Minutes

White Bear Lake Area Comprehensive Plan Work Group

Meeting Date: October 22, 2026 **Time**: 12:30 – 3:30 PM **Location:** Vadnais Heights Commons
655 County Road F E, Vadnais Heights

Members Present:

- ✓ Bryan Bear, City of Hugo
- ✓ Clark Schroeder, City of Lake Elmo
- ✓ Michael Grochala, City of Lino Lakes
- ✓ Craig Schlichting, City of New Brighton
- ✓ Kevin Kress, City of North Oaks
- ✓ Morgan Dawley, City of North St. Paul
- ✓ Kelli Bourgeois, City of Oakdale
- ✓ Jim Hauth, City of Vadnais Heights
- ✓ Paul Kauppi, City of White Bear Lake
- ✓ Larry Poppler, White Bear Township
- ✓ David Weum, Department of Health
- ✓ Randall Doneen, Department of Natural Resources
- ✓ Dave Strub, Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee
- ✓ Liz Kaufenberg, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- ✓ Will Menkhaus, Saint Paul Regional Water Services
- ✓ Greg Johnson, Metropolitan Council
- ✓ Judy Sventek, Metropolitan Council
- ✓ Sam Paske, Metropolitan Council
- ✓ John Chlebeck, Metropolitan Council

Alternate Members Present:

- ✓ Jesse Farrell, City of Stillwater

Call to Order

Judy Sventek called the meeting of the White Bear Lake Comprehensive Plan Work Group to order at 12:30 p.m.

Agenda Approved

Work Group members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda.

Information Items and Committee Work

1. **Welcome and introductions** (Judy Sventek, Metropolitan Council and Della Young, Young Environmental)

   Della Young from Young Environmental welcomed the group and went over the agenda. New attendees introduced themselves.

2. **White Bear Lake lawsuit update** (Randall Doneen, Department of Natural Resources)

   Randall Doneen from the Department of Natural Resources provided an overview of the 2017 court order and its implications for current and future water conservation. The work group discussed how potential solutions affect long-term water sustainability, the benefits of solutions compared to the cost, and the impact other water conservation efforts would have on the aquifer. The conversation also explored the process of recommending a solution to the legislature and whether it would ultimately

need to return to the court for review and alignment with the 2017 court order. The group concluded by discussing the groundwater model and how often it is updated, as well as how to balance cost, water quality, risk, and long-term effectiveness when evaluating and recommending potential solutions.

3. **Financial analysis dashboard – any additional questions or scenarios?** (Ben Crary, Hazen and Sawyer)

   Ben Crary from Hazen and Sawyer asked the work group members if they had any additional questions about the financial dashboard, other scenarios to incorporate into the dashboard, and if there are any minor changes that would be helpful to make to the dashboard. Work group members discussed how different funding methods, such as sales tax, water appropriation fees (WAC), and DNR user fees, were applied across the 14 communities. The conversation also explored whether the current 14 community boundaries or a different boundary would better capture all users who benefit from or impact the groundwater system. The group also discussed the purpose and future use of the dashboard. Members asked whether it would be publicly available and emphasized that it should provide information beyond costs alone, including how different solution types, such as conservation, augmentation, and surface water conversion, affect lake levels, water sustainability, and community preferences. People agreed that it would be helpful to see the tool have categories such as conservation, augmentation, and surface water conversion, so that people using the tool know what method they are looking at in the dashboard. Several participants also mentioned that they want the report to clearly communicate local stakeholder perspectives and the tradeoffs associated with each solution.

4. **October 12 survey results** (Greg Johnson, Met Council)

   Greg Johnson from Met Council went over the top four survey results from the October 12 survey. He clarified that only eight members of the work group filled out this survey.

