

DRAFT MINUTES

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC)

September 30, 2026

Hybrid Meeting – MN State Capitol 120 & Zoom, pursuant to MS 13D

Call to Order: Chair David Hartwell called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. [\(0:00:11\)](#)

Members Present	Members Absent
David Hartwell (Chair)	
Ron Schara (Vice Chair)	
Suzanne Baird	
Rep. John Burkel	
Kristin Eggerling	
Sen. FOUNG Hawj	
Matt Kucharski	
Sen. Andrew Lang	
Darrel Palmer	
Tom Saxhaug	
Ted Suss	
Rep. Samantha Vang	

A quorum was present.

1. Review and Approve Agenda: [\(0:01:03\)](#)

Councilmember Suss made a motion to approve the agenda – **Motion Prevailed**

2. Review and Approve Minutes: [\(0:01:19\)](#)

Councilmember Baird made a motion to approve the minutes from August 25, 2026 and August 26, 2026 – **Motion Prevailed**

3. Conflicts of Interest Reported: [\(0:01:43\)](#)

No conflicts of interest were reported.

4. Chair's Comments:

[\(0:01:52\)](#)

Chair Hartwell noted the Chairs' Proposal and allocation selections would be discussed at this meeting. Chair Hartwell reported that there was a general consensus across Member's allocation selections which became the basis for the Chairs' Proposal.

5. Report from the Executive Director:

[\(0:03:15\)](#)

Executive Director Kristina Smitten noted several points of follow-up remaining from the August proposal hearings will be addressed at future meetings, including questions related to program information and revisions of the LSOHC proposal. Director Smitten also reported two minor conversion/conveyances that were administratively approved.

6. Discussion/Action: Chairs' Recommendation and Allocation Selection

[\(0:08:20\)](#)

Chair Hartwell introduced the documentation provided and gave an overview of the recommendations included in the Chairs' Proposal, as well as the process undertaken to arrive at the recommendations. Chair Hartwell noted additional allocations for the LSOHC operating budget and maintenance of the Legacy website would be included in the bill in addition to project proposal allocations. Chair Hartwell identified points for additional Council discussion based on member comments or exceptions where the average member allocation was not used as the basis for the Chairs' recommendations.

Chair Hartwell noted that the Chairs' Proposal includes guidance related to adjustment of the budget for O3, "DNR Core Functions in Partner-led OHF Acquisitions", to account for administrative costs of land acquisition, as well as for staff to adjust the final recommendations based on fiscal forecasts as follows: increase allocation for O2, "2027 Restoration Evaluations" to the statutorily required 0.1%, then proportionately to all allocations.

Chair Hartwell listed three proposals that indicated their project was not scalable: WRE05, "Mud River Enhancement Phase II", HRE02, "Beaver Creek Habitat Restoration", and HRE09, "Knife River Habitat Rehabilitation Project-PH VII". Chair Hartwell described adjustments made to the average allocations which would fully fund WRE05 and HRE02 but noted there was a larger funding gap for HRE09, which would remain only partially funded under the Chairs' Proposal. Chair Hartwell indicated that the proposal managers for HRE09 would be asked to decide if they would accept partial funding prior to the next Council meeting. If the proposers would choose to reject partial funding, the amount recommended for HRE09 would be reallocated to CPL.

Council discussion followed.

Action:

[\(0:22:49\)](#)

Councilmember Suss made a motion to approve the Chairs' Proposal as presented.

Council discussion followed.

Action:

(0:23:53)

Councilmember Baird made a motion to amend the Chairs' Proposal to allocate full funding for HRE09, "Knife River Habitat Rehabilitation Project-PH VIII", should there be additional funds in the December or February fiscal forecasts.

A roll call vote was taken.

AYE:	NAY:	ABSENT:
Hartwell		Rep. Vang
Schara		
Baird		
Rep. Burkel		
Eggerling		
Sen. Hawj		
Kucharski		
Sen. Lang		
Palmer		
Saxhaug		
Suss		

11 AYES, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT – Motion Prevailed

Action:

(0:25:30)

Chair Hartwell made a motion to amend the Chairs' Proposal to prohibit the use of neonicotinoids within the program PA01, "DNR Accelerated Native Prairie Bank Protection - Phase IX".

