

Minutes- Approved: 6.17.2026
Meeting Type: Board Meeting
Time/Date: 6:00pm, May 20th, 2026
Location: 565 Prairie Center Dr, Eden Prairie, MN 55344



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER
WATERSHED DISTRICT

1. AREA 3 RIVERBANK STABILIZATION COMMUNITY UPDATE

The board received a comprehensive update regarding the Area 3 River Stabilization Project, which has now reached substantial completion. Lytle announced that construction had officially concluded the day before the meeting. The project's final survey had been submitted to Barr Engineering for review, and the engineering firm confirmed that the completed work was aligned with the approved plans and specifications. This sign-off represented a significant milestone and indicated that the project met the technical requirements established during design and construction.

Lytle reviewed the final construction walkthrough that occurred during the project's last weekly construction meeting. At the time of the site visit, crews were still completing minor finishing tasks, including earthwork and planting activities. Representatives from the city, construction administration team, and contractor participated in the walkthrough to confirm the final configuration of project elements before construction activities ceased. Topics reviewed included roadway conditions, slope grading, access points, and other site-specific details to ensure all stakeholders had a shared understanding of the final project layout.

A major focus of the presentation was the reconstruction of a section of shoreline that previously contained a stormwater pond required by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). Project engineers and stakeholders believed that the pond may have contributed to shoreline instability and erosion over time. To address these concerns, the pond was removed as part of the stabilization effort. In its place, contractors constructed a new drainage conveyance system consisting of a stone-lined channel designed to safely transport runoff while minimizing erosive impacts. The channel incorporates a zigzag alignment intended to reduce water velocity and dissipate energy before runoff reaches the river. Photographs and video footage from the site were presented to illustrate the completed improvements and demonstrate how the redesigned feature functions within the overall stabilization system.

The update also emphasized the unusually favorable environmental conditions that occurred during construction. Lytle noted that river levels remained exceptionally low and stable throughout the work period, providing an ideal window for shoreline construction activities. Such conditions reduced the risk of flooding, work stoppages, and damage to partially

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completed improvements. He characterized the timing as exceptionally fortunate, explaining that despite extensive planning and coordination among regulatory, financial, and administrative stakeholders, the project team could not have intentionally selected a better period for construction.

The board was informed that timely completion of the project was particularly important because of permit constraints. Lytle explained that if high water levels had interrupted construction and prevented completion within the authorized work window, several permits could have expired. This scenario likely would have required the project team to restart portions of the permitting process and potentially postpone construction until a future season. Such delays could have extended the project timeline by as much as a year while increasing administrative and project management costs. The successful completion of construction within the permitted timeframe therefore represented both a technical and administrative success for the project team.

Overall, the presentation conveyed that the Area 3 River Stabilization Project was completed successfully, passed final engineering review, achieved its erosion-control objectives, and avoided significant scheduling and permitting risks due in large part to favorable river conditions during construction.

2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

President Barisonzi called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM CST.

Managers Present: Joseph Barisonzi, Theresa Kuplic, Carter McNew, Vinatha Viswanathan

Staff Present: Will Lytle, Della Young, Damaris Canales

Others Present: Kati Johngrass, Beverly Burnett, Daniel M. Marx, Linda Loomis, Jody Brennan

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

No formal public comment was received.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS, PRESENTATIONS, COMMUNICATIONS

The board began the discussion with a review of a letter from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding its relationship with the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District and the district's role as the local sponsor for dredged material management. Lytle provided background on the

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significance of the letter, explaining that the watershed district has maintained an ongoing working relationship with the Army Corps of Engineers and that this partnership is among the district's most important relationships with federal and state agencies. He noted that one of the original purposes for establishing the watershed district was to serve as the local sponsor for dredged material generated from navigation maintenance activities on the Minnesota River. Recent discussions involving county governments, the district, and other stakeholders have focused on the future structure of the district and related responsibilities, prompting the Army Corps to clarify its position.

According to Lytle, the Army Corps expressed concern that ongoing discussions among stakeholders may have overlooked the critical role the district plays in supporting federal dredging operations. The Corps emphasized that if the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District were no longer able to fulfill its role as the local sponsor for dredged material management, public dredging operations on the Minnesota River could cease. Lytle explained that this would not simply result in dredged materials being relocated to another disposal site; rather, it could halt public dredging activities altogether. Such an outcome would likely allow sediment to accumulate in the navigation channel, potentially impairing commercial navigation and creating operational challenges for businesses that depend on river transportation.

