Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization
Technical Commission (TEC) Minutes
October 14, 2026
Vadnais Heights City Hall, Council Chambers
800 County Road E East, Vadnais Heights, MN 55127

Commission Members Present:

Nick Ousky	Vadnais Heights (VH)
Gloria Tessier	Gem Lake (GL)
Susan Miller	North Oaks (NO)
Jami Philip	White Bear Township (WBT)
Terry Huntrods	White Bear Lake (WBL)

Others in attendance: Phil Belfiori, Brian Corcoran, Dawn Tanner, Lauren Sampedro, Angela Hugunin (VLAWMO staff), James Brown (SPRWS).

I. Call to Order

Chair Ousky called the meeting to order at 8:14 am.

II. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Commissioner Tessier and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the October 14, 2026 TEC agenda. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes (September 9, 2026)

It was moved by Commissioner Tessier and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the September 9, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

IV. Administration & Operations

A. October Financial Report and Consider Authorization for Payment

Administrator Belfiori summarized the October financial statement as included in the TEC packet. He highlighted storm water utility charges for 2027 certification of parcels, lake and stream monitoring, and facility maintenance/public ditch maintenance for solicitation of bids for two ditch projects that will be taking place in November. He recommended approval of the bills for October.

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Tessier to approve the October financial report and authorize for payment. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

B. October TEC Report to Board

Administrator Belfiori highlighted high-priority items from the report. He noted that staff are continuing to work with the City of Vadnais Heights on early design concepts for the resiliency project behind City Hall and a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate on community outreach/engagement efforts that may begin soon. He also highlighted the Ramsey County Ditch

14 stabilization projects will begin in November, the 2027 working budget will be brought forward at the December Board meeting, and the Storm Sewer Utility (SSU) charges will be certified at the October Board meeting. He recommended approval of the TEC report to the Board.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the October TEC report to the Board. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

V. Programs

A. Watershed Award Nominations Open

Hugunin shared that nominations are now open for this year's Watershed Award. She noted the process has been moved up from last year's process to coincide more with the end of the year. She provided an overview of the eligibility for the award. She noted that if a nominee has completed a multi-year effort, there needs to be some connection to the last calendar year to be eligible. She said the nomination form is available online and can be filled out anonymously. The deadline to submit a nomination is November 20th. The TEC's review of the nominations and voting will occur at the December TEC meeting.

B. Consider Recommendation on Digital Accessibility

Hugunin shared VLAWMO has an upcoming deadline to comply with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by April 26, 2028. This Act requires that VLAWMO, as a government organization, ensures users of varying abilities can access all of VLAWMO's resources. Staff have developed a draft road map to prepare for the compliance deadline. Hugunin highlighted the anticipated tasks and timelines on the road map. She stated that the end goal is to have all of the tasks completed and available for review and approval by the February 2028 TEC and Board meetings.

Hugunin discussed that staff have explored the possibility of working with an accessibility consultant to assist VLAWMO with the compliance deadline. The consultant will provide training, manual audits of webpages, service hours and coaching, and assistance with document remediation as needed to ensure they are accessible. She stated the anticipated cost of this work is $9,600, and she requested that the TEC recommends that the Board consider the consultant's scope of services.

Commissioner Miller asked if the final work product needs to receive approval by a state agency. Hugunin responded that there isn't any specific approval needed, but VLAWMO could be liable for legal action after the deadline if not in compliance.

Chair Ousky asked if this work will include a jump start web page that will help users get to specific webpages. Hugunin confirmed that the website map will need to be very clear and reduce user toggling. This approach will be built into the website. She also noted that in the future, methods of sharing TEC and Board packets will need to be revisited. Chair Ousky stated that the proposed scope of work makes sense.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to recommend Board consideration of a scope of services for digital accessibility work with the consultant WeCo beginning in late 2026 and extending into 2028 as needed to achieve compliance with the new web rule.

C. Update on Recent Outreach Events

Hugunin presented the results of recent outreach events. She highlighted that 13 people attended a Blue Thumb workshop that was held at the White Bear Town Hall for practicing native plant maintenance on September 15th. She noted that staff saw a mix of prospective grantees, current grantees, and past grantees at the event.

Hugunin shared that one of the Community Blue-funded Love our Lakes events was held on September 29th, which had a strong turnout despite rain. The second event will be held on October 24th to spread more awareness of storm drain cleaning and allow participants to clean neighborhood storm drains.

Hugunin discussed two more recent events including the October 4th Vadnais-Snail Lakes Regional Park cleanup with the Watershed Action Volunteers (WAV) and a recent presentation at the Rotary Nature Preserve, where staff shared updates on ongoing wetland restoration work.

Hugunin highlighted an upcoming Smart Salting for Community Leaders workshop that will be held on November 9th online. She encouraged the TEC to consider sharing this training with their networks.

D. SHG 2026-08 Fitzpatrick Native Plant Restoration Phase 1 Grant Application

Sampedro presented a Soil Health Grant application for a native plant restoration project in Vadnais Heights. She described the proposed location of the project, which is on 0.7 acres that drains to two wetlands before ultimately draining to East Vadnais Lake.

