Ann Arbor Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan
Stormwater Advisory Group (SWAG) Meeting Minutes
Session 9 – June 10th, 2026

Attendees:

The following individuals attended the in-person meeting on June 10th:

Gage Belko
Michelle Bennett
Don Carpenter
Vince Caruso
Dan Christian
Katie Dillon
Gretchen Dirskell
Omar Gates
Jerry Hancock
Jillian Hesler
Craig Hupy
Kaitlin Knape
Jennifer Lawson
Melissa Menerey
Sara Nedrich
Dick Norton
Miekyn Notten
Andrea Paine
Peter Stephens
Skye Stewart
Dana Wilkinson
Ellie Williams
Dean Wozniak

Meeting Agenda:

The meeting consisted of the following components:

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. SWAG Retrospective
3. Volume 1 Summary Plan Review
4. Public Outreach/Announcements

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**

The final meeting was well attended and began with a round of introductions. Verbal approval was conducted for the meeting minutes from the previous session, SWAG 8.

2. SWAG Retrospective

Partially in response to requests for additional clarity regarding how SWAG feedback is utilized, Don conducted a recapitulation of past SWAG sessions, including an overview of topics and outcomes associated with each meeting, summarized briefly below.

SWAG 1 (January 29th, 2025)

- The first session included an introduction to project and the SWAG's role.
- SWAG engagement preferences, goals, and priorities were discussed.
- After discussing the impacts of climate change, the topic was incorporated into all technical memos, as opposed to separated in its own memo.

SWAG 2 (April 2nd, 2025)

- Charter was reviewed and approved.
- A climate resiliency exercise, Decisions for the Decades, was conducted to highlight the complexity of making decisions and regulations in the face of uncertainty and risk.
- Vision statement was revised and finalized.
- Reviewed and selected project terminology.

SWAG 3 (June 11th, 2025)

Technical Memo 2 – Policy Evaluation

- SWAG comments and discussion led to:
    - Increased emphasis on regional/watershed scale impacts.
    - Further consideration of the relationship between stormwater and development.
    - Shifting language in objectives from "preservation" to "improvement."

Technical Memo 3 – Water Quality

- SWAG comments and discussion led to:
    - Including more information on the connection between water quality and water quantity.
    - Increased emphasis on community collaboration and education.
    - Further consideration and discussion of TMDLs.
    - Additional consideration of emerging contaminants and potential future regulatory requirements.

SWAG 4 (August 13th, 2025)

- Four (4) focus groups and facilitated meetings were held in the fall based on SWAG input on focus group questions/discussion topics.
    - Four groups were involved:

        - Homeowners (focus group)
        - Businesses and Developers (focus group)
        - UM (facilitated discussion)
        - AAPS (facilitated discussion)
    - The general public was able to provide input through a city-wide survey.
    - Three core topical areas:
        - Understanding Stormwater and Flooding
        - Stormwater Practices and Regulations
        - Response and Resiliency

Technical Memo 4 – Stormwater Drainage

- SWAG comments and discussion led to:
    - Proceeding with tiered framework to better address risk and uncertainty.
    - Framing shift from "standards" to "targets."
    - Proceeding with the incorporation of future rainfall conditions
    - Additional detail on balancing infill/redevelopment with stormwater goals.

SWAG 5 (October 8th, 2025)

- Reviewed SWAG progress and contributions. Assessed what topics had been addressed and which needed to be covered.

Technical Memo 7 – Watershed Management

- SWAG comments and discussion led to:
    - Elaboration on TMDLs and BMPs.
    - Increased emphasis on collaboration.
    - Additional detail on balancing infill/redevelopment with stormwater goals.
    - Additional clarity and detail in goal-setting.

SWAG 6 (January 14th, 2026)

Technical Memo 5 – Floodplain Hazards Key Considerations

- SWAG comments and discussion led to:
    - Additional discussion of increasing frequency and intensity of rainfall
    - Increased consideration of the fact that flooding is not limited to formal floodplain boundaries.
    - Expanded discussion on the tensions between redevelopment and risk analysis.

