding requests directed toward BWSR and county-led initiatives. She stated that she believed any participating counties should come

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prepared with a clear list of specific issues and actionable objectives. According to Cox, vague requests made it difficult for BWSR to determine what meaningful actions could be taken. She distinguished between the current letter under discussion and earlier communications that she believed had contributed to confusion and controversy.

Later in the meeting, the board addressed another action item involving permit continuation and renewal extensions. Lytle explained that staff had received two permit renewal requests extending expiration dates for permits identified as 2022-19 and 23-20 to allow remaining work to be completed. He then requested a motion to place approval of the permit for continuations, extensions, and renewals on the floor. Motion was passed.

<b>Action:</b> To Place the Carver County WMP Report Before the Board									
<b>1<sup>st</sup>:</b>		<b>2<sup>nd</sup>:</b>							
<b>Bak.</b>	Y	<b>Vis.</b>	Y	<b>Bar.</b>	Y	<b>McN.</b>	Y		
Motion Carried									

<b>Action:</b> To Support and Send the Letter to BWSR									
<b>1<sup>st</sup>:</b>		<b>2<sup>nd</sup>:</b>							
<b>Bak.</b>	Y	<b>Vis.</b>	Y	<b>Bar.</b>	Y	<b>McN.</b>	Y		
Motion Carried									

<b>Action:</b> To Receive the SWCD Annual Report and Work Plan									
<b>1<sup>st</sup>:</b>		<b>2<sup>nd</sup>:</b>							
<b>Bak.</b>	Y	<b>Vis.</b>	Y	<b>Bar.</b>	Y	<b>McN.</b>	Y		
Motion Carried									

<b>Action:</b> Approval of the LMRWD Permit 2023-018 for the Sibley Memorial Highway Project									
<b>1<sup>st</sup>:</b>		<b>2<sup>nd</sup>:</b>							
<b>Bak.</b>	Y	<b>Vis.</b>	Y	<b>Bar.</b>	Y	<b>McN.</b>	Y		
Motion Carried									

<b>Action:</b> Approval of the Permit Continuations, Extensions, and Renewals for Permits 2022-19 and 23-20									
<b>1<sup>st</sup>:</b>		<b>2<sup>nd</sup>:</b>							
<b>McN.</b>	Y	<b>Bak.</b>	Y	<b>Vis.</b>	Y	<b>McN.</b>	Y		
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## 6. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

This portion of the meeting primarily covered the administrator's report, updates on ongoing watershed and infrastructure projects, administrative coordination items, and final public comments regarding meeting logistics. Lytle began by noting follow-up items related to earlier action agenda topics, particularly emphasizing that public project review work is becoming increasingly complex and resource intensive. He explained that current budget estimates for project reviews are based on historical averages, but this year has seen a notable increase in both the number and complexity of projects, requiring attention during upcoming budget amendment discussions.

Lytle further described ongoing efforts to track and potentially recover costs associated with intergovernmental permitting work. He noted that Young Environmental Consulting Group is providing improved tracking of staff time and workflow activity through invoices, which allows for better visibility than in prior years. He also explained that the organization is awaiting a new legal services provider to evaluate whether proposed memorandum of understanding (MOU) structures or cost recovery approaches are viable. He cautioned that the budget line associated with these activities is currently unstable due to these uncertainties.

Lytle then transitioned into broader report items, referencing personnel and finance committee materials and summarizing ongoing monitoring, inspection, and project oversight work being conducted by engineering and water resources staff. He highlighted upcoming educational and ecological programming, including a workshop on purple loosestrife management using beetles as a biological control method.

A significant portion of the report focused on environmental health communication efforts, including a new Department of Health fish consumption advisory system that staff found difficult to navigate. Lytle discussed the potential need for improved signage in areas where residents may engage in recreational or subsistence activities such as fishing, hunting, or harvesting vegetation. He emphasized that some locations within the district may contain legacy contamination risks, including mercury or other pollutants, and that clearer, more targeted public communication may be needed. While he supported

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informational signage efforts, he also noted that current guidance appeared too broad and suggested that future efforts should include more precise identification of affected areas and collaborative funding approaches.

Lytle then provided updates on the Area 3 riverbank stabilization project, explaining that construction had resumed after seasonal and environmental delays, including restrictions related to spring thaw hauling limitations and fish spawning protections. He described how changing river conditions required multiple design adjustments, including modifications to material placement and structural approaches due to shifting water levels and erosion patterns. Despite these challenges, he reported that major structural components such as rock protection and root wad installations had largely been completed above the waterline, with remaining work focused on vegetation and finishing elements. He indicated the project was nearing completion and suggested it was approaching its final stages.

Lytle then proposed hosting the next board meeting at the Eden Prairie Library and inviting both project managers and, if available, construction contractors to present updates. He noted that similar past projects, including the Vernon Avenue upgrade, had benefited from direct engagement with project teams. The goal, he explained, would be to provide the public and interested residents with an opportunity to receive updates and ask questions directly from those involved in the work.

Board members briefly discussed procedural questions regarding whether a formal vote was required to change meeting location. Lytle clarified that while no formal action was necessary, public notification procedures and website postings would need to be updated accordingly. He also noted that meeting schedules and locations had been initially published at the start of the year, but that future changes would be communicated through official public channels.

The discussion concluded with clarification on the Area 3 project communications plan, including the use of a project webpage and weekly internal meetings to provide updates. Lytle indicated that a full narrative update would be posted once the project reached completion, and all delays had been resolved.

In final public comment, Lori Cox questioned why the board was no longer meeting at a particular location. Lytle responded that the county had notified the organization that it

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was no longer welcome to meet there. Commissioner Lisa Anderson clarified that the decision had been made by the county rather than a formal board of action, and the exchange concluded without further dispute.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 PM CST.