

**Metropolitan
Mosquito Control District**

Commission Meeting
February 28, 2024
9:15 AM

Information Packet

**METROPOLITAN MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT
COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA**

FEBRUARY 28, 2024, 9:15 AM

1. Roll Call
2. Welcome and Introduction

CONSENT AGENDA *The following items (3-5) are administrative in detail and will be approved in one motion unless a commissioner wishes to withdraw an item for discussion.

3. Approval of Commission Meeting Minutes for December 20, 2023
4. Approval of Organizational Meeting Minutes for January 4, 2024
5. Approval of Checks and Claims
General 78321- 78534

REGULAR AGENDA

6. Intergovernmental Issues – Peg Larsen, Kim Scott
7. Executive Committee Minutes for January 24, 2024
8. Budget and Levy Development Schedule
9. Executive Director’s Report
10. Operations Report– Jon Peterson, Kirk Johnson, Mark Smith
11. Public Affairs Report – Alex Carlson
12. Drone Program Presentation
13. Other Items
14. Adjournment

* Action Requested

Next Executive Meeting: Wednesday, March 27, 2024, 9:15 a.m.

Next Commission Meeting: Wednesday, April 24, 2024, 9:15 a.m.

COMMISSIONER	COUNTY	COMMISSIONER	COUNTY
___ Mandy Meisner	Anoka	___ Angela Conley	Hennepin
___ Jeff Reinert	Anoka	___ Marion Greene	Hennepin
___ Julie Jeppson	Anoka	___ Rena Moran	Ramsey
___ Gayle Degler	Carver	___ Nicole Frethem	Ramsey
___ John Fahey	Carver	___ Mai Chong Xiong	Ramsey
___ Mary Hamann-Roland	Dakota	___ Tom Wolf	Scott
___ Laurie Halverson	Dakota	___ David Beer	Scott
___ Liz Workman	Dakota	___ Gary Kriesel	Washington
___ Kevin Anderson	Hennepin	___ Fran Miron	Washington

METROPOLITAN MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT
COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES
DECEMBER 20, 2023
6:00 P.M.

Chair Fran Miron called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Roll Call:

Commissioner Fran Miron, Chair	Washington County
Commissioner Gary Kriesel	Washington County
Commissioner Nicole Frethem	Ramsey County
Commissioner Mai Chong Xiong	Ramsey County
Commissioner Mandy Meisner	Anoka County
Commissioner Julie Jeppson	Anoka County
Commissioner Laurie Halverson	Dakota County
Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland	Dakota County
Commissioner Liz Workman	Dakota County
Commissioner Kevin Anderson	Hennepin County
Commissioner David Beer	Scott County
Commissioner Tom Wolf	Scott County

Staff:

Arleen Schacht, Interim Executive Director/Business Administrator
Jon Peterson, District Operations Manager
Kirk Johnson, Vector Ecologist
Mark Smith, Technical Services Manager
Alex Carlson, Public Affairs Coordinator

Visitors:

Joe Langel, MMCD Legal Counsel
Kim Scott, RCS Consulting
Peg Larsen, RCS Consulting

Chair Fran Miron welcomed all in attendance and thanked them for attending the meeting.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland offered the following resolution and moved its adoption.

Resolution 1:

The following administrative items were moved in one motion.

Approval of Commission Meeting Minutes for October 25, 2023

Approval of Financial Statements November 30, 2023

Approval of Checks and Claims. General 76867-78320

Commissioner Kevin Anderson seconded the motion. Chair Fran Miron asked all in favor to say “Aye” and those opposed to say “No.” The resolution was approved unanimously.

Public Comment MMCD Payable 2024 Total Levy and 2024 Budget

Chair Fran Miron opened the meeting for public comment and (three times) asked anyone from the public who wanted to comment to please come forward. Nobody stepped forward to comment about the 2024 MMCD payable levy and MMCD 2024 Budget.

Commissioner Tom Wolf moved that the public comment period be closed. Commissioner Kevin Anderson seconded the motion. Chair Fran Miron asked all in favor to say “Aye” and those opposed to say “No.” The resolution was approved unanimously.

