Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

Regular Meeting
Thursday, October 22, 2026
8:30 a.m.
Council Conference Room - Golden Valley City Hall
7800 Golden Valley Rd., Golden Valley MN

MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

On October 22, 2026 at 8:31 a.m. Chair Cesnik called the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (Commission) to order.

City	Commissioner	Alternate Commissioner	Technical Advisory Committee Members (City Staff)
Crystal	*Vacant*	Terri Schultz	*Absent*
Golden Valley	Paula Pentel	*Absent*	Emma Rakestraw
Medicine Lake	Clint Carlson	Shaun Kennedy	*Absent*
Minneapolis	Jodi Polzin	Nick Minderman	Liz Stout
Minnetonka	*Vacant*	*Vacant*	*Absent*
New Hope	Jere Gwin-Lenth	Jen Leonardson	Nick Macklem
Plymouth	Catherine Cesnik	*Absent*	Ben Scharenbroich, Claudia Guillot – Wallace
Robbinsdale	*Absent*	*Absent*	*Absent*
St. Louis Park	RJ Twiford	David Johnston	Erick Francis
Administrator	Laura Jester, Keystone Waters, LLC		
Communications & Outreach	Kaitlyn Egan		
Engineers	Stephanie Johnson and Pat Brockamp (online) - Barr Engineering Co.		
Legal Counsel	Dave Anderson, Kennedy & Graven		
Guests/Public	Michael Miller – online		

2. PUBLIC FORUM ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

No members of the public addressed the Commission during the public forum. TAC Member Scharenbroich introduced Claudia, a GreenCorps member working with the City of Plymouth for the next 10½ months. Chair Cesnik welcomed her.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Gwin-Lenth moved to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Carlson seconded the motion. Upon a vote, the motion carried 7-0. The cities of Minnetonka and Robbinsdale were absent from the vote.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Pentel moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Commissioner Polzin seconded the motion. Upon a vote, the motion carried 7-0. The cities of Minnetonka and Robbinsdale were absent from the vote.

The following items were approved as part of the consent agenda:

- Approval of September 17, 2026 Commission Meeting Minutes
- Acceptance of October Financial Report
- Approval of Payment of Invoices:
    - Keystone Waters, LLC – September 2026 Administration
    - Keystone Waters, LLC – September 2026 Administrative Expenses
    - Barr Engineering – September 2026 Engineering Services
    - Triple D Espresso – October Meeting Catering
    - City of Plymouth – September 2026 Accounting Services
    - Kennedy & Graven – August 2026 Legal Services
    - Stantec – WOMP Activities
    - Kaitlyn Egan – September Communications & Outreach Activities
    - Strategic Consulting and Coaching – Organizational Assessment
    - Finance and Commerce (Bridge Tower) – Public Hearing Notice
    - ECM Publishers – Public Hearing Notice
    - Shaun Kennedy – MN Watersheds Summer Tour Expenses
    - Bradley Blackhawk – Ȟaȟá Wakpádaŋ Water Blessing Event
    - Darlene St. Clair – Ȟaȟá Wakpádaŋ Water Blessing Event
- Approval of Reimbursement Agreement with Metropolitan Council
- Approval to Resolve Potential Conflicts of Interest by Directing Administrator to Review Certain Local Water Plans

5. BUSINESS

Before considering the business agenda items, Chair Cesnik noted that several items involved project budget or scope adjustments and raised the possibility of developing a Commission policy or framework for evaluating future cost increases. The discussion considered how to establish reasonable thresholds for adjustments, provide appropriate oversight of contractor costs, and avoid bringing every minor adjustment to the full Commission.

Commissioners discussed the potential for rising project costs as the Commission takes on more public-private partnerships and fewer relatively straightforward projects remain. They also noted that not all projects experience cost increases, citing a recently discussed project that came in significantly under budget. Commissioners emphasized that each proposed adjustment has unique circumstances and should be considered on its own merits.

