Ann Arbor Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan
Stormwater Advisory Group (SWAG) Meeting Minutes
Session 7 – March 11th, 2026

Attendees:

The following individuals attended the in-person meeting on March 11th:

Michelle Bennett	Jillian Hesler
Don Carpenter	Jennifer Lawson
Vince Caruso	Jen Lawson
Dan Christian	Melissa Menerey
Miekyn Cotton	Sara Nedrich
Katie Dillon	Richard Norton
Gretchen Driskell	Andrea Paine
Omar Gates	Jenna Troppman
Jerry Hancock	Dana Wilkinson

Meeting Agenda:

The meeting consisted of the following components:

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Tiered Performance Standards Framework
3. Case Study of Tiered Performance Standards
4. Structured Discussion: Tiered Performance Standards
5. SWAG Feedback Survey and Next Steps
6. Community Outreach Discussion
7. Private Stormwater Infrastructure Introduction
8. Closing and Adjournment

The PowerPoint slides presented to the SWAG have been attached. A summary of current and upcoming action items for SWAG members is available at the end of the meeting minutes section below.

Meeting Minutes:

1. Welcome and Introductions

Within the materials sent out before this meeting were two technical memos – one discussing performance standards and another discussing private stormwater infrastructure. Discussion of SWAG Feedback Survey and Next Steps (Agenda Item #5) was moved forward and included with the day's introductions. Don addressed specific points from the group's input.

- The timing of the meeting could not be shifted later without causing additional scheduling issues for most people.
- Similarly, the meetings will continue to occur on Wednesdays (as opposed to variable days of the week) for scheduling consistency.
- The project team will try to provide as much time as possible for the SWAG to review materials such as memos and meeting minutes.
- There are 2 more SWAG's scheduled for 2026 on April 29th and June 10th.

After this discussion of key feedback received by the Project Team, verbal approval was conducted for the meeting minutes from the previous session, SWAG 6.

2. Tiered Performance Standards Framework

In a previous session, the group discussed tiered performance standards, and this continued discussion aims to clarify the vision, feasibility, and implementation of such standards. An example framework, not a finalized set of standards, was presented to facilitate discussion. Furthermore, tiered performance standards are suggested to serve as guidance/framework as opposed to a directly enforceable standard or guarantee. Meeting the benchmarks established in tiered performance standards is not always possible and often requires substantial time and resources. A tiered framework can inform capital planning and engineering judgements.

Tiered standards have the potential to better address the complexity and variability of real-world conditions. Different storms have different risks associated with them and different types of roads have different functions and criticality to the community. One set of uniform standards may not reflect these distinctions.

Drainage systems can be considered in terms of two subsystems working together – minor drainage (pipes, inlets, gutters, etc.) and major drainage (overland flow, ROW, easements, etc.). These systems were generally designed for ~10yr storms, but typically performance is significantly lower due in part to increasing precipitation. Inlet capacity can act as limiting factor – even when there is system capacity it cannot always reach storage fast enough. Tiered expectations can be implemented based on storm probability, the function of the asset in question, and criticality of access to that asset.

The following were presented as potential performance objective categories:
- Minor conveyance (lower flood expectations – least amount of flooding acceptable)
- Full lane preservation
- Directional mobility
- Limited mobility/passable path
- Property protection
- Life safety (higher flood expectations – greater amount of flooding acceptable)

Establishing this range of objectives and expectations allows for the consideration of different objectives under different storm intensities. An example table detailed how different AEPs (annual exceedance probabilities) and road categories could be assigned different performance objectives. Even "current" rainfall statistics such as Atlas 14 are out of date relative to present conditions. If the city proceeded with a tiered framework, they could specify and finetune the road categories, storms, and performance objectives to reflect their needs and conditions.

There is a need for clarification on how floodplains are treated within the framework. Flooding within the floodplain should be treated differently than flooding outside the floodplain.

The project team reiterated that, even if a framework is adopted, it is not necessarily feasible to meet all goals laid out in that framework. Rather, this establishes goals and a consistent decision-making framework.

