

## MEETING MINUTES

### Riley-Purgatory-Bluff Creek Watershed District

May 20, 2026 RPBCWD Board of Managers Workshop

#### Attendees:

Managers Jill Crafton (Secretary), Tom Duevel (Treasurer), Bonnie Nelson (Vice President), Dorothy Pedersen (President), and Leslie Stovring

Staff/Advisors Zach Dickhausen\* (Natural Resources Manager), Liz Forbes (Deputy District Administrator), Andrew Hartmann (Regulatory Program Coordinator), Terry Jeffery (District Administrator), Louis Smith\* (Smith Partners), and Scott Sobiech (Barr Engineering)

Other Attendees: Joe Bischoff (Barr Engineering); Roberta Cronquist (Bolton & Menk); Eric Eckman (City of Minnetonka), Larry Koch\*

*\*Attended the meeting virtually.*

#### Call to Order

1 President Pederson opened the Wednesday, May 20, 2026, Board of Managers Workshop at  
2 5:00 p.m. at the District Office, 18681 Lake Drive East, Chanhassen, Minnesota, and  
3 Manager Duevel, Manager Nelson, and Manager Stoving were attendance, with Manager  
4 Crafton joining at 5:05 p.m.

#### 1. Highway 101 Project

5 Administrator Terry Jeffery introduced Roberta Cronquist, water resources project manager  
6 with Bolton & Menke, consulting engineer to the City of Minnetonka, to present the high-  
7 level overview and design approach of the Excelsior Boulevard project, which extends into  
8 the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and the RPBCWD. Administrator Jeffery said this  
9 presentation is in advance of the City submitting a formal application to the District.

10 Ms. Cronquist shared the presentation, "Excelsior Boulevard (CSAH 3) Improvement  
11 Project." She said Hennepin County is a project partner as well as is the City of  
12 Minnetonka, and she explained that half of the project is located in the RPBCWD. She  
13 summarized the proposed improvements, including full pavement reconstruction with  
14 concrete curb and gutter along the full corridor, adding shoulder and trail, intersection  
15 improvements including roundabouts, drainage and water quality improvements, watermain  
16 improvements, and overhead private utility burial and gas main replacement.

17 Ms. Cronquist mentioned at a high level the water resource protections included in the  
18 proposed project, such as trail buffers and green space, wetland impact avoidance, and  
19 stormwater BMPs and treatment. She explained that stormwater management will entail  
20 volume reduction, green infrastructure, maximizing infiltration where appropriate,  
21 expanding existing ponds, surface filtration, and underground BMPs where the site is

22 constrained. She pointed out the City anticipates requesting a variance, as it typical with  
23 linear projects, including variances to the District's minimum wetland buffer width  
24 requirement. Ms. Cronquist said possible discussion might include an exception to rate  
25 control.

26 Eric Eckman, City of Minnetonka Water Resources Engineer, said that when he heard about  
27 this project he approached Administrator Jeffery to talk about potential opportunities the  
28 project could open up regarding stormwater management and protecting and preserving  
29 resources. Mr. Eckman described the proposed stormwater improvements along the  
30 Excelsior Boulevard corridor. He said he thinks there are further opportunities along the  
31 road corridor and the green corridor with Purgatory Park for the District to consider  
32 including in its plan. He said, for example, right now there is no signage at the headwaters  
33 indicating it is Purgatory Creek and the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed. Mr.  
34 Eckman said there is opportunity for interpretive education and education about stormwater  
35 as an amenity, so that people see it, value it, and learn from it. He said he is bringing this to  
36 the Board's attention and there will be opportunities in the future to talk about it.

37 Ms. Cronquist described the proposed schedule for the Excelsior Boulevard reconstruction  
38 project, which is currently in the design phase for final design to be completed by early  
39 2027. She said the City anticipates submitting the permit application in September, then to  
40 go out for bids in early 2027, private utility burial and relocation to happen in 2026 and  
41 2027, and construction in 2027 and 2028. She mentioned the City of Minnetonka's website  
42 has a form for people to subscribe to for project updates.

43 Manager Crafton commented that water is being taken out of the water cycle and sent to the  
44 Gulf. She said she is trying to understand how the project will achieve infiltration, discharge  
45 to the wetland without degrading it, and help restore transpiration to cool the atmosphere  
46 and help the climate and environment.