5. **Update for September 17 survey results** (Della Young, Young Environmental)

   Della Young from Young Environmental went over the top ranked infrastructure solutions from the September 17 survey which had 17 responses, and the rankings for potential water savings solutions. The work group discussed whether they were interested in recommending all five potential water saving solutions in addition to whatever infrastructure solution they select. They explored whether these solutions would be required, incentivized grant programs, or just encouraged for communities.

6. **Work group discussion and questionnaire** (Della Young, Young Environmental)

   Della Young from Young Environmental kicked off the discussion portion of the meeting with the first question about where there was the strongest convergence of rankings between the surveys. Work group members agreed that augmentation showed the strongest convergence and remained the preferred option for many members. They discussed the appropriate augmentation rate and how cost estimations rely on the groundwater model assumptions and should be refined during preliminary design. Some people shared concern about whether augmentation addresses long term sustainability of the aquifer or if it only addresses lake levels and suggested that surface water conversion may better provide long-term benefits even though it is higher cost. The work group agreed that they want to make sure the report clearly documents the pros and cons of each option.

   The second discussion question asked the work group if there were specific combinations of infrastructure solutions that provide greater benefits than a single solution on its own. Several members suggested pairing lake augmentation with raising the outlet elevation of White Bear Lake or other water-saving strategies to address both lake levels and aquifer health. There was also one comment about using conservation measures as a pilot approach to evaluating their effectiveness before investing in major infrastructure projects. Participants debated whether conservation alone would sufficiently offset future water demand with community growth. Greg Johnson reminded the work group that the DNR had previously modeled and estimated that all the communities would need to reduce their total gallons per capita per day (TGPCD) consumption rate to 55 TGPCD to maintain the water elevation at or above 922.0 ft in White Bear Lake. Additionally, the group discussed the potential cost and benefit of using augmentation with the current infrastructure of SPRWS.

   The third discussion question looked at whether the work group wanted to recommend that all five potential water savings solutions be adopted as policy by every White Bear Lake area community to

conserve water for long-term benefits. Work group members clarified whether this was for communities in the five-mile radius or all 14 communities and they clarified it would be for the 14 communities. No one opposed including all five options.

The fourth discussion question asked work group members whether anyone disagreed with the top ranked solution, which is augmenting White Bear Lake from East Vadnais Lake and treating the surface water for nutrients, TOC, manganese, invasive species, and suspended solids with a pumping and treatment capacity up to 2 billion gallons per year. The DNR added that this option is not their top ranked option, but they are not disqualifying it from consideration. Randall Doneen shared concerns about the bigger regional water supply issue for ultimate growth and is unsure if augmentation would improve aquifer levels. The DNR is analyzing augmentation and is hoping to share other potential benefits with the work group before the report is finalized. Met Council staff will schedule an additional meeting, if needed.

The fifth discussion question asked work group members about which potential funding options carry risks or constraints that may make them unsuitable. The DNR clarified that DNR water fees go to the water management fund and there would need to be something specific to take that money and put it in a different fund. Another work group member said their city council would not be supportive of anything that would financially impact their residents such as local sales tax increase, DNR fees, or WAC fees for new developments. A few other members agreed that they were not supportive of WAC fees for new developments as it puts the burden on new residents rather than existing and that it is an unreliable source.

The final discussion question asked work group members what key constraints and community priorities must be reflected in the draft plans recommendations to make sure they are practical, feasible, and responsive to community needs. The work group discussed wanting to ensure the court would be supportive of their recommendation, that it maintains local control, and that it clearly communicates that there is no one solution that is desirable for the entire work group to select.

7. **Project expenditures, next steps, and questions** (Judy Sventek, Met Council)
   Judy Sventek from Met Council provided an update on how much of the budget has been allocated for current studies so far. Randall Doneen from the DNR offered to attend any city council meetings if it is helpful for work group members.

Next Steps

1. Next in-person meeting: February 4, 2027 – Woodbury Central Park, Woodlands Room C (8595 Central Park Place, Woodbury, MN 55125)

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

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