

**Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization  
Technical Commission (TEC) Minutes  
June 12, 2024  
Vadnais Heights City Hall, Council Chambers  
800 County Road E East, Vadnais Heights, MN 55127**

**Commission Members Present:**

Gloria Tessier	Gem Lake (GL)
Nick Ousky	Vadnais Heights (VH)
Susan Miller	City of North Oaks (NO)
Mike Grochala	City of Lino Lakes (LL) alternate
Jami Philip	White Bear Township (WBT)

**Absent:** Terry Huntrods (White Bear Lake), Andy Nelson (Lino Lakes)

**Others in attendance:** Phil Belfiori, Lauren Sampedro, Brian Corcoran, Dawn Tanner (VLAWMO staff), Jeremy Erickson (SPRWS)

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Tessier called the meeting to order at 8:02 am.

**II. Approval of Agenda**

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Ousky to approve the June 12, 2024 TEC agenda.

Administrator Belfiori stated staff are actually proposing a revised meeting agenda that indicates item VI.A. is an action item. Staff recommended approval of the revised agenda.

It was moved by Commissioner Ousky and seconded by Commissioner Miller to approve the revised June 12, 2024 TEC agenda. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**III. Approval of Minutes (May 8, 2024)**

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**IV. Administration & Operations**

**A. June Financial Report and Authorization for Payment**

Administrator Belfiori outlined the June financial report as included in the packet. Highlights included expenses related to water quality monitoring, watershed management planning, Lambert Creek feasibility study and potential iron enhanced sand filter at Columbia Park, spent lime loads at the demonstration project, finalization of the Polar Lake reuse study, carp removal, and finalization of the East Vadnais Lake subwatershed resiliency study. Staff recommended approval.

It was moved by Commissioner Ousky and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the June Financial Report for payment. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

B. June TEC Report to the Board of Directors

Administrator Belfiori presented highlights contained in the TEC report, including work on moving forward potential projects from the East Vadnais Lake subwatershed resiliency study, continuing work on the spent lime project, finalizing the 2025 budget that will be considered at the June 26<sup>th</sup> Board of Directors meeting, continuing progress on the watershed management plan, and significant activity with the VLAWMO grant programs.

It was moved by Chair Tessier and seconded by Commissioner Miller to approve the June TEC Report to Board. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**V. Programs**

A. SHG 2024-05 Ulm Turf Replacement

Sampedro presented a proposed turfgrass replacement project located in the City of White Bear Lake. The applicant heard about the VLAWMO grant programs through word of mouth. She discussed the project would be in a high traffic area and the applicant proposed replacing the existing turfgrass with native pollinator plants.

Commissioner Miller noted that this could not be a more visible project site. Commissioner Philip echoed Commissioner Miller's comments. Commissioner Miller asked if signage will be provided for the project. Sampedro confirmed staff has signage available, but staff are considering pursuing additional signage for this project.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Grochala to approve SHG 2024-05 in the amount of \$1,250. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

B. SHG 2024-06 Gmeinder Pollinator Garden

Sampedro presented a proposed pollinator garden project located in the City of Vadnais Heights. Sampedro noted the project is close to a grant project recently approved by the TEC this year and that she connected the two grant applicants. Sampedro summarized the planting plan proposed for the project.

It was moved by Commissioner Ousky and seconded by Commissioner Miller to approve SHG 2024-06 in the amount of \$562.50. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

C. SHG 2024-07 Farmer Turf Replacement

Sampedro presented a proposed turfgrass replacement project located in the City of North Oaks. The project is located west of the channel between Deep and Pleasant Lakes. The project would focus on replacing the existing turfgrass with native pollinator plants. Sampedro noted this project is the first phase with a second phase planned for next year.

Commissioner Miller asked where the plants were sourced from. Sampedro responded she is not aware of the source, but stated the applicant is hiring a landscaper to complete the project.

It was moved by Commissioner Ousky and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve SHG 2024-07 in the amount of \$1,250. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

#### D. SHG 2024-08 Steenson Turf Replacement

Sampedro noted the application packet materials were provided separately prior to the meeting. The applicant proposed a turfgrass replacement project in the City of North Oaks. She said the project is located in the direct subwatershed of Pleasant Lake and would focus on replacing the existing turfgrass and creeping charlie with low mow/no mow fescue grass.

Commissioner Miller asked how the turf area will be managed. Sampedro responded the applicant is hiring Prairie Restorations who is proposing to spray herbicide two different times and burn the area before adding the fescue grass seed.