SWAG 7 (March 11th, 2026)

- The group participated in a more in-depth discussion of tiered performance standards, and how that could function.
    - There was general support for a tiered approach.

    - It was noted that significant public outreach would be important in moving forward with a tiered performance framework.
    - The need for clarification on how FEMA floodplains are treated within the framework was also mentioned.
- Communication approaches were suggested and recorded, the group suggested stormwater messaging consider:
    - MLive and/or general press campaign
    - Contact representatives for various groups including focus group attendees
    - Social media
    - Postcards
    - Washtenaw County newsletter
    - HRWC & Watershed Trivia
- The group discussed the role and condition of private stormwater infrastructure in the system.

SWAG 8 (April 29th, 2026)

- The group discussed private stormwater infrastructure in more detail. There was general support for the City overseeing maintenance for key private assets that are currently underperforming.
    - The need for clarity on which systems are eligible was reiterated, with general agreement that only systems whose maintenance stands to benefit the larger system should be considered.
- The group was in favor of future condition design standards.
    - It was noted that communication needs to be clear surrounding expectations, and implementation should be flexible to accommodate changing conditions.

Technical Memo 6 – Flood Preparedness

- SWAG comments and discussion led to:
    - Additional consideration of how and when to coordinate pre-storm actions and how to utilize available data.

Technical Memo 10 – Prioritization Framework

- SWAG comments and discussion led to:
    - Reinforcing the following priorities: public safety, asset management, and reducing disproportionate impacts
    - Additional consideration of how to best communicate the prioritization framework to the public.

After reviewing these 8 sessions, the group was asked for their reactions, questions, or feedback.

- The public health implications of water issues was reinforced, with 1,4 – Dioxane serving as an example.
- The Project Team was asked to report out on the focus groups:
    - It was noted that the focus groups were overall positive.
    - Both UM and AAPS wanted to establish quarterly meetings, and there was a desire for partnership and communication.
    - Resident focus group tended to focus on immediate issues. Private detention basins were discussed, and it was noted that there were a lot of City efforts that people were not aware of. This highlighted the need for increased communication surrounding the City's stormwater projects and approach.
    - The commercial focus group was interested in collaboration and open to revised standards. They emphasized the desire for clear standards and consistent application of those standards. If incentivized, they indicated interest in upsizing systems to account for drainage areas beyond the immediate site.
- An update on the City stormwater survey was also provided.
    - Seems like people generally align on priorities.
    - Includes information on how they hear about stormwater to help strategize communication going forward.
    - Pending full analyses of results.

3. Volume 1 Summary Plan Review

A total of 400-500 pages are drafted; there is a need to summarize the information to make it more accessible. Volume 1 is the "short and sweet" version, geared toward elected officials and the public. Volume 2 will serve as a reference and include all technical details. The need for specific goals and objectives was highlighted.

Exercise 1

The first exercise focused on discussing the key components of the Plan in 15-minute breakout groups before reporting out. Proposed key outcomes were presented as follows:

1. Reduce Flood Risks to People, Property, and Infrastructure
2. Protect and Improve Water Quality
3. Build Climate Resilience
4. Strengthen Natural Systems and Watershed Health
5. Modernize Infrastructure Through Innovation and Data-Driven Planning
6. Invest Strategically and Sustainably

Question 1. Organizing the Story. Do these six outcomes effectively capture and organize the major themes that emerged throughout the planning process?

- All groups noted that education and outreach should be integrated in some capacity, be that its own outcome or integrated into existing outcome(s).
- A few groups indicated that outcome 6 could be clearer – what are we investing in?

- Groups mentioned that adding typical metrics for all categories would be beneficial.

Question 2. Missing or Underrepresented Themes. Is there an important idea, priority, or perspective that is not adequately reflected within the six outcomes?