The Commission Attorney explained that there was no statutory barrier to including cost-adjustment provisions in future agreements. However, for cooperative projects in which the Commission reimburses a member city or another project partner, the Commission may need to request additional funds from Hennepin County in advance to ensure they are available. Commissioners also discussed the distinction between anticipated increases in planned consumables, such as fuel or concrete, which could potentially be tied to an index, and unexpected costs discovered during project implementation.

Administrator Jester reviewed the balance of the Commission's special projects budget and closed CIP project funds. Commissioners discussed whether smaller adjustments could be handled through the consent agenda, while preserving the ability of any commissioner to pull an item for discussion.

The discussion also addressed the length of time between project initiation and completion and how a shorter project-development process could help limit the effects of inflation. Commissioners agreed that the topic was appropriate for further consideration by the Administrative Services Committee, which could refer it to the Budget Committee as needed. No formal action was taken.

A. Consider Approval of Scope and Budget for Engineering Services for Phase II Lagoon Dredging and Wetland Restoration Project

The Commission reviewed the proposed scope and budget for engineering services for the second phase of the Lagoon Dredging and Wetland Restoration Project in Theodore Wirth Park. Administrator Jester noted that that this proposed budget is approximately $209,000 lower than the engineering costs of $510,000 approved with the total project budget.

Commission Engineer Johnson explained that the feasibility study was completed in June 2026 and that the proposed scope includes design, permitting, bidding, construction administration, and construction observation. During the feasibility study, the City of Golden Valley and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) were asked whether they would be willing to administer bidding and construction oversight. Both preferred that the Commission manage those responsibilities.

The engineering scope includes coordination meetings with permitting agencies and project partners; design approvals at the 50% and 90% stages; permit applications; updated water quality and cost estimates; public engagement; and bidding and construction services. The project is expected to require several permits, including an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). The Engineer noted that the Commission has experience completing an EAW for the first phase of the project.

The scope also includes coordination with the MPRB and Indigenous communities to identify an appropriate approach for providing opportunities for input on the project. The Commission intends to apply for a Conservation Partners Legacy grant to support the wetland restoration component, and the proposed engineering scope includes assistance with preparing the grant application.

Engineer Johnson explained that the project is expected to be advertised through two separate bid packages: one for dredging and one for wetland restoration. The work requires different contractor specialties, and separate bid packages are intended to attract contractors with appropriate experience for each component. The Commission is targeting completion of 50% design plans by January to support the grant application.

In response to questions about the wetland buffer, Engineer Johnson explained that the buffer area may extend into the golf course property. The project team has discussed the buffer with City of Golden Valley and MPRB staff, including golf course staff. Because the area is already vegetated, the city has indicated that if not disturbed with the project it will satisfy buffer requirements. Opportunities to add native vegetation will be considered as design advances.

Commissioners asked about long-term stewardship and maintenance of the restored wetland. Engineer Johnson explained that the scope includes a three-year maintenance and establishment period, with the wetland ecologist working with the contractor to monitor vegetation establishment, make adjustments as needed, and manage invasive species. Long-term maintenance agreements between the public partners have not yet been established. Administrator Jester noted that there is time to address long-term responsibilities before construction, which is not expected to begin until late 2027. The Commission could also consider a levy for CIP maintenance.

Commissioners discussed whether using two contractors would create additional administrative costs and whether the bidding process could provide an incentive for one prime contractor to take responsibility for both components while using a qualified restoration subcontractor. Engineer Johnson agreed to discuss this possibility with the project team. Commissioners emphasized the importance of retaining qualified wetland restoration expertise to ensure the work is successful.

Engineer Johnson confirmed that maintenance would address both establishing and maintaining desired vegetation and controlling invasive species. Successful establishment during the initial maintenance period is expected to improve the likelihood of long-term restoration success.

The Commission also discussed the proposed construction observation hours and project schedule. Engineer Johnson explained that approximately 200 hours of construction observation were included because of challenges experienced during phase I. Although the project team hopes not to need all of those hours, the allocation provides a reasonable level of oversight should unexpected issues arise. Commissioners also asked about Blanding's turtle habitat and whether an avoidance plan would be required. The Engineer explained that turtle habitat considerations would be addressed through the EAW and permitting process, and that any contractor requirements, such as temporary fencing, would be included in the final bid documents if needed.