A roll call vote was taken.

AYE:	NAY:	ABSENT:
Hartwell		Rep. Vang
Schara		
Baird		
Rep. Burkel		
Eggerling		
Sen. Hawj		
Kucharski		

AYE:	NAY:	ABSENT:
Sen. Lang		
Palmer		
Saxhaug		
Suss		

11 AYES, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT – Motion Prevailed

Action:

(0:39:08)

Councilmember Eggerling made a motion to amend the Chairs' Recommendation to exclude expenditures related to acoustic monitoring as pertaining to FRE03, "Metro Forests for Minnesota Wildlife and Communities".

A roll call vote was taken.

AYE:	NAY:	ABSENT:
Hartwell		
Schara		
Baird		
Rep. Burkel		
Eggerling		
Sen. Hawj		
Kucharski		
Sen. Lang		
Palmer		
Saxhaug		
Suss		
Rep. Vang		

12 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT – Motion Prevailed

Council discussion moved to consideration of proposal WRE02, "DNR Shallow Lakes and Wetland Enhancements - Phase 19". Bob Meier, Assistant Commission, MN DNR, and Dave Trauba, Wildlife Section Manager, MN DNR, were invited to testify before the Council on this proposal. Mr. Meier and Mr. Trauba provided additional information related to historic funding amounts for the program, use of dedicated funds to supplement DNR Shallow Lakes and Wetlands staff, and future considerations. MN DNR reported a commitment to supplying 10% of funding for Shallow Lakes and Wetlands staff from non-OHF funding going forward. Discussion continued relating to proportions of funding to be used towards staff versus ongoing projects and

possible future adjustments. The Chair reported additional information will be provided to the Council from DNR and Council staff prior to approval of an accomplishment plan for WRE02.

Council discussion moved to consideration of HRE03, “Daylighting Phalen Creek - Phase 2”.

Action:

(1:06:20)

Councilmember Palmer made a motion to amend the Chairs’ Recommendation to require funds allocated to HRE03, “Daylighting Phalen Creek - Phase 2” be spent only on lower reaches; reaches 1, 2, and 3.

Council discussion continued. Gabby Menomin, Director of Land and Environment, Waḡaḡ T̄ipi Awaḡyaḡkapi, Maren Hansell, Design Engineer, Inter-Fluve, and Katie Gamades, Director of Development, Waḡaḡ T̄ipi Awaḡyaḡkapi, were invited to testify before the Council on this proposal. The testifiers provided additional information on project considerations across different reaches of Phalen Creek in response to Council questions. The testifiers indicated they would support a proposed split of funding allowing no more than 25% of total funding to be spent on middle reaches 4, 5, and 6 of Phalen Creek.

Action:

(1:40:55)

Councilmember Palmer amended the original motion as follows: to amend the Chairs’ Recommendation to limit spending on reaches 4, 5, and 6 of Phalen Creek at no greater than 25% of total funds allocated to HRE03, “Daylighting Phalen Creek - Phase 2”.

A roll call vote was taken.

AYE:	NAY:	ABSENT:
Hartwell	Sen. Lang	
Schara	Rep. Vang	
Baird		
Rep. Burkel		
Eggerling		
Sen. Hawj		
Kucharski		
Palmer		
Saxhaug		
Suss		

10 AYES, 2 NAYS, 0 ABSENT – Motion Prevailed

Council discussion moved to consideration of proposal HRE06, “DNR Irish Creek Watershed Enhancement, Phase 1”.

Action:

(1:47:46)

Chair Hartwell made a motion to amend the Chairs' Recommendation to require funds allocated to HRE06, "DNR Irish Creek Watershed Enhancement, Phase 1" be used solely for Irish Creek and brook trout related enhancement, and to exclude enhancement related to moose foraging habitat.

Council discussion continued. Jeremy Pinkerton, St. Louis River and Lake Superior Program Supervisor, MN DNR, was invited to testify before the Council on this proposal, as well as additional sources of funding to be used towards completion of fish passage culvert projects.