Approval of Payable 2024 Levy

Commissioner Kevin Anderson offered the following resolution and moved its adoption.

Resolution 2:

Whereas, the Metropolitan Mosquito Control Commission has reviewed the proposed property tax levy for payable 2024 considering the needs of the program, and

Whereas, the 2024 levy is proposed in the amount of \$19,904,957, a 2.5% increase over the 2023 original levy of \$19,419,470, and

Whereas, the Commission has held a public hearing conforming with truth in taxation requirements,

Be it now resolved, the Metropolitan Mosquito Control Commission adopts the payable 2024 levy in the amount of \$19,904,957 to the Minnesota Department of Revenue, a 2.5% increase over the 2023 levy of \$19,419,470, and authorizes staff to certify the levy to the Minnesota Department of Revenue and the Counties of the District.

Commissioner Tom Wolf seconded the motion. Chair Fran Miron asked all in favor to say “Aye” and those opposed to say “No.” The resolution was approved unanimously.

Approve Budget for 2024

Commissioner Tom Wolf offered the following resolution and moved its adoption.

Resolution 3:

Whereas, the Metropolitan Mosquito Control Commission has reviewed the proposed 2024 operations budget of \$20,232,943, a 1.5% increase from the original 2023 budget (\$19,933,874), which is sufficient to meet the needs of the program, and

Whereas, the operations budget includes capital equipment and maintenance of \$527,520 for replacement equipment and facility maintenance, and

Whereas, the budget leaves intact the MMCD's unassigned working capital account which needs to cover approximately 55% of expenditures and leaves \$8,059,143 for emergency disease control, employee benefits, control materials, and other assigned funds,

Be it now resolved, the Metropolitan Mosquito Control Commission approves the final 2023 operations budget in the amount of \$19,933,874 and adopts the proposed 2024 expenditures budget in the amount of \$20,232,943, an increase of 1.5% from the 2023 budget.

Commissioner Julie Jeppson seconded the motion. Chair Fran Miron asked all in favor to say "Aye" and those opposed to say "No." The resolution was approved unanimously.

Intergovernmental Issues

Kim Scott and Peg Larsen reported, as the legislature is not in session, it is relatively quiet at the Capitol at the moment. Many are looking back over the last session and hoping to accomplish what was missed in the next session.

Renovation of the 91-year-old State Office Building (SOB), which holds the offices of the House of Representatives, has begun. The tunnel between the SOB and the Capitol has been closed and the entire building will be closed at the end of the 2024 session; construction is expected to conclude by the start of the 2027 session. Previously, a new Senate Office Building was completed in 2016 and Capitol renovations were finished in 2017. The SOB renovation will be the most costly of the three projects at \$500 million.

The most recent budget forecast shows an expected surplus of \$2.4 billion; this number will be finalized in February. With a budget surplus, there will be expectations for supplemental budget bills.

However, as this will be the second year in the legislative biennium, the focus is intended to be a bonding bill to pay for capital improvement projects in the state. Bonding bills require a vote of three-fifths of the members to pass. With slim majorities in both houses, Republican votes are a necessity to pass a bonding bill. If Republicans participate, a bonding bill could reach \$1.6

billion. If there are not enough Republican votes, there will likely be a cash bonding bill of around \$800 million instead.

In terms of policy issues for next session, Speaker Hortman has talked about addressing the school resource officer issue, passing a sports betting bill, and making tweaks to the cannabis law. Gov. Walz has repeated his goal to make Minnesota the best place for families, which likely translates into affordable and accessible childcare. Republicans have talked about reducing spending, (and calling out the price tag of the SOB), as well as, permitting reform.

The entire House of Representatives will be up for election in 2024.

Currently, the list of representatives not running in 2024 include:

Jamie Becker-Finn (DFL)
Brian Daniels (R)
Shane Hudella (R)
Jerry Newton (DFL)

Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan School Board Member Bianca Virnig won the special election with 58% of the vote to replace Rep. Ruth Richardson, who resigned in September to be the CEO of Planned Parenthood. Rep. Heather Edelson announced that she is running for the Hennepin County commissioner District 6 seat vacated by Chris LaTondresse. Sen. Kelly Morrison is running for the Congressional seat that will be vacated by Dean Phillips.

