



Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

MEMO

To: BCWMC Plan Steering Committee Members
From: Commissioner Welch and Administrator Jester
Date: January 30, 2024

RE: Considerations for Future BCWMC Implementation Capacity

As the PSC and commission continue developing the 2025-2034 watershed management plan, the commission should consider expanding the capacity of the organization to allow for more robust implementation. The commission should concurrently review how it conducts its work and determine whether significant changes are necessary to help the commission more effectively fulfill its statutory mandate, purposes and goals. Currently, most day-to-day BCWMC operation and coordination is performed by a halftime administrator contracted for about 20 hours per week at a current rate of \$75/hour or \$78,750/year. (The BCWMC does not have any actual employees. All staff are contracted.)

Over the past 10 years as the BCWMC worked through projects identified in its 2015 Plan, the BCWMC has increasingly operated in a reactionary mode rather than 1) prioritizing its water resources and natural resources issues; 2) affirmatively identifying the projects needed to address the issues that have been identified through assessment and analysis; and 3) directing those projects from inception to completion. Further, commissioners may often feel rushed into decisions without the ability to fully understand the origin of the project, or to comprehend and discuss the matter before a decision is needed. Commissioners may feel unempowered to ask questions or ask for more time and information, and therefore may not fully understand implementation actions being recommended by staff and the TAC. Finally, commissioners may feel like the organization is rubber-stamping projects and that they have little or no ability to change the outcome or say "no."

Subwatershed analyses directed by the commission (which can be funded through the newly approved policy to use investment income) will help identify needs and opportunities across the watershed. Commissioners should be fully involved in directly and thoroughly reviewing initial assessments, identifying and prioritizing projects, and deciding where, when, and what projects or programs to implement. If implementation is fully directed by the commission in this way, then whether the commission or an affiliated organization implements the projects is less important. Cities may be the best entity to implement some, but not all, capital projects.

The commission should consider increasing its staff capacity by contracting for a full-time administrator and contracting with a project manager or watershed specialist. Additional staff capacity would increase the commission's ability to identify and prioritize projects, perform assessments, and develop commission-driven mechanisms for implementation at a manageable and reasonable cost. Additional staff would also enable the commission to seek and facilitate partnerships with private developers and other

entities to implement projects recommended in subwatershed analyses, particularly when the projects identified should be retrofitted into an existing property. Additional staff would be able to help shepherd a project through all implementation stages and coordinate with cities and property owners for easements, etc. Additional staff will be able to help commissioners operate with hands-on knowledge about BCMWC projects as they progress along the entire continuum from inception through construction.

In addition, increased staff capacity could bolster the BCWMC's capacity to advocate for the water resources and commission's interests, goals, and projects with partners and could increase and improve the general education and engagement activities for commissioners, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders (e.g., newsletters, press releases, updated homepage, trainings, workshops, signage, coordination with other educational programming, social media, tours, tabling, etc.). Increased staff capacity could also be used to form and cultivate new relationships with underserved and marginalized communities.

For budgetary context:

A fulltime (40 hours/week) contracted administrator would cost approximately \$157,500/year. (In 2024 budget terms, that would equal about an 8.2% increase in operating budget.)

Independent contractors or staff with engineering or consulting firms could be contracted for additional project management activities on a full- or part-time basis. Costs would vary widely depending on experience of the staff, overhead (firm vs. independent status), and the amount of time contracted. A general ballpark figure of \$100,000 could be considered for a project manager position. (In 2024 budget terms, that would equal about a 10.4% increase in operating budget.)

For discussion purposes, the committee could consider these questions:

1. Does the committee agree with the gaps and needs outlined above?
2. What is the appetite for increasing staff capacity to address the gaps and needs outlined above?
3. Is there a desire to change the general operation of the commission to be more proactive in assessing issues and identifying needs and projects (e.g., perform subwatershed assessments)?
4. Is there a desire for the commission to be more involved in the implementation of projects from inception through construction?
5. Is there a desire for the commission to offer more educational programming?
6. What are the next steps needed to advance this conversation?