MOTION: Commissioner Twiford moved to approve the scope and budget for engineering services for the Phase II Lagoon Dredging and Wetland Restoration Project. Commissioner Polzin seconded the motion. Upon a vote, the motion carried 7-0. The cities of Minnetonka and Robbinsdale were absent from the vote.

B. Consider Approval of Scope and Budget for Wirth/Eloise Butler Wetland Hydrology Study

The Commission considered a proposed scope and budget for a hydrology study in partnership with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) and the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). Administrator Jester described the study as an important step toward a potential wetland and peatland restoration project in the Eloise Butler area and noted the study was included in the new watershed management plan. BWSR had identified a need for additional information about the area's hydrology to determine how restoration could proceed. The Commission's participation in funding the study will help provide the information needed to advance that work.

Engineer Johnson explained that the study area is located south of Glenwood Avenue and includes historic springs, including Great Medicine Spring, and wetland areas that have been altered by drainage ditches and other water-management features. The area contains historic peatland, which may have subsided as a result of drainage. The study will examine how water moves through the area and how groundwater and surface water interact.

The proposed work includes field monitoring and hydrologic modeling to estimate the different sources and movements of water. Groundwater wells and monitoring equipment are expected to be installed in the fall, with more detailed monitoring of water movement continuing into the spring. The project includes coordination and data sharing with project partners. The study will provide information about both historic and current hydrologic conditions to help inform future restoration design.

Commissioners discussed the age and history of the drainage ditches and the development of Great Medicine Spring. The Engineer noted that based on information shared by project partners, the ditches appear to be old. Ditches like this can date back approximately 100 years based on similar projects in the metropolitan area, although the exact age of this particular ditch is unknown. Commissioners also shared historical knowledge of the spring and its use, including changes associated with wells and other structures in the area.

Commissioners asked whether the study would address erosion and sediment concerns associated with trails and other infrastructure. Engineer Johnson explained that those issues were outside the scope of the hydrology study but could be considered as part of future restoration planning.

The Commission discussed how current drought conditions could affect monitoring results. Engineer Johnson explained that the study would document current conditions during the monitoring period and compare them qualitatively with available historical groundwater monitoring records from the surrounding area. A groundwater specialist would identify appropriate historical information to support the analysis. Wells would generally be installed by hand, with mechanized installation available if needed for deeper monitoring locations if requested contingency funding is approved.

Commissioners also discussed the potential effects of historical groundwater changes associated with construction of Interstate 394. One commissioner noted that construction of the highway project may have altered groundwater conditions and affected the flow of Great Medicine Spring. Engineer Johnson explained that a comprehensive study of historical groundwater changes had not been completed. The proposed study will assess historic and current conditions to help inform restoration design, but it will not provide a comprehensive record of all historical groundwater changes.

The Commission discussed the importance of clearly identifying the study's limitations and distinguishing what is known from what remains uncertain. Commissioners expressed interest in understanding whether longer-term monitoring may be necessary and what responsibilities the Commission or project partners might have beyond the proposed study. Chair Cesnik suggested that the Commission's knowledge of the area could be useful to the project and discussed the possibility of a learning session or presentation to share that knowledge with project partners.

Engineer Johnson noted that the study is one component of a larger restoration effort being advanced by the BWSR with additional project work anticipated in 2028. Commissioners emphasized that the final report should clearly describe the study's scope, findings, limitations, and any additional information or monitoring that may be needed.

MOTION: Commissioner Polzin moved to approve the scope and budget for the Wirth/Eloise Butler Wetland Hydrology Study including use of contingency funding as approved by the Administrator. Commissioner Twiford seconded. Upon a vote, the motion carried 7-0. The cities of Minnetonka and Robbinsdale were absent from the vote.

[Chair Cesnik called for a 5-minute break.]