Finally, we have a new state flag and emblem, which may also be a source of consternation, mainly by Republicans, next session for the design and cost to implement.

The 2024 legislative session will commence February 12, 2024.

Executive Committee Report

Arleen Schacht reported that the November 16, 2023 meeting did not take place due to the inability to obtain a quorum.

Executive Director's Report

Arleen Schacht reported she is working with HR and the management team in preparation for the start of the new Executive Director, Daniel Huff. Over the course of several weeks/months giving the opportunity to meet with all staff, individually or in small groups.

On December 12, all regular full-time employees participated in our annual Employee Recognition celebration. The event includes fun team building activities and a potluck lunch. We take this opportunity to thank all employees and recognize those employees that have reached years of service milestones in their careers at MMCD.

The 2024 operational plan does include expansion, but not necessarily does it mean actual treatments but rather expanding services which also includes adding acres of surveillance in P2, adding possible pre-hatch treatments at the early and later times of the season when staffing can be an issue, and adding a 3rd drone, which will increase the acres that can be treated by drones in areas of the District.

Keeping in mind, so much of the operational decisions is based on the weather, if 2024 is not a drought year and the District receives average or more rainfall, an 1.5% budget increase may not cover all expenses, and it may be necessary to use reserve funds, not only for operational purposes but also for capital equipment purchases and capital improvements.

Operations Report

Jon Peterson reported that the weather has continued to be very mild in November and December. The forecast for Christmas is near 50 degrees. The current US drought monitor shows most of the metro in abnormally dry to a moderate drought. While this has vastly improved from this summer, we still need a normal snowfall to fill up the wetlands. We will have to see what the El Niño climate patterns brings.

Field staff are continuing to take advantage of this mild weather to be in the field, updating their maps, reviewing the site data, and mapping new areas. Many of the wetlands continue to be dry. I am in the process of hiring a new facility manager for our Oakdale office. The current manager, Marty Kirkman, will retire at the end of January after serving the District for over 37 years. We will have a new manager in place before Marty leaves. We will also be hiring 2 field supervisors before the end of March.

We continue to prepare for the 2024 season. We will be ready to go with whatever the weather brings us.

Mark Smith reported the Technical Services team is organizing information and data for our annual reports & presentations. The team will be presenting at various conferences (American Mosquito Control Association, North American Black Fly Association, Michigan Mosquito Control Association, and other meetings).

Technical Services assisted with our annual staff meeting (DOS - District Operations & Services) and conducted nine presentations.

Technical Services will be participating in District workgroups to explore ideas on various aspects of improving operations and expanding services.

The Technical Advisory Board (TAB) meeting is scheduled for February 14th, 2024 (12:30pm-3:30pm).

Kirk Johnson stated, to date this year, the Minnesota Department of Health has reported 27 WNV illnesses to the CDC including thirteen District residents (residents in 5 of the 7 District counties), with one fatality in Minnesota.

One La Crosse encephalitis (LAC) case has been confirmed in Minnesota this year (Scott County). District crews responded in neighborhoods where *Ae. triseriatus* were found by inspecting properties for larval habitats and at times with adult mosquito treatments. Over the course of the 2023 season, MMCD employees removed 11,139 tires from the field for recycling and eliminated 2,331 container habitats and filled 96 tree holes.

The Minnesota Department of Health has confirmed two Jamestown Canyon virus (JCV) illnesses in Minnesota this year, one resident in Anoka and Ramsey Counties.

No eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) activity has been reported in Minnesota in 2023

Public Affairs Report

Alex Carlson reported that overall calls were up from 1,454 in 2022 to 3,101 in 2023, mostly due to the stretch from May 15th to June 15th during which 2,210 calls came in. The most common calls were for mosquito annoyance (2,206) and to request tire pickups (534). Here is how calls compare to previous years by category:

- Report Mosquito Annoyance: 2,206 in 2023; 856 in 2022; 410 in 2021
- Request Tire Pickup: 534 in 2023; 377 in 2022; 374 in 2021
- Restricted Access: 87 in 2023; 76 in 2022; 73 in 2021
- Request Treatment for Public Event: 64 in 2023; 61 in 2022; 43 in 2021
- Helicopter or Employee Concern: 28 in 2023; 23 in 2022; 23 in 2021

The most calls came from Anoka County, which had 1,050 calls and e-mails followed by Hennepin County, which had 680.