It was moved by Commissioner Grochala and seconded by Commissioner Miller to approve SHG 2024-08 in the amount of \$1,000. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

#### E. FY'24-25 BWSR WBIF Grant Program Process

Sampedro introduced the BWSR Watershed-based Implementation Funding (WBIF) program for fiscal year 2024-2025. She noted that BWSR funding allocations were increased for this next funding cycle and the Vadnais Lake Area Watershed Planning Area is eligible for \$147,921. Sampedro described the general activities and project types that are eligible for the grant funding and noted that projects must primarily benefit water quality to be a grant-eligible project.

Sampedro discussed the next steps for requesting grant funds including the requirement of holding at least one convene meeting with planning area partners. She stated prior to scheduling the convene meeting, BWSR requires the selection of up to two decision-making representatives from municipalities within the planning area and asked if the TEC would like to self-select a representative.

Commissioner Miller ask if non-staff TEC members could be a municipal representative. Administrator Belfiori discussed they could with close collaboration with municipal staff, especially those involved and familiar with the municipality's capital improvement project planning and VLAWMO's five-year partnership projects table. Commissioner Miller recommended staff contact the City administrators to request the self-selection of representatives. Sampedro responded she will follow up today's discussion with a group email to municipal staff and encourage email recipients to reply all. Sampedro noted BWSR guidance does not provide detail on if the municipal representative needs to be staff. She added TEC meetings were chosen as the previous starting point for the municipal representative discussion since the municipalities are already represented in one room and it

can be difficult to collaborate through email. She stated she would contact the municipalities through an email for the selection of the two municipal representatives.

Sampedro presented the next step of the WBIF process is to select a convene meeting coordinator and suggested the TEC considers VLAWMO to serve in that role.

It was moved by Commissioner Ousky and seconded by Commissioner Miller for VLAWMO to serve as convene meeting coordinator. Vote: all aye. Motion passed

Sampedro provided background on the existing partnership work occurring through the current grant's funding cycle, which ends in 2025. She stated staff are initially recommending the consideration of directing the 24-25 funding cycle allocation for the Vadnais Lake Planning Area to partnership projects through VLAWMO's Landscape Level 2 Grant program since it is working well under the current grant funding cycle. She described the key deadlines for securing funding through the BWSR WBIF program.

## **VI. Projects**

### **A. Watershed Management Plan update and priority issues**

Administrator Belfiori provided background on the watershed management plan (WMP) update process. He stated VLAWMO is on the initiate step, which includes the identification of priority issues for the WMP that was completed through a robust engagement process. He discussed that though the issues presented today are ranked with a 1, 2 or 3, all of the issues presented are priority issues that will be included in the WMP since they are interconnected. He stated the ranking process is required by state statute and staff involved partnership groups in the prioritization process.

Tanner provided background on the information used for the rankings including feedback staff received during the April 24 Initial Planning Meeting, responses from the public, feedback from the TEC and Board surveys, responses from the 60-day review authorities, and feedback during the capital improvement project (CIP) partner table discussions. She provided hand outs to TEC members of the summarized feedback and proposed issue rankings. Tanner noted Houston Engineering staff assisted VLAWMO with synthesizing the feedback received and developing the issue rankings to be consistent with the feedback. She presented an overview of how the feedback was synthesized and how the rankings were weighted for the priority issues. She asked TEC members to focus their review on how the material was synthesized and if it reflects their feedback from the TEC survey. She said TEC members can recommend any changes or shifts to the rankings and that staff are requesting the TEC make a recommendation to the Board of Directors.

Commissioner Miller asked if staff had any surprises when reviewing the feedback on priority issues. Tanner responded staff were surprised emerging contaminants and chlorides were ranked high by the TEC and 60-day review authorities. Administrator Belfiori added that staff were surprised that climate resiliency and environmental justice were ranked low. He stated other agencies are including these issues in their planning documents and VLAWMO will weave these issues throughout the WMP like the other agencies. He said groundwater issues

are continuing to come up more as well and a few issues that were not currently in the WMP, such as shoreline and streambank erosion.

Commissioner Miller asked how closely VLAWMO's current projects match the average priority issue rankings and if we see areas where we may need to change our projects to match the priority rankings. Tanner responded that it's more that the projects should align with the issues rather than rankings. She stated VLAWMO's projects are already meeting our goals and we are getting new opportunities for outreach, such as in environmental justice areas. Administrator Belfiori added that the rankings closely align overall.

Chair Tessier asked how the TEC can dynamically change the decisions when there are many input levels and processes. Administrator Belfiori responded staff are looking for the TEC's feedback on if the identified priority issues overall align with the TEC's expectations or if anything is missing that should have been included.

Commissioner Miller stated she reviewed the rankings for each priority issue and did not observe any substantial differences and is comfortable with the rankings. Chair Tessier said she trusts the process and feels it is going in the right direction. Tanner noted there will be more opportunities for review at future WMP stages.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Philip to recommend to the Board of Directors to authorize priority issues with non-material changes.