C. Consider Approval of Revision to Scope and Budget for Northwood and Lost Lakes TMDL Support Services

Administrator Jester reported that at their April 2025 meeting, the Commission approved a scope of work and budget for the Commission Engineer to update the Commission's pollutant loading model (P8), collect lake sediment cores and complete lab analysis, attend up to two stakeholder meetings, and prepare a memo on results of the technical analyses for use by the MPCA on the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies for Northwood and Lost Lakes. She reported the Commission Engineer's work was completed in February and since that time MPCA staff have been working on developing the TMDLs. She noted that two additional upcoming and critical tasks were inadvertently left out of the original scope and budget. She requested a $5,900 increase to the project budget for Commission Engineer attendance at two additional project meetings and for Commission Engineer review and comment on the draft TMDL study report; including a meeting with MPCA staff to discuss BCWMC comments, if needed. She noted the proposed increase would be funded through the Commission's special projects budget.

MOTION: Commissioner Pentel moved to approve the revision to the scope and budget for Northwood and Lost Lakes TMDL support services, adding $5,900 for the additional work. Commissioner Gwin-Lenth seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: Commissioner Polzin asked if the motion includes the assumption that funding would come from the Commission's special projects fund. Commissioner Pentel agreed to that additional language. Administrator Jester reviewed the special projects fund balance and projected balance.

VOTE: Upon a vote the motion carried 7-0. The cities of Minnetonka and Robbinsdale were absent from the vote.

D. Consider Adjustment to Bassett Creek Restoration Project Engineering Services Budget

Administrator Jester requested approval to reallocate $58,000 from the Bassett Creek Restoration Project's environmental contingency budget line to construction observation services, without increasing the overall project budget. She explained that the project has been challenging since its beginning and that construction has been more expensive and time-consuming than anticipated. The construction period is also longer than originally expected, increasing the need for engineering oversight.

The environmental contingency was originally set aside to address potential contamination discovered during construction. Administrator Jester explained that the Commission could use funds from closed CIP projects to replenish the environmental contingency if contamination is discovered. The Commission has sufficient funds in its closed project accounts to address that possibility.

Commissioners asked about the original engineering hours and how much construction observation time had been used. Engineer Johnson explained that the original budget anticipated approximately 700 hours for construction observation and related services. The exact number of hours spent in the field was not immediately available. Some of the budget initially allocated for construction observation had been used for other construction administration needs as the project has progressed. Approximately $120,000 remained in the overall project budget.

Engineer Johnson explained that some of the expected work and project activities anticipated when the budget was developed had not played out as expected. The project team has adjusted its approach during construction, including reducing the amount of time spent in the field as the contractor has demonstrated satisfactory performance.

Commissioners asked for clearer accounting of engineering hours spent on design changes, construction administration, and field observation, as well as an updated projection of the hours and funds needed to complete the project. Engineer Johnson agreed that accurate forecasting and communication are important as the project moves forward. Commissioners also discussed whether City of Golden Valley staff could provide additional construction oversight. City staff manage the construction contract but noted that their capacity to assist would depend on other project demands.

The Commission discussed the proposed $58,000 reallocation and whether it would provide sufficient construction observation through the remaining construction period. Administrator Jester explained that the request would move funds from the environmental contingency to construction observation, while maintaining the option to replenish the contingency with closed project funds if needed. Commissioners noted that the environmental contingency was an allocation for potential future costs and that the proposed adjustment would make those funds available for a more immediate project need.

TAC member Scharenbroich noted that expenses often change with large, complicated projects such as this and said that cities often incur those expenses themselves. TAC member Rakestraw indicated that Golden Valley staff would like to review the engineering services hours and would like to be included in future discussions about budgets and use of funds.

MOTION: Commissioner Polzin moved to approve the adjustment to the Bassett Creek Restoration Project engineering services budget, reallocating $58,000 from environmental contingency to construction observation services and allowing the environmental contingency to be replenished with closed project funds if needed and as approved by the Administrator. Commissioner Gwin-Lenth seconded the motion. Upon a vote the motion carried 7-0. The cities of Minnetonka and Robbinsdale were absent from the vote.