Community events were strong in 2023 with the biggest being the Minnesota State Fair where we interacted with about 9,600 people and where 42 MMCD staff members worked shifts. We also delivered presentations at rotary clubs, city environmental commissions, and 22 elementary, middle, and high schools around the District.

MMCD was featured in statewide and local news stories 58 times in 2023 including some new, unique experiences like an article in Runner's World and several live appearances on Fox 9 Morning and Minnesota Live on KSTP.

We also made numerous improvements to our website and expanded our social media presence in 2023. We look forward to continuing to expand our public interactions in 2024 including, by popular demand, more appearances by Vectoria.

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Adjournment

Commissioner Angela Conley adjourned the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

METROPOLITAN MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT
ORGANIZATION MEETING

MINUTES
JANUARY 4, 2024
9:15 AM

2023 Chair Fran Miron call the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

Roll Call:

Commissioner Jeff Reinert	Anoka County
Commissioner Julie Jeppson	Anoka County
Commissioner Mandy Meisner	Anoka County
Commissioner Gayle Degler	Carver County
Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland	Dakota County
Commissioner Liz Workman	Dakota County
Commissioner Laurie Halverson	Dakota County
Commissioner Kevin Anderson	Hennepin County
Commissioner Angela Conley	Hennepin County
Commissioner Mai Chong Xiong	Ramsey County
Commissioner Nicole Frethem	Ramsey County
Commissioner David Beer	Scott County
Commissioner Gary Kriesel	Washington County
Commissioner Fran Miron	Washington County

Staff:

Arleen Schacht, Interim Executive Director
Jennifer Macchia, Accounting Coordinator (notary)

Swearing in of Commissioners

On behalf of legal counsel, Arleen Schacht asked Jennifer Macchia (notary) to administer the oath of office to Commissioners participating in the meeting today, orally in one group.

Election of Officers

Chair Fran Miron referred the Commissioners to the recap of the rotation of the Commission officers. Officers serve for two years. The Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary in 2023 all completed their first of the two-year rotation of serving as officers. The rotation would have new Commissioners serve as Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary in 2025 which would be their first year.

Commissioner Gayle Degler moved to nominate Commissioner Nicole Frethem as Vice-Chair, to replace Commissioner Rena Moran, Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland seconded the motion.

Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland moved to appoint Commissioner Jeff Reinert to the Executive Committee, replacing Commissioner Mike Gamache, Commissioner Kevin Anderson seconded the motion.

Chair Fran Miron asked all in favor to say “Aye” and those opposed to say “No.” The motions were approved unanimously.

Commissioner Gayle Degler stated, due to the uncertainty of Commissioner Tom Workman, serving as an MMCD Commissioner in 2024, if Commissioner Tom Workman does not serve, Commissioner Degler would assume the Secretary officer role for 2024.

Appointment of Executive Committee

Chair Fran Miron reviewed the composition of the Executive Committee. Commissioner Gayle Degler moved that Commissioners Fran Miron, Nicole Frethem, Tom Workman, Liz Workman, Jeff Reinert, Kevin Anderson and David Beer, be Executive Committee members in 2024.

Commissioner Laurie Halverson seconded the motion. Chair Fran Miron asked all in favor to say “Aye” and those opposed to say “No.” The motions were approved unanimously.

Meeting Schedule – Day and Time

The Commission reviewed the proposed 2024 meeting schedule. Commissioner Kevin Anderson moved that the proposed 2024 Commission and Executive Committee meeting schedule be adopted.

Commissioner Nicole Frethem seconded the motion. Chair Fran Miron asked all in favor to say “Aye” and those opposed to say “No.” The motions were approved unanimously.

Other Issues

Gary Kriesel asked how the search for the new Executive Director, was going, Arleen Schacht stated that the process is in the early stages, the recruiter has had conversations with some staff, with the next steps to establish a hiring committee, made up of four Commissioners who will meet with the recruiter establishing timelines.

