

**Metropolitan
Mosquito Control District**

Executive Committee

March 27, 2024

9:15 AM

Information Packet

METROPOLITAN MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

COMMITTEE: **Executive Committee Meeting**
LOCATION: **Metropolitan Mosquito Control District**
2099 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55104
DATE: **Wednesday, March 27, 2024**
TIME: **9:15 AM**

A G E N D A

1. Approval of Minutes September 27, 2023, Meeting*
2. Approval of Minutes January 24, 2024, Meeting*
3. Legislative Update – RCS Consulting (Peg Larsen, Kim Scott)
4. Staff Compensation Discussion
5. Executive Director’s Report
6. Other Issues
7. Adjournment

* Action Requested

Commissioner Jeff Reinert	Anoka County
Commissioner Gayle Degler	Carver County
Commissioner Liz Workman	Dakota County
Commissioner Kevin Anderson	Hennepin County
Commissioner Nicole Frethem	Ramsey County
Commissioner David Beer	Scott County
Commissioner Fran Miron	Washington County

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

Next Executive Committee Meeting: Wednesday, May 22, 2024, 9:15 a.m.

**METROPOLITAN MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

September 27, 2023
9:15 a.m.

Chair Fran Miron called the meeting to order at 9:19 a.m.

Roll Call:

Commissioner Fran Miron	Washington County
Commissioner Mike Gamache	Anoka County
Commissioner Liz Workman	Dakota County
Commissioner Kevin Anderson	Hennepin County
Commissioner Rena Moran	Ramsey County
Commissioner Tom Workman	Carver County
Commissioner David Beer	Scott County
Commissioner Tom Wolf	Scott County

Staff:

Arleen Schacht, Interim Executive Director/Business Administrator
Cassie Sweeney-Truitt, Administrative Assistant

Visitors:

Kim Scott, RCS Consulting

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

Approval of Minutes for May 24, 2023, Executive Committee Meeting

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

Resolution 1:

Resolved, that the May 24, 2023, Executive Committee Meeting minutes be approved as presented.

Commissioner Mike Gamache seconded the motion, and the resolution was approved unanimously.

Intergovernmental Issues

The crisis of the day is the possibility of a federal government shutdown. As to how a shutdown may impact Minnesota, there could be delays in reimbursement of federal funds and, in the agriculture sector, negotiations around the next Farm Bill will be delayed, among many other impacts. Congress has until Sunday to figure out an agreement.

In Minnesota, this week saw the appointment and resignation of its first cannabis management director, Sen. Tina Smith canceled events this week after coming down with COVID, and the United Auto Workers' picket lines have expanded to Plymouth. Since we last met, Rep. Brian Daniels, a Republican from Faribault, and Heather Edelson, a Democrat from Edina, have both announced that they will not be running for reelection to the Legislature in the next election.

The upcoming session is a bonding year, but there may be a supplemental budget—we will know more when the November forecast comes out. The revenue forecasts are expected to be more predictive this year than they were during the height of COVID when revenues were difficult to predict. There is a lot of pre-work happening to have legislation ready to go out the gate in February. The DFL is very aware of the opportunity that exists with the DFL trifecta and does not want to squander that opportunity. The Republicans have been talking a lot about the need to fix mistakes when they come back in February and also to address permitting reform.

Thinking about how the upcoming 2024 legislative session will affect MMCD, PFAS (Per and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, which are chemicals that resist grease, oil, water, and heat) are being discussed as they relate to pesticides. This would be a good time to review the types of pesticides that MMCD utilizes to understand whether any contain PFAS and to consider the risks or benefits (both politically and otherwise of continuing their use).

Approval of Bylaws

The Commission made the decision to submit a bill to the legislature to change statutory language removing the requirement that the Executive Director must be an entomologist, Statute § 473.704 Subd. 3. Director; to be an entomologist. The Commission recommended fulfilling the entomologist needs of the District, amending the bylaws and including that the District would always employ at least one entomologist, as a staff member of the Technical Services Department. The recommendation was made to help pass the legislative bill, if there was any opposition or concern with amending the language.

Bylaws are adopted to govern and serve as an operational document made by the commission that can include but not limited to regulate operating procedures, specific rules on conducting business, officer processes, authority of specific groups or positions as well as staff structure requirements.

Statute § 473.703 Subd. 8. Bylaws. The commission may adopt bylaws to regulate its own proceedings.