47 Ms. Cronquist said the corridor is currently discharging to the wetlands without treatment,  
48 so the project will improve conditions by treating the stormwater. She said the project's first  
49 goal is to maximize green space and infiltration, although there will be some places where  
50 infiltration is not feasible, so filtration will occur.

51 Manager Crafton asked about opportunities for microbial break down and she asked if the  
52 project could work with nature. Mr. Eckman said this is an opportunity for the District to  
53 consider plugging in to the project and contributing ideas.

54 Manager Duevel noted Purgatory Park has some controversy regarding dogs in the park and  
55 dog owners not cleaning up after their pets.

56 Manager Nelson commented that she thinks collaboration is good, and she is curious about  
57 what capital projects the District might have in terms of evaluating and coordinating  
58 regarding the District's scoring system to rank projects.

59 President Pedersen said from the managers comments it seems that the managers are in  
60 consensus for staff to move forward with talking about and looking for opportunities to  
61 collaborate on the project.

Mr. Sobiech asked if the project can get creative with chloride management. Ms. Cronquist said this is on the radar.

## 2. Update on Systemic Approach to Lake Management (Whole Lake Management Plan)

Joe Bischoff of Barr Engineering displayed the presentation, "A Systems Approach to Watershed & Lake Management – Ann, Lucy, and Susan Lake Watersheds." He reintroduced the concept of a systems approach to lake and watershed management, which takes into account lake and watershed characteristics, balancing goals, and layered systems.

Mr. Bischoff said lake and watershed stressors include impervious surfaces, reduction of green space, excess nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, and toxic contaminants like chloride, among other stressors. He reviewed the watershed nutrient cycles and the mapped pour points, which helps the District pinpoint areas that are most important for restoration.

Mr. Bischoff summarized the current hydrological conditions of the watershed. He shared maps that show areas that would be inundated or has structures that would be impacted in a 100-year storm event. He said the takeaway is that the District needs to consider the balance of flood risk and water quality impacts of projects in the subwatersheds, such as the subwatershed where water enters Mitchell Lake. He summarized findings of the hydrology study, including that perched lakes like Lake Lucy and Lake Ann are not overly vulnerable to groundwater changes and are primarily driven by surface water; Lake Susan is a recharge lake but not vulnerable to changes in the groundwater table and chloride is likely driven by surface water runoff; Lake Mitchell and Red Rock Lake are recharge lakes and have relatively high vulnerability to changes in groundwater, and there is high infiltration potential in the Red Rock watershed. Mr. Bischoff said the District wants to consider if it can promote infiltration in that part of the watershed to support the water table in that region.

Mr. Bischoff said ground water recommendations coming out of the study include considering re-establishing a monitoring well network and establishing thresholds, or target hydrographs, for lakes and wetlands identified as vulnerable to changes in the groundwater system. He said the Red Rock area is a place to consider doing additional monitoring and more localized groundwater assessment.

Mr. Bischoff addressed eutrophication and how excess nutrients impact the lakes and what the District can do about it. He pointed out that nitrogen is a harder cycle to manage than phosphorous. Mr. Bischoff pointed out that the nitrogen species ammonium is a fuel source that algae absorb instantly without expending energy, which can trigger rapid algal bloom growth. He said nitrogen sources are not understood well in the watershed's suburban environment. Mr. Bischoff said wetlands and forests are good at denitrifying, and one of the reasons there are higher nitrate concentrations in the watershed is the loss of wetlands.

Mr. Bischoff reviewed data on Lake Ann and Lake Lucy cyanobacteria, identifying which species were found, and of those which produce hepatotoxins and neurotoxins. He described how cyanobacteria can absorb light at the lake surface and sink down to absorb nutrients.

101 He said the District should pay attention to the cyanobacteria levels in Lake Ann and Lake  
102 Lucy and more recent cyanobacteria monitoring is needed to understand what is going on.  
103 Mr. Bischoff said connecting this to a restoration plan within the District's eutrophication  
104 goals, it is not enough just to have a goal of meeting summer average state water quality  
105 standards for the lake. He said it makes sense to add the eutrophication goal of minimizing  
106 cyanobacteria that blooms below WHO thresholds throughout the growing season. Mr.  
107 Bischoff said the goal is to stay below the 100,000 cells, because cyanobacteria will not go  
108 away, but the District could work to reduce the magnitude.