Sampedro pointed out key spots where erosion is occurring on the proposed project site. The applicant wishes to stabilize these areas and capture stormwater runoff before it goes directly to one of the nearby wetlands.

Sampedro highlighted proposed native plant species that would be added to phase one of the project and stated that phase two will likely be a rain garden to collect stormwater runoff from a neighbor's property as well as the applicant's property.

Commissioner Miller asked whether staff were familiar with the contractor for the proposed project. Sampedro confirmed and said the contractor is newer to the field but is recognized as a native plant restoration contractor on several watershed management organization lists.

Sampedro stated the total estimated cost for the first phase of the project is $4,258.

Chair Ousky stated he is curious about phase two and whether it shows the split between property owners. Sampedro responded that, while the runoff would partially come from the neighbor's yard, the rain garden would be entirely on the applicant's property. Chair Ousky

stated he recommends the applicant checks with City staff as this is something they may review, such as if there are flowage challenges with the property boundary. He added that he suggests reminding the applicant that adding projects in the drainage and utility easement is at their own risk and they could be removed if utility work is needed in the area. Sampedro stated she will provide these recommendations to the applicant.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to approve SHG 2026-08 in the amount of $1,250. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

E. FY 26-27 BWSR WBIF Grant Program Process

Sampedro shared an overview of the BWSR Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) grant program process. She noted for the upcoming cycle, the Vadnais Lake area watershed was allocated $147,921 and eligible activities must primarily benefit water quality.

Sampedro described the application process. BWSR requires at least one convene meeting with partners to jointly choose proposed grant activities and coordinate a WBIF funding request to BWSR. Sampedro outlined the convene meeting requirements from BWSR including who is able to join the meetings. She noted that municipal representatives must self-select two representatives to attend the meeting and asked the TEC if they would like to choose today.

Chair Ousky asked how many meetings are required. Sampedro replied that only one is required, but there could be more if needed. Commissioner Phillip asked what time of day the meeting would be held. Sampedro responded daytime and it would be online. She noted that this meeting has been typically short in the past, around 30 minutes.

Chair Ousky stated that the self-selection step could happen now, otherwise the TEC could go back to the municipalities to inquire. Commissioner Huntrods volunteered to represent the City of White Bear Lake. Commissioner Phillip volunteered to represent White Bear Township. Sampedro responded that this process has typically been informal, but the goal is to make funding allocation diplomatic, especially in areas with numerous communities.

Chair Ousky said he could fill in as a backup if needed. Sampedro stated that she will send a scheduling poll to ensure availability for voting members. She asked that the TEC consider selecting VLAWMO staff as the facilitator or coordinator of the convene meetings.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Phillip to select VLAWMO as the facilitator of the BWSR WBIF convene meetings. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

Chair Ousky thanked staff for coordinating this process.

Sampedro shared completed projects from the previous round of funding and a potential Park and Ride project in Vadnais Heights that is currently in the design phase. Further updates on this project will be brought to the TEC as work continues. She presented the proposed next steps for the current round of WBIF funding. She stated VLAWMO is initially proposing that the funding supplements VLAWMO's Landscape Level 2 grant program, like previous funding rounds. The WBIF funding request is due on April 30, 2027.

VI. Projects

A. Update on Phase 2 319 Proposed Project

Tanner shared there has been a lot of recent activity for the proposed Wilkinson Phase 2 project. She discussed that the project's engineering consultant and staff met with permitting agencies and received guidance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. She said staff have a meeting scheduled with the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) next week. She added that one of the project stipulations in the project easement is that MLT needs to provide written support of the 60% project design. The project engineers will be incorporating feedback from MLT, permitting agencies, and staff into the final design and have started working on a permitting application.

B. Lake Survey/RCSWCD and NST Scopes for 2027

Tanner shared several proposed scopes of work contained in the packet for the TEC's review and noted that one more will be received in the next few months that will be presented at a future TEC meeting. She described what each scope of work would include such as lake surveys, invasive species removal maintenance, Birch Lake shoreline restoration work, and the Birch Lake Iron-Enhanced Sand Filter ongoing maintenance. She noted that partner support is built into some of the scopes, such as NOHOA support for invasive species removal work and North Oaks Company support for maintenance of the Wilkinson Lake deepwater wetland.

In response to the proposed Birch Lake survey work, Commissioner Huntrods stated the Birch Lake Improvement District will be doing aquatic invasive species removal work, but their board hasn't met to discuss it yet. He said he will share more information with Tanner after the board has met.

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Miller to request a recommendation to the Board for approval of the contracts provided in the packet with RCSWCD and NST. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

VII. Commissioner Reports

None.

VIII. NOHOA

None.

IX. Ramsey Soil & Water Conservation Division (RCSWCD)

None.

X. St. Paul Regional Water Services

None.

XI. Public Comment

None.

XII. Next Meetings

TEC meeting: **Thursday**, November 12, 2026 at 8:15 am; Board meeting: October 28, 2026.

XIII. Adjourn

It was moved by Commissioner Tessier and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 am. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.