Bylaws will be created and include in the ‘Purpose,’ to continue to use science-based data to drive the control operations, commit to always employ at least one entomologist, and to add the Technical Advisory Board (TAB) as a required advisory board. The committee requested a letter be sent to the TAB so as to ensure MMCD’s is taking steps to satisfy the concern brought up by the TAB when changing the statute.

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

Resolved:

The Executive Committee will make a recommendation to the full commission to accept the Bylaws as amended, to include a letter sent to the Technical Advisory Board.

Commissioner Mike Gamache seconded the motion, and the resolution was approved unanimously.

Executive Director Selection

The hiring committee discussed with the Executive Committee the hiring and interviewing process and candidate they chose, providing in detail the reasoning behind their decision, and what they believe the candidate can contribute to the District. They will begin working on an employment contract that will be provided at the October 25, 2023, Commission Meeting for approval.

Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB)

Arleen Schacht provided information related to the Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) Trust fund, requesting the permission to review the current plan, and work with VIA Actuarial Solutions to conduct an evaluation showing the impact on the trust if the plan provisions were changed to include all employees. According to the plan provisions, only employees that were hired prior to January 1, 2008, are eligible (19 of 53 employees).

After a lengthy discussion, the Executive Committee approved to move forward with the review and to include on the October 25, 2023, commission meeting more detailed information about the trust and the results of the review.

Commissioner Mike Gamache made a motion, to support the consideration of including all employees in a post-employment benefit, to be determined after review of more detailed information, and further discussion at the full Commission meeting on October 25, 2023

Commissioner Rena Moran seconded the motion.

Executive Director's Report

Arleen Schacht worked with the Bylaws sub-committee to establish the Metropolitan Mosquito Control Commission Bylaws and presented them for review of the Executive Committee.

Provided information related to the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB), an irrevocable trust, showing the current value of the trust, stating that the trust investments are managed by PERA, and the plan provisions are administered by MMCD. Every other year, to comply with GASB 74/75, the District is required to have a full actuarial evaluation conducted, which is performed by VIA Actuarial Solutions.

Adjournment

Chair Commissioner Fran Miron adjourned the meeting at 11:43 a.m.

**METROPOLITAN MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

MINUTES
JANUARY 24, 2024
9:15 AM

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

Vice Chair Frethem 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 the information packet summarizes 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

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

TO: COMMISSION MEMBERS
FROM: DAN HUFF
RE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT
DATE: MARCH 2024

1. DIRECTOR'S INITIATIVES

Spring is (almost) here! This year's first tick and mosquito larvae have been found and some adult mosquitos (most likely species that overwinter), the weather is warming, and seasonal applications are coming in and being reviewed.

I completed my goal of meeting with every permanent staff person. It was great fun for me to meet everyone and hear directly what they want to see from their Executive Director. I continue to be in awe of the great people who work here and of what a great organization MMCD is. The major themes I heard from folks was the desire for leadership to articulate a common vision and strategic direction for the District. A second theme was for leadership to be responsive to requests and input provided by the work teams, make decisions as needed, and communicate back why the decision was made. I heard many other things as well and will be writing these up for me to discuss with the team.

My plan is to continue to listen and learn as I experience my first field season. I am excited to go out and experience the work firsthand. I would love for Commission members to join me. Please let me know if you would like to see our field or lab teams in action and we can schedule a time.

I have begun working with the senior leadership team on the following:

1. Strategic Planning. I am hoping to bring in an outside consultant to work with us this winter to develop a new strategic plan for the District. My goal is to have a strategic plan that is action oriented and helps guide the development of our team and individual workplans. We will seek your input in the plan's development, and we will seek approval of the final plan by the Commission.
2. Facility Assessment. Among the six facilities owned by the District, we are responsible for managing 160,000 square feet of building space on twenty-eight acres. That is a lot of space and a lot of complexity. The goal of the assessment is to help us continue to be good stewards of these resources and help us with our capital budget planning. We are working to have an outside firm provide us with this assessment. At the recommendation of our internal Sustainability Team, we will also be looking at building energy use and how can be more efficient.
3. Technology Assessment. Our tech is another important part of our infrastructure. Our work is dependent upon continued operation of our IT systems. Our goal is to have an external assessment that helps us look at maintaining the sustainability and security of these systems.

I was fortunate to participate in the interview panel for the three new FOS positions. This was a strong applicant pool, making our job of choosing challenging. We hired three top notch individuals to the team.

Thanks to Arleen and Jennifer and their work hiring our new Facilities Coordinator, Tim Stich. Tim has a rich background in facilities management and is a great addition to our team. Tim will be helping to lead the facility assessment.