109 Mr. Bischoff said Barr Engineering built a Barr Lake Response Model to help test and  
110 determine a number of considerations, such as the role of nitrogen in driving cyanobacteria  
111 blooms, and are both nitrogen and phosphorous reductions beneficial, among other  
112 parameters. He shared example scenarios and reviewed total phosphorous budgets for Lake  
113 Ann, Lake Lucy, and Lake Susan.

114 Mr. Bischoff concluded that nitrogen reductions opportunistically make sense for these  
115 lakes because the reductions will help in the grand scheme of things. He commented that he  
116 does not recommend the District spend a lot of time or money on methods like underground  
117 woodchip bioreactors, but he does support the District trying to identify wetland restorations  
118 that could improve nitrogen removal. He reiterated that improved nitrogen monitoring is  
119 required to better understand nitrogen conditions. Mr. Bischoff stated that phosphorous  
120 management remains the best approach for reducing nuisance algae blooms and  
121 cyanobacteria. He pointed out that internal phosphorous loading is a major driver in Lake  
122 Lucy, Lake Ann, and Lake Susan.

123 Mr. Bischoff mentioned the watershed project types that remove phosphorous, including  
124 structural engineered projects, such as iron-enhanced sand filters; alum treatments and pond  
125 maintenance; wetland restoration; and non-structural projects like street sweeping,  
126 education and outreach, and programs for property owners such as about what they put on  
127 their lawns.

128 Administrator Jeffery said District staff has talked about putting together a map showing  
129 areas to target for street sweeping, to help out the cities. Manager Stovring pointed out there  
130 is also the consideration of what to do with the sediment that is swept up and collected.

131 Mr. Bischoff reviewed chloride levels of lakes and ponds in the watershed, pointing out the  
132 Lake Susan watershed gets almost a million pounds of salt per year loaded on to the  
133 watershed, and the salt makes its way into the lake. He said the Lake Susan area is a great  
134 area to focus on regarding low salt practices. In sum, Mr. Bischoff said Lake Lucy and Lake  
135 Ann do not demonstrate strong chloride impacts, Lake Susan exceeded the standard in the  
136 spring, Mitchell Lake and Red Rock Lake show signs of chloride impacts, and ponds in the  
137 watershed are likely impacted by road and parking lot salt.

138 Mr. Bischoff shared a historical overview of the Lotus Lake alum treatment and provided an  
139 update on the Barr study on Lotus Lake Wake Boat Impact on Alum Treatment. He said  
140 given the 2025 SAFL study identifying lake sediment disturbance following a wake boat  
141 pass that estimated the disturbance up to 20 feet deep, it was important to consider if wake  
142 boat activity is impacting the alum. He said data shows the alum is moving around, which

could be from the wake boat activity, but the alum does settle back down. Mr. Bischoff said the alum treatment has been effective reducing phosphorous in the bottom waters, even in the heavy boating year of 2025. He said the conclusion is that the wake boats may be stirring up and moving the alum but not reducing its effectiveness because the alum is still suppressing the release of phosphorous out of those sediments in a beneficial way. Mr. Bischoff pointed out that the District will need to continue monitoring to determine the alum treatment's effectiveness over periods of five and ten years.

Administrator Jeffery pointed out that the wake boat impact on alum treatment study was undertaken to inform the District on whether it should continue using alum treatments as a tool for managing internal phosphorous loading.

Mr. Bischoff summarized that Barr's Lotus Lake wake boat impact study confirmed the occurrence of sediment disturbance. He said next steps include conducting statistical analysis of the differences between seasons and treatment zones, continuing the sediment coring to understand long-term impact, and talking about whether total aluminum is the right measure moving forward.

Mr. Bischoff mentioned Barr is on a team with SAFL, who applied for an LCCMR grant for possible funding to be part of further research about alum treatments and wake boats, and the group is waiting hear about the funding.

President Pedersen adjourned the workshop at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Jill Crafton, Secretary