Adjournment

Chair Fran Miron asked if there was any additional business. No Commissioners brought up any additional business. The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

METROPOLITAN MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES
JANUARY 24, 2024
9:15 AM

Chair Fran Miron was unable to attend the meeting so Vice-Chair Nicole Frethem called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

Roll Call:

Commissioner Nicole Frethem	Ramsey County
Commissioner Gayle Degler	Carver County
Commissioner Liz Workman	Dakota County
Commissioner Kevin Anderson	Hennepin County
Commissioner Tom Wolf	Scott County

Staff:

Daniel Huff, Executive Director
Arleen Schacht, Business Administrator

Visitors:

Peg Larsen, RCS Consulting
Joe Langel, MMCD Legal Counsel

Chair Fran Miron welcomed all in attendance and thanked them for attending the meeting.

November 16, 2023, Executive Committee Meeting

Arleen Schacht reported that the November 16, 2023 meeting did not take place due to the inability to obtain a quorum.

Intergovernmental Issues

The second year of the legislative biennium is the bonding year and this year the governor has requested \$982 million in bonding requests. The main focus for the legislature will be to vet the governor's requests, as well as legislative member requests and put together a bonding package that can pass both houses with a super-majority (60%) vote.

In addition to a bonding bill, if we have a revenue surplus, there may also be supplemental budgets bills. Even though the current surplus is projected to be \$2.4 billion, the actual number available for the legislature to appropriate will be far less (closer to \$82 million) due to enactment of a law from last session that requires budgets to be adjusted for inflation. The February revenue forecast, to be released in late February, will be the final number that the legislature will use to make its appropriation decisions.

There have been a significant number of legislative retirements announced over the last several months already. Two notable announcements since the last MMCD Commission meeting were Kurt Daudt, a previous Speaker of the House for the Republican caucus, and long-time rabble-rouser Republican Rep. Pat Garofalo. Traditionally, there are surprise retirements announced on the final day of the session. With the entire House up for election in November 2024, we expect there to be several more announcements in the final days.

Pesticides will be a topic of legislative discussion, as it has been for the last several years. The focus continues to be on noenicitinoids but could expand to a more general category of pesticides. We will work with Director Huff to reach out to relevant legislators on this topic. The 2024 legislative session begins February 12, 2024, and must end by May 20, 2024.

Daniel Huff, new Executive Director

Daniel Huff introduced himself and shared with the committee, shared his background and his experiences in the public sector. He expressed his excitement to work for MMCD and to get to know the staff and Commissioners.

Budget and Levy Development Schedule

Arleen Schacht explained that pages 2-4 of the information packet summarize a calendar of different steps in the 2024 levy and budget development process. The dates have been updated to reflect 2024 but otherwise steps have not been changed. Also includes a legal explanation of why the Commission needs to approve a preliminary levy at its July meeting, a requirement that is a bit different than for other agencies.

Insurance Liability Waiver

Arleen Schacht reported that the District and Commission have not waived the statutory limits in the past. Arleen recommended that the statutory limits again not be waived, keeping the limits at \$500,000/\$1,500,000.

Commissioner Kevin Anderson offered the following resolution and moved its adoption.

Resolution 2:

Resolved, that District does not waive the statutory insurance liability limits.

Commissioner Liz Workman seconded the motion.

The resolution was adopted unanimously.

Executive Director's Report

Arleen Schacht introduced Daniel Huff, the new Executive Director. He provided the Executive Committee with a little about himself, his education and work experience. He expressed he was excited to have been chosen for the position and he is looking forward to working with the Commission and for MMCD. Arleen reported that she is officially handing over the reins and thanked the committee for the opportunity to serve as the Interim Executive Director in 2023.

Staff Direction to recognize Arleen Schacht

Commissioner Liz Workman inquired about ways to recognize the work of Arleen Schacht for excellent work while serving as the Interim Executive Director in addition to her duties as Business Administrator over the past year.

Vice Chair Frethem offered the following resolution and moved its adoption.

Resolution 3:

Resolved, that the Executive Committee of the Commission directs the Executive Director to research options to recognize the extraordinary service of Arleen Schacht and to report back with recommendations to the Executive Committee at its March meeting.