The discussion further highlighted the economic and logistical importance of maintaining dredging activities. While private entities could potentially manage their own dredging needs independently, the existing arrangement provides a centralized and efficient system for handling dredged material. The Army Corps indicated that any disruption to the sponsorship relationship could have significant consequences for channel maintenance, river navigation, and local businesses that rely on a navigable river system.

Lytle also noted that the Army Corps sought confirmation from county officials regarding support for maintaining the existing relationship structure and ensuring that the appropriate local governmental entity continues to fulfill sponsorship responsibilities. This communication was connected to a future planning and governance discussion and was intended to inform decision-makers before consideration of 2026 watershed planning matters.

Staff received and presented the Army Corps of Engineers' letter for the board's awareness and consideration. The communication will be considered as part of ongoing discussions regarding

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watershed governance, local sponsorship responsibilities for dredged material management, and 2026 watershed planning efforts. The board will continue evaluating the implications of maintaining the district's relationship with the Army Corps of Engineers and the potential impacts on navigation, dredging operations, and regional stakeholders as future planning discussions proceed.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

The board approved all items contained within the consent agenda through a single vote.

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| Action: Motion to place the consent agenda before the board for consideration | | | | | | | | | |
| 1st: | | 2nd: | | | | | | | |
| McN. | Y | Vis. | Y | Bar. | Y | | | | |
| Motion Carried | | | | | | | | | |

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| Action: Motion to approve the consent agenda | | | | | | | | | |
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| McN. | Y | Bar. | Y | Vis. | Y | | | | |
| Unanimous Motion Carried | | | | | | | | | |

8. ACTION ITEMS

The board moved into its action items and considered a request to review and authorize conditional approval of the City of Savage's municipal permit application and official controls as they relate to the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District's regulatory requirements. Staff presented a recommendation for conditional approval under Rule B and specifically recommended approval of the portions of the city's regulations associated with Rules D and F. The action represented part of the watershed district's ongoing review process to ensure local government ordinances and development regulations remain consistent with watershed district standards and requirements.

A motion was made and seconded to place the item before the board for discussion and consideration. During the discussion, board members clarified that the proposed action did not include approval of Rule C at this time. Instead, the board was considering conditional approval only for Rules D and F, consistent with the staff memorandum dated May 15, 2026. The

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distinction reflected the fact that portions of the city's code revision process were still underway and not all regulatory sections were ready for final review.

In response to questions regarding why one portion of the review had been deferred, Lytle explained that the City of Savage is currently undertaking a broader update of its municipal codes and ordinances. As part of that process, certain code sections are being comprehensively revised while others are not currently being reopened for amendment. The watershed district's review therefore focused on those sections actively under revision. He then stated that district staff worked with the city to ensure that revised ordinance language either incorporated watershed district requirements directly or contained provisions sufficiently consistent with district standards to support approval. For regulatory areas not currently being amended, the city proposed implementing corresponding administrative policies and staff procedures to ensure compliance. This approach would allow review checklists, permitting processes, and implementation practices to remain aligned with watershed district expectations even if certain ordinance sections were not immediately revised.

Additional clarification was provided by Della Young regarding the floodplain and drainage alteration components of the review. She explained that some required updates involve coordination with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), necessitating an additional regulatory review process. Given the timeline constraints facing the city, completing all required DNR-related updates before seeking watershed district approval was not feasible. As a result, staff recommended a conditional approval approach that would allow the city to continue progressing with ordinance updates while completing the remaining state review requirements. This approach recognized both the city's efforts to modernize its regulations and the practical realities associated with coordinating multiple layers of governmental review.

The discussion reflected the board's intent to support municipal compliance efforts while maintaining consistency with watershed district rules and standards. By granting conditional approval, the board acknowledged the progress made by the City of Savage and established a framework for addressing outstanding regulatory requirements through future coordination and review. Following discussion and the opportunity for questions and comments, the board proceeded to vote on the matter. The motion carried, authorizing the conditional approval as recommended by staff.

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The City of Savage will continue updating its municipal ordinances and official controls to maintain consistency with Lower Minnesota River Watershed District requirements. Staff will work with the city to ensure that revised ordinance language, administrative policies, and permitting procedures remain aligned with district standards, particularly in areas where formal ordinance amendments are not yet being undertaken. The city will also continue coordination with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to complete required floodplain and drainage alteration updates. District staff will monitor progress on outstanding items and review future submissions as necessary to ensure all conditions associated with the approval are ultimately satisfied.

