COON CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT
Request for Board Action

MEETING DATE: July 9, 2012
AGENDA NUMBER: 15
ITEM: Consider Potential Use of Consent Agenda

POLICY IMPACT: Discussion
FISCAL IMPACT: n/a

REQUEST
Discuss and provide direction to staff in pursuing the use of consent agendas

BACKGROUND
On July 3, Manager Westlund contacted the District office and inquired about the potential use of consent agendas for Board of Manager Meetings. Westlund expressed concern about the increased length of time for discussion that has occurred and will be required as Board agendas become longer and more complex.

In 1998, the Board briefly discussed the use of consent agendas and opted to not use them.

A consent agenda, sometimes called a consent "calendar," is a component of a meeting agenda that enables the board to group routine items and resolutions under one umbrella. As the name implies, there is a general agreement on the procedure. Issues in this consent package do not need any discussion before a vote. Unless a board member feels that an item should be discussed and requests the removal of that item ahead of time, the entire package is voted on at once without any additional explanations or comments. Because no questions or comments on these items are allowed during the meeting, this procedure saves time.

At every board meeting, at least a few items come to the agenda that do not need any discussion or debate either because they are routine procedures or are already unanimous consent. A consent agenda (Roberts Rules of Order calls it a consent calendar) allows the board to approve all these items together without discussion or individual motions. Depending upon the organization, this can free up anywhere from a few minutes to a half hour for more substantial discussion.

ISSUES/CONCERNS
1. **Items that can be included in a consent agenda**
Routine, standard, non-controversial, and self-explanatory are adjectives that well describe consent agenda items. Examples include:
1. Approval of committee and previous board meeting minutes
2. Staff reports
3. Final approval of proposals or reports that the board has been dealing with for some time and all members are familiar with the implications
4. Routine matters such as appointments to committees
5. Minor changes in a procedure (E-mail is added as an acceptable method of communication to announce a change in a meeting schedule)
6. Routine revisions of a policy (Changes in dates or dollar amounts due to changes in laws)
7. Updating documents (Address change for the main office)
8. Confirmation of conventional actions that are required in the bylaws (Signatory authority for a bank account or acceptance of gifts)
9. Reports provided for information only

2. **How are consent items handled?**
   A consent agenda can only work if the reports, and other matters for the meeting agenda are known in advance and distributed with agenda package in sufficient time to be read by all members prior to the meeting. A typical procedure is as follows:

   1. When preparing the meeting agenda, the president or chairperson determines whether an item belongs on the consent agenda.
   2. The president prepares a numbered list of the consent items as part of, or as an attachment to the meeting agenda.
   3. The list and supporting documents are included in the board’s agenda package in sufficient time to be read by all members prior to the meeting.
   4. At the beginning of the meeting, the chair asks members what items they wish to be removed from the consent agenda and discussed individually.
   5. If any member requests that an item be removed from the consent agenda, it must be removed. Members may request that an item be removed for any reason. They may wish, for example, to discuss the item, to query the item, or to register a vote against the item.
   6. Once it has been removed, the chair can decide whether to take up the matter immediately or place it on the regular meeting agenda.
   7. When there are no more items to be removed, the chair or secretary reads out the numbers of the remaining consent items. Then the chair states: “If there is no objection, these items will be adopted.” After pausing for any objections, the chair states “As there are no objections, these items are adopted.” It is not necessary to ask for a show of hands.
   8. When preparing the minutes, the Secretary includes the full text of the resolutions, reports or recommendations that were adopted as part of the consent agenda.
3. **How to start using a consent agenda**
   To start using a consent agenda, the board should first adopt a rule of order allowing for the consent agenda process. Below is possible policy language that could be amended into existing District policy 1.9: District Board Agenda Preparation or Section 4 of the By-Laws (to be adopted):
   “A consent agenda may be presented by the president at the beginning of a meeting. Items may be removed from the consent agenda on the request of any one member. Items not removed may be adopted by general consent without debate. Removed items may be taken up either immediately after the consent agenda or placed later on the agenda at the discretion of the Board of Managers.

4. **Future Manager Training:**
   It is important to make sure that all directors know what items belong on the agenda and how to move items to and from the consent agenda. For this reason, instruction on using the consent agenda should be part of the board orientation program.

**OPTIONS:**
1. Do not consider using Consent agendas
2. Direct staff to revise policy 1.9: District Board Agenda Preparation and resubmit to Board for review and possible adoption
3. Direct staff to include above policy statement (with revisions if needed) in the rough draft of section 4 of the District By-Laws and resubmit to the Board.
4. Consider a separate stand alone policy (Attachment A) addressing the use of consent agendas

**RECOMMENDATION**
Discussion and give direction to staff
ATTACHMENT A

COON CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUAL

Policy #: 2.1
Program: Administration
Policy Name: Use of Consent Agenda

POLICY
In order for a more efficient administration of Watershed District board meetings, the Board of Managers may elect to use a consent agenda for the passage of non-controversial items or items of a similar nature.

INTENT
The intent of this policy is to allow the use of a consent agenda

GENERAL INFORMATION & BACKGROUND
The District Administrator, in consultation with the Chair/President of the Board, may place items on the consent agenda. By using a consent agenda, the Board of Managers has consented to the consideration of certain items as a group under one motion. Should a consent agenda be used, an appropriate amount of discussion time will be allowed to review any item upon request.

Consent items are those which usually do not require discussion or explanation prior to Board of Managers action, are non-controversial and/or similar in content, or are those items which have already been discussed and/or explained and do not require further discussion or explanation. Such agenda items might include ministerial tasks such as, but not limited to, the approval of the agenda, approval of previous minutes, approval of bills, approval of reports, etc. These items might also include similar groups of decisions such as, but not limited to, approval of staff reports, approval of maintenance details for assets and resources or approval of various schedules.

Items shall be removed from the consent agenda by a timely request by an individual Board of Managers member for independent consideration. A request is timely if made prior to the vote on the consent agenda. The request does not require a second or a vote by the Board of Managers. An item removed from the consent agenda will then be discussed and acted on separately immediately following the consideration of the consent agenda.

Consent agenda items are approved en masse by one vote of the Board of Managers. The
consent agenda items shall be separately recorded in the minutes.

PROCEDURES

A consent agenda can only work if the reports, and other matters for the meeting agenda are known in advance and distributed with agenda package in sufficient time to be read by all members prior to the meeting. A typical procedure is as follows:

1. When preparing the meeting agenda, the administrator and president or chairperson determines whether an item belongs on the consent agenda.

2. The administrator prepares a numbered list of the consent items as part of the meeting agenda.

3. The list and supporting documents are included in the board’s agenda package in sufficient time to be read by all members prior to the meeting.

4. At the beginning of the meeting, the chair asks members what items they wish to be removed from the consent agenda and discussed individually.

5. If any member requests that an item be removed from the consent agenda, it must be removed. Members may request that an item be removed for any reason. They may wish, for example, to discuss the item, to query the item, or to register a vote against the item.

6. Once it has been removed, the chair can decide whether to take up the matter immediately or place it on the regular meeting agenda.

7. When there are no more items to be removed, the chair or secretary reads out the numbers of the remaining consent items. Then the chair states: “If there is no objection, these items will be adopted.” After pausing for any objections, the chair states “As there are no objections, these items are adopted.” It is not necessary to ask for a show of hands.

8. When preparing the minutes, the Secretary includes the full text of the resolutions, reports or recommendations that were adopted as part of the consent agenda.