Commissioner Liz Workman seconded the motion.

The resolution was adopted unanimously.

Adjournment

Commissioner Nicole Frethem, Vice-Chair, asked if there was any other business, with being none, the meeting was adjourned at 9:47 am.

METROPOLITAN MOSQUITO CONTROL COMMISSION MEETING

Requested by:

Arleen Schacht

Informational:

2024 Budget and levy development schedule

Background:

In 2015 and 2016, there were questions about when, during the season, specific decisions about the District's budget and levy must be made. These questions arose during a time when the MMCC was deciding how to balance District resource and funding needs (levy) relative to service demand and reserves (fund balance). See page 3 for a schedule outlining steps to be taken by staff and the Commission to develop the 2025 levy and budget. Months or specific dates are taken from the 2024 Commission meeting schedule.

An initial review of legislative requirements and deadlines (see page 4) revealed that the MMCC must approve a preliminary tax levy for the following year by August 1 of the current year. The July Commission meeting is the closest meeting before this deadline. In 2023, the MMCC approved a preliminary 2024 levy at its July 26 meeting.

Both the 2024 levy and 2024 budget were approved by the MMCC at its meeting on December 20, 2023.

This information is being presented here both for review and to determine if modifications to the schedule can facilitate the levy and budget development process while satisfying statutory requirements.

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MMCD Calendar for Budget Year 2024

Commission and Executive Committee provide direction to develop budget.	May / June 2024
Commission approves preliminary 2025 levy and budget direction	July 24, 2024
Approved proposed levy deadline for the District (Proposed Levy due to MN Dept of Revenue)	August 1, 2024
Review 2025 budget and levy proposals	August 28, 2024
Proposed levy certification due (Proposed levy due to Counties with TNT notice)	September 10, 2024
Executive Committee reviews proposed budget (Subject to change)	September 25, 2024
Commission reviews proposed budget (Subject to change)	October 23, 2024
Executive Committee reviews budget	November 21, 2024
Parcel Specific Property Tax Notice	November 10–24, 2024
Commission adopts Final 2025 Levy & Budget (December Commission meeting)	December 18, 2024
Truth in Taxation Hearing (Commission & Staff)	December 18, 2024
Continuation Hearing, if necessary, (Commission & Staff)	December 18, 2024
Certify Adopted Payable 2025 Levy (Due to MN Dept Revenue and Counties)	December 27, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: MMCD Board of Commissioners

FROM: Joseph Langel, MMCD Attorney

DATE: August 26, 2016

RE: Tax Levy Schedule

At the Commission meeting on August 24th (2016), there was a discussion about the budget calendar. Specifically, questions were raised about when MMCD’s property tax levy must be certified to the Commissioner of the Department of Revenue. The calendar in the Information Packet showed that the initial levy certification deadline is August 1st.

Some Commissioners questioned the validity of that date given that it is earlier than other taxing districts. A quick review of Minnesota Statutes chapter 275 (the property tax levy statute) indicated that (1) MMCD is defined as a special taxing district; and (2) “each special taxing district shall adopt and certify to the county auditor a proposed property tax levy” “on or before September 15.” *Minn. Stat. §§ 275.065, subd. 1(b), 275.066 (16)*. It therefore appeared that September 15th is, in fact, the correct deadline.

The quick statutory review during the meeting, however, did not reveal the additional provisions in Minnesota Statutes chapter 473, which relate specifically to MMCD. Section 473.711, subdivision 5, provides that MMCD “must certify its property tax levy to the commissioner of revenue by August 1 of the levy year.” This specific provision overrides the more general provision in Chapter 275.

The Commissioner of Revenue reviews the tax levy to ensure that the tax is within MMCD’s statutory levy limitation. That determination must be completed by September 10th. *Minn. Stat. § 473.711, subd. 5*. The Commissioner notifies the MMCD that the levy is appropriate and provides the amount of levy for each member county. The levy data is transmitted to the respective counties by September 15th. The Commission adopts the final levy and holds the Truth in Taxation hearing in December.

Let me know if anyone has additional questions about this process.