I joined seven other MMCD staff in Dallas for the American Association of Mosquito Control (AMCA) Annual Meeting. Our team gave three presentations and participated in panel discussions. As evidenced by the engagement from attendees, all these presentations were well received. I learned a lot and enjoyed meeting colleagues in other states.

Alex, Regional Managers, and I have been making the rounds to each county commission providing an overview of MMCD. Commissioners have been very positive in their comments. We have presented to every county board, except for Ramsey County.

Thank you for your ongoing support of MMCD!

2. MOSQUITO CONTROL SERVICES-OPERATIONS

The first part of March has been very warm. As we look at the second half of March though, the forecasts are showing cooler temperatures, and even a chance for snow. The metro remains in a moderate drought. Staff are continuing to report varying conditions; dry wetlands, wetlands with lower water levels, and still some frozen pockets in some of the wetlands. We will continue to meet on a weekly basis to ensure we are prepared for what the weather brings us. As of today, our plan is for our seasonal staff to start on Monday April 8th.

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

- Loren Lemke, a Field Operations Supervisor at Maple Grove who has worked for the District full time since 1990, is retiring on Friday March 22nd. We thank Loren for his services.
- We have hired three new Field Supervisors, one in Maple Grove and two in Anoka. In Anoka, Cheng Yang and Rosa Mueller will start on March 25th. In Maple Grove, Mark Leonard will start on April 1st.
- Our hiring for seasonal employees is going very well. To date, we have received 309 applications. We have hired 108 applicants that will be starting throughout the months of April, May, and June. Our hiring goal for 2024 is 195 seasonal positions.
- Staff are making final preparations for the field season. This includes preparing training for the seasonal staff, updating maps, and getting vehicles and equipment ready to use.

3. TECHNICAL SERVICES

Team members are preparing for the upcoming season and attempting to predict the effects of the unseasonable weather on our operations. Staff continue to meet to discuss the multiple environmental variables that may affect mosquitoes, black flies, and ticks.

Technical services hired most of our seasonal technicians required for the entomology lab, catch basin crew, and tick program.

Technical Services is planning an orientation for our new full-time staff members to assist in their transition and education.

Mosquito-borne Disease Update

2024 Season Preparations:

We are in the late stages of planning for the 2024 mosquito-borne disease season. La Crosse encephalitis prevention begins in earnest as soon as staff are back in the field. We have opportunities to spot container and tire habitats in the spring that were hidden by vegetation during the previous summer. Eliminating those habitats early in the year prevents several generations of LAC vectors from developing there over the course of the summer.

Larval control applications targeting WNV vectors will begin in late May. Analysis of mosquito samples for WNV will start late in May or early June. A primary component of WNV risk reduction is larval control within the stormwater management system. We partner with many cities to control mosquitoes in structures with difficult access. We will soon be contacting municipalities to assist us with mosquito control in underground stormwater management structures. We hope to make arrangements with cities that have cooperated with us in the past and to reach out to other cities that maintain underground stormwater structures.

Finally, we are about to begin the training of our Seasonal Technicians in the concepts of mosquito-borne disease prevention. We place a heavy burden on our technicians as the front-line defense against mosquito-borne illnesses. Over the next several months they will be working to prevent La Crosse encephalitis, West Nile illness, Jamestown Canyon illness, western equine encephalitis, and eastern equine encephalitis.

Entomology Lab update

Diann, Carey, and Scott are reviewing the draft TAB report and making final edits. It will be ready for the April commission meeting.

Scott Larson attended the American Mosquito Control Association meeting in Dallas, TX where he presented a paper (*Efficacy and nontarget effects of a spinosad-based larvicide in Minnesota vernal pools and cattail marshes*) for Diann who was on medical leave. He also gave a presentation about invasive mosquito species in Minnesota and participated as an expert in the panel discussions at a pre-conference workshop (Young Professionals – Placing your best tarsi forward: How to be prepared for anything).

Carey LaMere was on the organizing committee for the North American Black Fly Association, which was February 7-9, in Harrisburg, PA. Carey presented an update of the MMCD Black Fly Program for 2023.

Scott Larson received results of ticks from drag samples collected last year that were tested for pathogens by the CDC. He has been reviewing those results and will communicate them to the appropriate facilities, organizations, and land managers.

We are currently working on the IDs for the nontarget samples collected on the Mississippi River as part of the permit process for the Black Fly Control Program.