- Multiple groups noted the opportunity for improved communication internally and externally, both the sharing of information across departments and with the public.
- Collaboration was mentioned as a theme for additional consideration – collaboration with staff, residents, developers and neighbors.
- It was mentioned that, while all components serve to improve planning/development, the relationship between development and stormwater relationship should be represented clearly.
    - Thinking about development in a way that centers infrastructure and environmental needs
- Integration of policy was also referenced, 'modernize infrastructure and policy.'

Question 3. Communicating Priorities. Looking at the six outcomes as a whole, do they communicate the right story about the future of stormwater management in Ann Arbor?

- *The majority of discussion and input on the outcomes was centered around questions 1 and 2.*

Exercise 2

The first exercise focused on discussing the key components of the Plan in 15-minute breakout groups before reporting out

Question 1. Key Takeaways for Residents. If a resident only read Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan, what are the three most important things you would want them to understand about stormwater management in Ann Arbor?

- One group came up with the following 3 takeaways:
    - Stormwater 101: why does it matter to manage SW?
    - City Actions: what has been done and what is being done by the City?
    - Stakeholder Actions: what can residents do to help?
- Another group emphasized:
    - Forward Thinking: Ann Arbor is thinking ahead, we are not proceeding with business as usual and not taking shortcuts.
    - Shared System: The stormwater system is a shared, dynamic one that is responding to a wide range of issues and needs.
    - Stormwater Reality: Stormwater is a fact of life, and stormwater management makes coexistence possible.
- One group also recommended incorporating the risk framework to set expectations.
- Emphasizing intensive, active planning and management – it needs to be clear that decisions are not happening randomly or passively.

- Stormwater is there even when it is not visible.
- Clarifying the role of the stormwater utility, as the funding source enabling the vast majority of management efforts, will help people understand where tax funds are going.
    - Don took a moment to follow up on the role of the utility, and asked if it needed further consideration in the Plan as this will inform upcoming LOS and rate analyses.
        - The group discussed highlighting the stormwater utility's role in what the city is doing and has potential to do. Potentially add a sidebar in the report to highlight both the stormwater utility and the upcoming rate study.
- Communication with the City Council was also discussed.
    - Stormwater education for both the public and the council is crucial, need to build understanding and understand how to navigate misconceptions.
    - Could develop an education program for city council/planning commission:
        - Bite-sized, 5-10 min, series
            - Discuss how the plans align, as this is a common question.

Question 2: Addressing Misconceptions and Expectations. What stormwater misconception, misunderstanding, or expectation should Volume 1 help address? Consider topics such as flooding, infrastructure limitations, climate change, watershed health, funding, or public responsibility.

- Misconception: Seeing water means the system is failing/has failed.
    - Some water accumulation is planned/beneficial to avoid flooding critical areas.
- Misconception: Redevelopment has exclusively negative impacts on stormwater management.
    - Redevelopment has potential to improve stormwater management by fixing what was ignored earlier.
- Misconception: Key terminology and references.
    - Clarify the meanings of key terms like '100 yr flood,' 'atlas 14,' etc.)
- Misconception: Getting water out of the way as fast as possible is the main priority for stormwater management.
    - It is often better to treat water closer to where it falls.
- Misconception: Water accumulation is the result of insufficient engineering.
    - We cannot out-engineer any storm/flood, and there will always be larger storms.
- Expectation: Realtors will have and provide accurate and updated stormwater information to prospective homeowners.
    - There is a need to better solidify the role of realtors in understanding and relaying stormwater needs and risk.

Question 3: Lessons from the SWAG Process. Looking back on the SWAG process, what important lesson, theme, or perspective should be clearly reflected in Volume 1 before the Plan is finalized?

- City staff needs to meet with other groups (internally and externally) more regularly.
- Need shift from planning infrastructure for growth to also plan growth for infrastructure.
- Many perspectives were considered and incorporated in the development of the Plan.

4. Public Outreach/Announcements

- A survey will be circulated via email to capture any final thoughts and takeaways.
- The Plan will be finished by the end of the year.

Action Items:

Current action items include the following:

- Please send stormwater-related photos to Dan for incorporation in the Plan.

Thank you all for your contributions to this group!