

# Mississippi River Sartell Watershed Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

**Date/Time:** Friday April 18, 2025 9:00am-12:00pm

**Location:** Royalton City Hall, 12 N Birch St N, Royalton, MN 56373

**Voting members present:** Chuck Rau (Benton SWCD), Ed Popp (Benton County), Aryln Lawrenz (Stearns SWCD), Joe Perske (Stearns County), Scott Saeher (Morrison SWCD)

**Voting members absent:** Kelly Applegate (MLBO), Randy Winscher (Morrison County)

**Staff present:** **Stephanie** Hatzenbihler (Stearns SWCD), Robert Wall (MLBO), Mike McMillin (Benton SWCD), Angela Beckman (Stearns County), Zach Guttormson (BWSR), Shannon Wettstein (Morrison SWCD)

**Minute taker:** Angela Beckman, Stearns County

1. **Call to order/approve agenda:** Chair Popp called the meeting to order at 10:04am. Introductions made and check-in question answered by those in attendance. Member Lawrenz moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Member Rau, motion carried.
2. **Meeting Schedule.** Ms. Hatzenbihler presented the upcoming Policy Committee Meeting dates to confirm if there were any known conflicts. It is not anticipated that the group will need to meet every month, the current goal is to meet every other month unless additional meetings are necessary. A monthly calendar invite will be sent so that members can ahead and respond should any conflicts come up. Chair Popp indicated that there may be a conflict with the current timeframe of 9:00am-12:00pm and suggested 8:30am-10:30am as a possible alternative. At this time, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month is the only date that appeared to work for all members.

A motion was made by Member Saeher to approve the meeting dates to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month from 8:30am-10:30am. Seconded by Member Perske. Motion carried.

3. **Primer to Consultant Presentation.** Ms. Hatzenbihler provided background on the consultant review process. Two proposals were submitted, one by Houston

Engineering, Inc. (HEI) and one by ISG, Inc. (ISG). The Steering Committee reviewed the proposals and brought forward the top proposal, which was determined to be HEI. This recommendation was driven by a significantly lower bid and contents of the proposal. Members of the Steering Committee indicated that they have had experience with both consultants in previous projects. Shannon noted some key differences and experiences with both HEI and ISG and indicated that HEI was the more efficient consultant to work with.

- 4. Consultant Presentation.** Rachel Olm and Moriya Rufer from HEI presented their proposal. The presentation was broken down into three key areas: providing a smoothly managed process, expertise along the Mississippi River Corridor, and effective, engaging facilitation and outreach.

Noted history of remaining on or under budget, remaining on schedule, learning from other partners, and setting the stage for tracking and implementation.

Noted experience in 1W1P projects along the Mississippi River Corridor, familiarity with goals of other plans in this area. Have led, facilitated, and advised on planning efforts in the next two watersheds upstream. Have experience in working with Landscape Stewardship plans.

Noted expertise in using models and tools to understand sources of pollution loading and to recommend effective solutions. Example model was HSPF-SAM, which was included in HEI's proposal.

HEI also offers assistance tailoring public events with custom outreach materials offered as well as facilitation expertise on committee meetings and citizen advisory groups.

A Q&A session was held.

Member Rau inquired if HEI has experience in identifying and leveraging other funding sources for projects and how common it is for groups to look beyond the scope of the WBIF funding. Rufer and Olm both indicated that HEI has had experience working with groups that have utilized WBIF as an opportunity to acquire funding from additional sources through pooling funds, matching, and other strategies for finding funding without restricting all projects solely to the scope of WBIF alone.

Member Perske inquired if decisions on federal budgeting could affect funding for projects within the plan. Member Rau clarified that the BWSR funding for 1W1P is through Environmental Trust Fund/Clean Water Fund lottery proceeds and that while there may be some fluctuation, it has been a stable funding mechanism that likely won't be affected by federal funding decisions.

Perske asked about public engagement and how it will be managed in this plan, and how issues might be addressed. Ms. Rufer explained that they have held separate citizen meetings in other plans to address public complaints and concerns. Member Rau pointed out the importance of public input but that it shouldn't derail the plan. Ms. Olm further noted the importance of refocusing on the plan goals and importance of the projects when addressing public concerns.

Chair Popp also pointed out that more education has been provided over time that has eased the amount of public contention with 1W1P plans and projects.

5. **Consultant Selection.** A brief discussion was held regarding the presentation and experience of the proposer. Member Rau made a motion to recommend HEI as the consultant to the Fiscal Agent, seconded by Member Lawrenz. Motion carried.
6. **Technical Advisory Committee Formation.** Ms. Hatzenbihler provided background on the purpose of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to be formed. The Steering Committee previously discussed and created a recommended list of organizations to be included in the TAC, which was presented to the Policy Committee.

There was discussion surrounding which specific staff from each county would be invited to the TAC. Shannon inquired what was considered a quorum for this group, as Member Rau had to leave the meeting at 11:30am. Ms. Hatzenbihler confirmed a quorum would be half of the committee, plus one. Therefore, there was a quorum present.

Member Perske made a motion to approve the recommended list for the Technical Advisory Committee, seconded by Member Saehr. Motion carried.

7. **Planning Vision Statement Brainstorm.** The committee was provided with questions to consider for brainstorming goals for the 10-year plan including desired future state, impacts, tangible outcomes that will demonstrate success, and how success will be measured. Results of activity will be shown at the next meeting.
8. **Check Out and Adjournment.** Check-out question answered by those in attendance. Chair Popp adjourned the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 12:02pm.