It was noted that more qualitative labels (i.e. Catastrophic Storm, Critical Storm) for the storm scenarios could be a helpful communication tool. Introducing labels that do not reference AEPs could help to better set expectations for those without a stormwater background.

Regarding climate change, there are different ways to account for new information and changing conditions. Ranging from least to most proactive, the options are:

1. Status quo – continue current practices without accounting for increasing precipitation
2. Evaluate and decide – assess conditions and use this information to make decisions
3. Future focused design – utilize projections and updated rainfall values to try to anticipate and address future system needs

While the group generally favored option 3, the most proactive option, cost was acknowledged as a barrier – as you decide to be more active and proactive it gets expensive quickly. A group member noted that the ideological and functional answers to this question may differ – for example, you may believe in actions aligned with option 3 but be constrained to actions aligned with options 2 or 1. Option 3 is complicated politically and would require a lot of outreach and education.

3. Case Study of Tiered Performance Standards

To illustrate the implementation of tiered standards, Jenna Troppman presented a case study from Madison WI. Flooding is an issue for the community and the desired LOS objectives are not achieved. Five alternatives were reviewed, and the decision-making process demonstrates how tiered expectations can be applied for project prioritization.

4. Structured Discussion: Tiered Performance Standards

Mapping and modeling inform the development of tiered system standards, and concern was expressed that new flood risk maps could have implications on City and development plans that were approved before the maps became available. For example, areas that could later be identified as at flood risk could be approved for higher density zoning or major redevelopment before that information is broadly available. The presence of affordable housing near the floodplain was also noted as a concern.

Assessing and modeling current conditions, let alone future conditions, is a large undertaking, and updating maps could take considerable time. While there are some decisions that will need to be made before additional information may become available, the group advised that the City look for opportunities to coordinate land use and stormwater planning efforts and considerations. To provide this information to constituents ranging from lawmakers to residents, the City should also prioritize data accessibility.

The group was generally in favor of tiered stormwater standards in Ann Arbor. It was noted that careful communication would be necessary to convey:

- The tiered standards are a planning tool and not a promise
- Specific tradeoffs involved
- Engineering/design alone cannot solve all present problems

Tiered standards are not common in MI, but it is a new concept and as modeling and information improve it becomes more feasible.

SWAG members were encouraged to spend additional time reviewing the associated memo and send feedback to Jen by Friday, March 27th.

5. SWAG Feedback Survey and Next Steps

This agenda element was moved and incorporated with the meeting introduction.

6. Community Outreach Discussion

There are two remaining SWAG sessions planned, SWAG members were asked to please reach out if they have additional topics they think should to be covered. They were also asked to review a drafted community survey on stormwater. The community survey is set to be distributed soon, so there is a faster turnaround on feedback.

The group was asked to suggest methods to convey the comprehensive management plan to the pubic. The following ideas were presented:

- MLive and/or general press campaign
- Contact representatives for various groups – reach out to focus group attendees
- Social media
- Postcards
- Washtenaw County newsletter
- HRWC
- Watershed trivia

The group was asked to send any additional ideas via email.

7. Private Stormwater Infrastructure Introduction

While this topic is planned for further discussion at a later session, private stormwater infrastructure was introduced. The City includes a lot of privately maintained detention ponds. They are generally maintained enough to perform as designed, but neighborhood ponds present an issue and, in addition to being undersized, many are not functioning as intended. The City is considering taking on maintenance for some privately owned neighborhood ponds to rehabilitate them while taking the onus off HOA's and homeowners. Many HOA's and homeowners do not have a strong understanding of stormwater system maintenance, and taking over key properties could advance system resiliency and create retrofitting opportunities. It was noted that City maintenance of a pond must benefit the larger system, not just the house or neighborhood, for the City to step in. There are potential legal hurdles due to private ownership.

8. Closing and Adjournment

Action Items:

Current action items include the following:

- Send feedback on Performance Standards Memo to Jen by Friday, March 27th.
- Send feedback on Community Stormwater Survey to Jen by Friday, March 13th.
- Please send any additional ideas for community outreach and SWAG agenda items by March 31st.

Upcoming action items include:

- Upcoming SWAG sessions will take place on April 29th and June 10th
- The April SWAG session will take place at the drinking water plant.