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| Action: To conditionally approve the City of Savage municipal permit application and official controls associated with Rules D and F, as outlined in the May 15, 2026 staff memorandum | | | | | | | | | |
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| Unanimous Motion Carried | | | | | | | | | |

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| Action: To conditionally approve the TH77 Bridge Tech permit (Public) | | | | | | | | | |
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| Action: To conditionally approve the Carver Dig 2 Project (Private) | | | | | | | | | |
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| Action: To conditionally approve the Boiling Springs Drainage Improvement Project permit (Public) | | | | | | | | | |
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Unanimous Motion Carried

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| Action: To conditionally approve the Quarry Lake Erosion Restoration Project (Public) | | | | | | | | | |
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| Action: To conditionally approve the Boiling Springs Drainage Improvement Project permit (Public) | | | | | | | | | |
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| McN. | Y | Vis. | Y | Bar. | Y | | | | |
| Unanimous Motion Carried | | | | | | | | | |

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| Action: To conditionally approve the Quarry Lake Erosion Restoration Project (Public) | | | | | | | | | |
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| Action: Approval of renewal request for permit 2022-039 | | | | | | | | | |
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| Unanimous Motion Carried | | | | | | | | | |

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| Action: Approval of renewal request for permit 2022-042 | | | | | | | | | |
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| Unanimous Motion Carried | | | | | | | | | |

Action: Approval of renewal request for permit 2023-022

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| Unanimous Motion Carried | | | | | | | | | |

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| Action: Approval of the Scott SWCD Workplan | | | | | | | | | |
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| McN. | Y | Vis. | Y | Bar. | Y | | | | |
| Unanimous Motion Carried | | | | | | | | | |

9. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

During the administrative report, Will Lytle provided a high-level overview of key organizational and operational updates, focusing on recent staffing changes, professional service transitions, and upcoming planning considerations for the district. Rather than reading the full report, he highlighted several significant developments intended to keep the board informed of major shifts in capacity and ongoing work.

A major update involved the onboarding of a new financial services provider, identified as Cavanaugh Company (referred to as Cavco Cavanaugh Company). Lytle explained that the firm is currently assisting with transitioning the district’s financial infrastructure, including the development of a new chart of accounts and preparation for upcoming budget cycles. These include the 2026 budget amendment process and the 2027 preliminary budget and levy process. The firm has prior experience working with watershed districts and has been positively received so far, with leadership expressing confidence in the added capacity and improved financial management support they will provide during this transition period.

Lytle also announced the addition of new legal counsel, Daniel M. Marx from Flaherty and Hood. He noted that the legal team has already begun onboarding activities, including coordination with prior counsel Rinke Noonan and early review of district materials. The transition includes sharing documentation, initiating communication channels, and beginning to address pending legal and administrative matters. Lytle expressed appreciation for the responsiveness of the outgoing firm and noted that they had recently undergone a merger but remained cooperative during the transition. The district anticipates that the new legal team will

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begin actively supporting watershed management planning efforts and cost recovery matters in the near future.

In addition to financial and legal staffing updates, Lytle reported the addition of communications support through Jim Davis, who has begun assisting with public outreach, watershed management planning communications, and the district's annual report. He emphasized that these staffing additions collectively represent a significant increase in organizational capacity over a short period of time, describing it as a notable expansion of the district's support team.

The administrative report also included a preview of the upcoming board meeting. Lytle confirmed that the next regular meeting is planned to take place in the City of Savage. He noted that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has offered to provide a special presentation, and there was discussion regarding whether the board would prefer an in-person site visit to a dredging location prior to the meeting or a virtual presentation by the Corps regarding their recommendations. This decision remains part of the planning considerations for the next meeting agenda. The report concluded with brief acknowledgments from staff. Young confirmed there were no additional updates from the engineering perspective. Marx expressed gratitude for joining the team and stated his enthusiasm for supporting the district's goals.

No formal action items were assigned during the administrative report. However, the board is expected to consider and provide direction on the format and logistics of the upcoming meeting, specifically regarding whether to conduct a site visit to the dredging location prior to the next meeting or to proceed with a virtual presentation from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Staff will continue onboarding new financial, legal, and communications support teams and integrating them into ongoing district operations, including budget preparation, watershed management planning, and public communications.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 PM CST.