E. Consider Approval of Attendance at Minnesota Watersheds Annual Conference

The Commission discussed attendance at the Minnesota Watersheds Annual Conference and Meeting, scheduled for December 2–4 in Nisswa, Minnesota. Commissioners who had attended in previous years described the conference as a valuable opportunity for education, professional development, and networking.

Several commissioners indicated their desire to attend.

MOTION: Chair Cesnik moved to approve attendance at the Minnesota Watersheds Annual Conference for up to nine attendees. Commissioner Twiford seconded the motion. Upon a vote the motion carried 7-0. The cities of Minnetonka and Robbinsdale were absent from the vote.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Administrator's Report

i. Medicine Lake Task Force and Survey Update

Administrator Jester reported that recruitment for the Medicine Lake Task Force was nearing completion, and the first meeting was anticipated in early December. The community survey had received 192 responses. Commissioner Carlson expressed interest in reviewing the survey results.

ii. Reminder of November Wednesday Meeting Date

Commissioners were reminded that the November Commission meeting would take place Wednesday, November 18.

The Administrator also shared information on online Salt Symposium the following Tuesday and Wednesday. Commissioners Pentel and Cesnik expressed interest in registering.

iii. Update on WMWA Positions and New Website

The Administrator provided an update on West Metro Watershed Alliance (WMWA) staffing and recruitment. Interviews for educator positions were underway. The Administrator also shared the link to WMWA's new website.

Recruitment for the coordinator position shared with the Hennepin County Department of Environment and Energy was closing that day. The Administrator also reported the unexpected and tragic passing of Amy Juntunen, which created an additional staffing gap for the organization.

Commissioner Minderman noted a mistake in the Administrator's report regarding the Bassett Creek Restoration Project.

B. Engineer

Engineer Johnson reported that the warmer weather had allowed fieldwork to continue. The monitoring season was complete, and work continued on the Toledo Ave/Minnaqua Pond feasibility study. The project team had also completed a survey and field inspections for flood-control projects.

C. Legal Counsel - No report.

D. Communications & Outreach Coordinator

Coordinator Egan reported that email accounts were being established and connected to the Commission's domain. The Education Committee was meeting to discuss communications project goals and priorities. Additional updates included a presentation planned for Covenant Living and a communications meeting related to the Sochacki project.

E. Chair

Chair Cesnik reported that the Ȟaȟá Wakpádaŋ Water Blessing Event went very well. Partners are exploring holding a similar event in New Hope next year.

F. Minnesota Watersheds

i. Report on Metro Watersheds Quarterly Meeting

Commissioner Kennedy reported on legislative priorities including stormwater reuse, permitting efficiency, chloride solutions. He reported the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association named Minnesota Watersheds its 2026 Partner of the Year.

G. Commissioners - No reports.

H. TAC Members

i. Report on October 7th Meeting

The TAC report included discussion of stream survey goals and a potential public-private cost-sharing program for best management practices. Two TAC members, Nick Macklem and Jenna Wolf were appointed to the Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) convene group.

The TAC also discussed the newly released Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit, which includes significant changes and will require attention from city staff. The next TAC meeting was scheduled for November 10, from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m.

I. Committees

i. Administrative Services Committee Update on Organizational Assessment Project

Administrator Jester reported that the organizational assessment was progressing and was expected to wrap up in January. The consultant's financial services subcontractor had withdrawn from the project and they are looking for a replacement. A local firm is being considered and the work remains within budget.

ii. Education Committee Meeting – October 26th

The Education Committee meeting was scheduled to meet Monday, October 26, at 4:00 p.m.

7. INFORMATION ONLY (Information online only)

The following materials were provided for information and were available online:

- Administrative Calendar
- CIP Project Updates: www.bassettcreekwmo.org/projects
- Grant Tracking Spreadsheet
- WCA Notice, Golden Valley
- September Minnesota Watersheds Newsletter

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.