TO: COMMISSION MEMBERS
FROM: DANIEL HUFF
RE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT
DATE: FEBRUARY 2024

1. DIRECTOR'S INITIATIVES

Daniel Huff, Executive Director: I have enjoyed a warm welcome and support in my first month as Executive Director. I have been meeting with each full-time staff member to learn what staff want in their new Executive Director, what is working well and what are areas where they feel we can improve. Regional managers have provided me with a tour of each of our district facilities. I have been pleased to find a well-run organization, a positive culture and staff who love their jobs and share a strong commitment to the district. I have come across no red flags or areas of obvious toxicity. Starting with members of the Executive Committee, I have also begun meeting with Commission members. I hope to meet with each of you to hear about your vision for the MMCD. Based upon my meetings and additional review of records, I will be developing a report, similar to a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) assessment. After working with the management team and receiving input from all staff, I will provide my assessment report to the Executive Committee. I do not anticipate this being completed until after I have experienced the summer control season. I hope to use this assessment to develop my Year 1 work plan for approval by the Commission.

I was flattered to be part of a feature on MMDC and me as its new leader by Mary Divine in her [article](#) for the Pioneer Press.

The District owns 6 facilities for a total of 161,490 square feet on 24.77 acres. The Regional Operations Managers have done a good job of maintaining the physical plant for each facility. A full facility needs assessment has not been completed since 2015. A priority for my first three months is to solicit consulting expertise to perform a full assessment of these facilities and to assist us in developing a long-term capital plan. Once complete, this will be presented to the Commission.

On Wednesday February 14, 2024, the Technical Advisory Board (TAB), held their annual meeting. This board is comprised of a diverse group of experts from many different organizations and institutions that review the District's programs, making recommendations for the following service year. Two longtime board members, Susan Palchick, Hennepin County Health Director, and John Moriarty, Senior Manager of Wildlife for Three Rivers Park District, are retiring and were recognized at the meeting for their many years of service to the MMCD. Many thanks to Technical Services Manager, Mark Smith for the work he and his team put into this year's TAB meeting. The Chair of the TAB will report their evaluation of the program at the April 26, 2023, Commission meeting.

The season's first deer (black-legged) tick was found in the district earlier this month. Many thanks to Public Affairs Manager Alex Carlson for his work responding to the many media inquiries related to this discovery.

2. MOSQUITO CONTROL SERVICES

We finally saw a significant snow fall (around 5-6 inches), on February 14th. It's hard to believe that it was the largest snow fall this winter. With this most recent precipitation event, the metro is still in an abnormally dry state. Before the snow fell on February 14th, when it was warmer, staff were able to check on some wetlands and see where the water levels were at. They found water levels to be down, and wetlands with water in them still frozen. As we get closer to the start of the field season, we are meeting on a weekly basis to ensure we are prepared for what the weather brings us.

Staff are working on the following to prepare for the upcoming field season.

- We are hiring three new Field Supervisors, one in Maple Grove and two in Anoka. These job openings are due to retirements from 2023. The jobs were posted on February 5th. We plan to have these new employees start during March.
- Our Seasonal Technician Jobs were posted on February 12th. During the first week the postings were open, we received over 90 applications. We will begin interviewing these applicants with the projected start date of April 8th, depending on the weather.
- Staff are busy recruiting for the upcoming season. This includes placing online ads, putting up posters, and attending job fairs.
- Staff are finishing updating their maps and the data associated with the wetlands. Seasonal staff will utilize these for inspections and treatments this season.
- The District's Drone program is expanding for 2024. We are adding a third treatment drone at another facility. We plan to hire 6 seasonal staff (2 more than 2023) dedicated to treating with these drones. This season, we will have a drone at our Plymouth, Maple Grove, and Anoka Facilities.
- Four of our Field Operations Supervisors, who also are licensed drone pilots, are giving presentations at a Drone Symposium at the annual AMCA (American Mosquito Control Association) meeting the first week of March. They will share with others from around the country how we are utilizing the drone.

3. TECHNICAL SERVICES

Technical Services and MMCD staff presented our 2023 Operational Review and Plans for 2024 to our Technical Advisory Board (TAB) on February 14, 2024. The board accepted and approved the report. A TAB representative will present their summary to the MMCD Commission in April 2024.