Chair Hartwell withdrew the previous motion.

Council discussion moved to consideration of proposal HRE16, "Tamarac River Enhancement Project - Phase 1". Lon Aune, County Engineer, Marshall County, and Tony Nordby, Houston Engineering, were invited to testify before the Council to answer questions regarding availability of RIM funding for easement acquisition for this program. The testifiers indicated that RIM funding is expected to be available, and noted funding would likely be available from county ditch system or watershed management board funds if RIM funding was unavailable.

Action:

(2:06:32)

Chair Hartwell made a motion to amend the Chairs' Recommendation to require funding allocated for HRE16, "Tamarac River Enhancement Project - Phase 1" be contingent upon receipt of confirmation of funding availability for easement acquisition by the December 8th, 2026, Council meeting.

A roll call vote was taken.

AYE:	NAY:	ABSENT:
Hartwell		Sen. Lang
Schara		Rep. Vang
Baird		
Rep. Burkel		
Eggerling		
Sen. Hawj		
Kucharski		
Palmer		
Saxhaug		
Suss		

10 AYES, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSENT – Motion Prevailed

Council discussion moved to consideration of proposal CPL, “Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program - ML27/FY28”.

Action:

(2:10:02)

Councilmember Kucharski made a motion to amend the Chairs’ Recommendation to require funding allocated for CPL, “Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program - ML27/FY28” be designated as at least \$3,000,000 for grants in the 7-county metropolitan area and cities with a population of 50,000, with the remainder of funding available to statewide applicants.

A roll call vote was taken.

AYE:	NAY:	ABSENT:
Hartwell		Sen. Lang
Schara		Rep. Vang
Baird		
Rep. Burkel		
Eggerling		
Sen. Hawj		
Kucharski		
Palmer		
Saxhaug		
Suss		

10 AYES, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSENT – Motion Prevailed

A roll call vote was taken on the Suss motion to approve the Chairs’ Recommendation as amended.

AYE:	NAY:	ABSENT:
Hartwell		Sen. Lang
Schara		Rep. Vang
Baird		
Rep. Burkel		
Eggerling		
Sen. Hawj		
Kucharski		
Palmer		
Saxhaug		

AYE:	NAY:	ABSENT:
Suss		

10 AYES, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSENT – Motion Prevailed

7. Discussion/Action: Amendment Request

[\(2:15:34\)](#)

ML 2022, Ch. 77, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(a): Dakota County Habitat Protection/Restoration Phase VIII

Executive Director Smitten provided an overview of the amendment request, which requests a shift in funds from acquisition to restoration budget categories.

Alex Scurto, Senior Project Manager, Parks Department, Dakota County, testified to the Council on additional programmatic details and further explained the amendment request.

Action:

[\(2:20:26\)](#)

Councilmember Baird made a motion to approve the amendment request as presented.

A roll call vote was taken.

AYE:	NAY:	ABSENT:
Hartwell		Sen. Lang
Schara		Rep. Vang
Baird		
Rep. Burkel		
Eggerling		
Sen. Hawj		
Kucharski		
Palmer		
Saxhaug		
Suss		

10 AYES, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSENT – Motion Prevailed

8. Presentation: Ike's Creek Restoration

[\(2:21:35\)](#)

Neal Feekan, Executive Director, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, and Vicki Sherry, Wildlife Biologist, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, presented to the Council

an informational overview of a Council-funded restoration of Ike's Creek, a trout stream in Bloomington, MN.

Council discussion followed.

9. Presentation/Discussion: Saving Wetlands, Shaping a Legacy – 75 Years of Minnesota's WMA System [\(2:41:38\)](#)

Dave Trauba, Wildlife Section Manager, MN DNR, presented to the Council an informational overview on the history of the Wildlife Management Area system and how Outdoor Heritage Funds have been used to accelerate the protection, restoration, and enhancement of lands in the Wildlife Management Area system.

Council discussion followed.

No public testimony was heard.

Meeting adjourned at 11:42 a.m.