Tick Program update

Ticks are becoming active as warm spring temperatures increase. Citizens and staff may potentially encounter ticks during the day.

Tick-borne disease testing 2023:

Tularemia. Results pending. This rare tick-borne disease (Minnesota yearly rates are 0-3 people; 0-5 animals) is caused by a bacterium. Most transmission occurs via handling or eating an infected animal (primarily hunters handling rabbits) but can also occur via the bite of an infected wood tick, dog tick, lone star tick or biting fly (primarily deer flies) or more rarely, via drinking contaminated water or inhaling contaminated dust or aerosols. The Minnesota Department of Health is testing all wood ticks collected from our tick surveillance and approximately four hundred more collected via dragging to determine a tularemia infection rate.

Powassan virus. Results pending. This rare virus (yearly Minnesota case totals have ranged from 0-11 (median 4)) is transmitted by three species of ticks, all in the genus *Ixodes*, but only *Ixodes scapularis*, the deer tick, commonly bites people. For the last several months of the tick surveillance season staff collected blood samples and also saved any ticks found while out in the field. Additional attempts to collect ticks were performed by dragging for questing ticks. Dr. Matthew Aliota, U of M College of Veterinary Medicine, is testing all samples to check for the presence of Powassan virus in small mammals and deer ticks.

Testing of *Ixodes scapularis* and *Ixodes muris* collected via dragging. Results in progress. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) tested 282 deer tick nymphs, two hundred deer tick adults, and one *Ixodes muris* nymph for infection with Lyme disease (either *Borrelia burgdorferi* (common) or *Borrelia mayonii* (1-3 cases yearly)), human anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis (*Ehrlichia muris euclairensis*), tick-borne relapsing fever, and babesiosis. As expected, Lyme disease bacteria were found in deer ticks from across our service area, with fewer ticks infected with any of the other tick-borne diseases. A limited number of ticks were found to be co-infected (infected with two or more pathogens).

Tick-borne disease testing 2024.

Powassan virus. Expansion. St. Paul tick program staff will collect a full season of samples and ticks in 2024. In addition, MMCD staff from all facilities will also save all ticks of any species found on themselves in the field in 2024.

Probable. SARS-CoV-2 testing of mice (*Peromyscus*). A continuation of this research collaboration from 2022 could result in MMCD again providing samples from *Peromyscus* to Dr Jeff Bender, DVM, MS, School of Public Health. A plan is not finalized.

Testing of *Ixodes scapularis* and *Ixodes muris* collected via dragging. Continuation. Staff from all facilities will again collect questing ticks via dragging a cloth for 1,000 meters at specific locations across our service area. Up to 50 *I. scapularis* or *I. muris* at each location will be sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to be tested for the tick-borne diseases listed above. Any

other tick species collected and the number of *I. scapularis* or *I. muris* greater than fifty that were collected at any one location will be included in the Powassan virus testing project.

Progress—tick vector field projects:

The 2023 tick surveillance began on April 24 and ended on October 26. Laboratory work, data entry, and tick identification is complete, and data is currently being compiled.

Public education efforts

Social media, tick alerts. We already alerted our Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/Tik Tok followers of the February 5th date of the first deer tick collection by MMCD in 2024 and will continue to inform our followers of additional items of interest as they occur.

4. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Mosquitoes in the News

After a surge of tick-related stories making the news in February, mosquitoes are the big story for March so far, after Field Operations Supervisor Brian Feldhake found the first active larvae of the year on February 26th. Here are some of the stories that have been published so far:

- KSTP: Metropolitan Mosquito Control District unveils its forecast for the coming season
- Star Tribune: Mosquitoes are getting an early start, but numbers may be down this year
- WCCO: Experts find first mosquito larvae of the season, but don't expect a surge just yet.

Commission Presentations and Follow Up

We had a great time visiting the various Commission meetings to provide updates on the past mosquito season and a preview of what's ahead for MMCD. Several Commissioners reached out about providing additional materials that can be put in their newsletters. Alex has sent the County Summaries to each commission office and will prepare a brief 2023 summary and 2024 preview upon request. Please let Alex know if you are interested: acarlson@mmcd.org

School and Public Events

We have been expanding our education outreach by appearing at public events and presenting to students of various ages. In the past month, we have met with hundreds of middle school students to discuss future careers in mosquito control during various visits at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. We've also participated in events like Science Night at Cedar Ridge Elementary School, Get Ready Conference at the U of M, and various job fairs for college-aged students.

Other Items

Adjournment