The staff have been participating in regional and national conferences. Mark Smith was an invited speaker at the Michigan Mosquito Control Association annual meeting and Carey LaMere presented at the North American Black Fly Association annual meeting. Dr. Scott Larson will be participating in a Young Professionals workshop at the American Mosquito

Control Association (AMCA) and will be presenting in a Natular symposium. MMCD field staff will also be presenting in drone symposia at the AMCA meeting.

Technical Services completed the annual National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) report and submitted the report to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The team recently submitted the permit application for conducting Black Fly operations to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and will be submitting the annual report to Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The Tier II reports summarize chemical quantities and their secure locations to public safety officials and Community right to know.

Staff are participating in organizational workgroups to continually improve District operations.

MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASE

Planning is underway for vector surveillance and disease prevention in 2024. The 2023 West Nile virus (WNV) season was an active one. Nineteen human illnesses have been reported among District residents and 43 within the state of Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Health is currently reviewing several additional reports of WNV illness from last summer, and the case count is expected to rise. Tests of mosquitoes for WNV in 2023 set a record for rate of infection. We can expect elevated numbers of mosquitoes to carry WNV infections through hibernation and into the 2024 season. Larval control applications against WNV vector species will be crucial for mitigating WNV risk. That work will begin in late May and will continue through the summer months. Supplemental WNV risk reduction efforts will include surveillance driven adult mosquito control targeting vector species and numerous public education opportunities.

For the second consecutive year, there was a La Crosse encephalitis (LAC) case in the District. There is always some level of risk for LAC transmission in the District and risk will ultimately increase as we break free from drought conditions into a wetter summer pattern. La Crosse encephalitis risk is greatly reduced through vector habitat elimination. Most of that habitat consists of tires and water-holding containers that are discarded in wooded areas. Our early spring field conditions provide an excellent opportunity to locate and eliminate these habitats as visibility in the woods is greater prior to foliation of forest vegetation.

Drought seems to have suppressed eastern equine encephalitis virus (EEE) circulation in Minnesota and there were no detections of the virus in the state for the second consecutive year. Still, EEE remains a serious concern for parts of the District and northern Minnesota. Over the past two decades, we have worked to refine our techniques for surveillance and control of the primary EEE vector, *Culiseta melanura* in the District and we will continue to target the species for control due to the severity of the illness the virus can cause in both humans and horses.

Jamestown Canyon virus (JCV) infections have resulted in dozens of illnesses in Minnesota over the past decade. There were two cases in District residents in 2023. The first mosquito larval control applications of the year targeting the spring *Aedes* species that transmit JCV

will reduce the risk of human infections in 2024. If dry conditions persist through the remainder of the winter and early spring seasons, JCV risk will be further reduced naturally as some of the wetlands used by vector species will be drier than is typical.

4. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Ticks in the News

MMCD Field Operations Supervisor Brian Feldhake found the first tick of the year on February 5th of this year and a post on social media was picked up by the local news. In February there have already been 13 stories in local news media about the early tick season. Here are some of the most prominent:

- [WCCO - Ticks emerging early due to mild winter](#)
- [Star Tribune - With Minnesota's unseasonably warm weather, ticks are back](#)
- [MPR News - Warm weather brings ticks early to Minnesota](#)
- [KARE 11 - Will 2024 be a bad year for ticks and mosquitoes?](#)
- [Fox 9 - Deer ticks are active throughout the metro](#)
- [KSTP - Warm weather to blame for early emergence of deer ticks](#)
- [Minnesota Live appearance on 2/19/24](#)

Commission Presentations

MMCD completed presentations at Carver and Scott County commission meetings on February 6th and at the Hennepin County commission meeting on February 27th. We will be presenting to more counties in March:

- March 12 - Dakota County
- March 19 - Washington County
- March 26 - Anoka County

Education Outreach Expansion Group

A dedicated group of MMCD staff members have been meeting this winter to talk about how to expand education outreach and the group has already begun adding new opportunities at summer camps and schools. This is an exciting opportunity for MMCD to inform residents of all ages about mosquito control activity, job opportunities, safety precautions, and more!