B. Spent lime demonstration project pay request and update

Tanner provided an update that a spent lime pay request was received that the TEC approved this morning with the bills. She said work is continuing on the project and a spent lime load will be applied today in the shallow zone with eight loads remaining after that.

C. Tamarack alum RFQ update

Tanner stated staff are continuing to coordinate with Barr Engineering on the Tamarack Lake alum project. She said a RFQ was sent out, but no quotes were received. Barr Engineering is discussing the project with local contractors to see if a quote can be submitted.

Commissioner Miller asked what the key problems are for receiving quotes. Tanner responded the feasibility of the project is a bit difficult because the alum doses required are different between Tamarack and Wilkinson lakes and access is a challenge because neither lake has a boat launch. Tanner added that staff anticipated the issues, but felt there are viable strategies for working through them. She said one of the main issues could be contractors currently have a lot of business and they may not want/need to work on a project with access challenges. She said staff are waiting to hear more from Barr Engineering after their discussions with contractors.

D. Pleasant Lake carp removal update

Tanner provided an update that there has been a lot of carp activity since the initial carp removal run earlier this spring. Several carp removals have occurred and about 12,000 pounds of carp have been removed so far. She said the new carp barrier allows the carp to be captured more efficiently and prevent them from going to Deep Lake.

Commissioner Miller asked if the carp removal is done for the year. Tanner responded staff anticipate it is over for the year. She said two tagged carp were repeatedly found in the Pleasant Lake culvert area where neighbors reported carp activity and where a group of carp was observed by VLAWMO staff. She stated there is an antenna and temporary barrier at the culvert so we can document the carp movement and prevent access to the shallow pond at the other side of the culvert. Tanner added that she found where carp have also been spending time in Charley Lake and will be checking to see if any of the radio-tagged carp are in Charley.

Commissioner Philip asked what the removed carp are used for. Tanner responded they are used for fertilizer on farm fields. The carp removal research permit with MN DNR doesn't allow for selling them to market.

#### E. Deep Lake MOU with NOHOA

Tanner presented a MOU with NOHOA proposing to split the cost with VLAWMO to remove and replace buckthorn that was identified in a prioritization study. She recommended the TEC approve moving the MOU forward to the Board for approval.

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Chair Tessier to recommend the Board of Directors sign the MOU with NOHOA at the June regular Board meeting and VLAWMO staff to return the fully executed MOU to NOHOA.

#### F. Wilkinson Deep-water wetland update

Tanner highlighted that Houston Engineering has been coordinating some final work on the Wilkinson deepwater wetland project. There were concerns about compaction in the immediate construction area and the contractor has alleviated this, re-seeded the area, and installed erosion control blanket. Staff are expecting a final payment to be recommended for approval at the June Board meeting. Tanner added eagle chicks are being cared for by the parents and learning to fly. Monitoring samples have also been taken for the project to collect information for the MPCA.

#### G. Scope with SEH for Wilkinson potential meander feasibility

Tanner stated staff have been working with SEH on a feasibility study scope for a potential meander project at Wilkinson Lake. Staff had preliminary meetings with permitting agencies. The scope will include plan development with an alternate option since wetland areas can be difficult to work in and dry conditions can't be expected. She added the DNR is expected to have feedback on the meander path and flow rates, which will be included in SEH's scope. She said staff are anticipating the scope will be ready for the TEC's review at the next meeting. Staff are working with Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Division for potential additional funding for investigating the meander project.

Commissioner Miller asked if the meander would be north of the existing Wilkinson Lake project. Tanner confirmed and said the new meander would start at the road crossing at the north end of the current project site and likely will access some of the upland area. An alternate path could be near the boardwalk. She said that the final extent of constructability will depend upon rainfall and water levels during the construction year.

#### H. Birch Lake pre-survey completed and permit underway

Tanner presented a Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) and Curly-leaf Pondweed (CLP) pre-survey was completed in partnership with BLID. She said the EWM spread has decreased and staff were able to find the remaining areas, but the CLP area is more widely distributed this year. She said this information has been provided to the DNR, BLID, and Dive Guys and a handpulling is planned for next Monday. She added a post survey will occur after the handpulling.

Tanner highlighted a Meet the Goats public engagement event on the TEC agenda that will be held at the Vadnais Heights City Hall. She invited TEC members to attend.

### **VII. Commissioner Reports**

None.

### **VIII. NOHOA**

None.

### **IX. Ramsey Soil & Water Conservation Division**

None.

### **X. St. Paul Regional Water Services**

None.

### **XI. Public Comment**

None.

### **XII. Next Meetings:**

Next TEC meeting July 10, 2024. Next BOD meeting June 26, 2024.

### **XIII. Adjourn**

It was moved by Commissioner Ousky and seconded by Commissioner Philip to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 am. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.