

**Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization  
Technical Commission Minutes  
May 9, 2014  
Vadnais Heights City Hall, Lakes Room**

**Attending:**

Paul Peterson	White Bear Township (WBT), Chair
Jim Grisim	White Bear Lake (WBL)
Mark Graham	Vadnais Heights (VH)
Marty Asleson	Lino Lakes (LL)
Jim Lindner	Gem Lake (GL)
Chris Mann	North Oaks (NO)

Others in attendance: Stephanie McNamara, Kristine Jenson, Brian Corcoran, Vanessa Strong, Josh Lekson (VLAWMO); Margaret Behrens (Ramsey Conservation District); Bob Larson (NO Natural Resources Commission Chair); John Murphy (North Oaks Homeowners Association); Sarah Brown (St. Paul Water Regional Service)

**I. Call to Order** Peterson called the meeting to order at 7:30am.

**II. Approval of Agenda**

It was moved and seconded by Mann & Graham to approve the May 9, 2014 agenda. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

It was moved and seconded by Grisim & Mann to approve the minutes of the April 11, 2014 Meeting of the VLAWMO Technical Commission. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**IV. Administration & Operations**

**A. 2015 Draft Budget**

Enclosed in the e-packet was the draft 2015 budget and the 2015 Budget narrative as recommended by the Finance Committee to the Board at the April meeting. Approved recommendations from Policy & Personnel committee also affect the budget. A survey of salaries for watershed and other local govt., non-profit and state jobs was commissioned by neighboring watersheds. VLAWMO staff salaries were found to be anywhere from 15% to 27% below the market range for like job descriptions. After consideration at two committee meetings and approval by the VLAWMO Board, VLAWMO jobs will now have a 3-Step classification system (e.g. Step 1 is entry level, Administrator has no steps) with salaries tied to a current reputable salary survey.

The 2015 draft budget is offered for your preliminary consideration and discussion at this time. Your recommendation to the Board will be requested next month. Following are some highlights of changes and effect on the Storm Sewer Utility fees.

- Total budget increase in 2014: \$14,427 or 3.3%. Total budget increase in 2015: \$47,749

- The payroll market adjustment was assumed to pass so we could look at what impact it would have on the 2015 budget. Market adjustment increase: \$54,705. Budget increase with no wiggle room: \$44,000.
- Where possible other operational budget items were trimmed.
- The total funds for CIP projects are still budgeted at \$140,000. The average actual expenditure for the last three years is \$138,108. VLAWMO CIP expenditures are still low compared to neighboring watersheds.
- Transfer from General Fund (Reserves): \$130,000
- Storm Sewer Utility (SSU) fee income increase: \$22,789 or 5.05%. Roughly this would make single family (1-3 units) residential fee increase from \$26.28 to \$27.61. Our rates are still substantially lower than our neighboring watersheds (at least 50% less for a single family home).
- The overall budget is higher by about 8%. We have a healthy amount in our reserves which can be used to offset some of the increase for this year.

**B. BBR – BWSR Biennial Budget Request**

Every other year, BWSR asks its local watersheds and SWCD's to submit what projects for which they would be requesting grant funding. This is for FY16-17 and was due May 2, 2014. The BBR spreadsheet is in the e-packet for your information. Many of our Strategic Plan projects are listed even though some may be done before 2016.

**V. Projects**

**A. Community Blue Update**

Kristine reported on the following: Vadnais Heights Elementary will be putting in their raingarden project this month. Lakeaires should be getting theirs installed in the near future as well. Heritage Estates is working with Metro Blooms on their design. Fox Meadow Park will be done late summer/early fall. Vanessa met with the representative from Vacker signs to determine the placement of the signs at the existing projects. They will be installed soon.

**B. Bullhead Spring Population**

Brian reported there was only about 400 pounds of bullheads removed this spring from West Goose Lake. The fisherman said this shows that the harvest last year was a success. They will come in the fall again to do one more harvest.

**C. Strategic Planning – project short list and prioritization**

After input from the TEC, the Board and our stakeholders, our short list of projects has been modified. Two projects were taken off: Goose Lake weed survey and soil boring analysis. After consideration, they were found not to reach the threshold of a Capital project. Both are assessments done for lakes prior to completing a Sustainable Lake Management Plan and can be completed for minimal expense and time. You will see one request later on the agenda under monitoring. Two more project areas were added at the request of Board or TEC: Gem Lake BMP's and Wetland banking scoping. Neither of these were ranked at the workshop of course. Della Young from Burns & McDonnell will present the draft report will be at the June TEC meeting. Stephanie asked for input from the TEC.

Mann stated that the wetland bank is an important project to pursue since there is opportunity to possibly buy from the North Oaks Company. She stated it would be good to have a bank within VLAWMO.

**VII. Programs**

**A. Monitoring**

**1. E coli sourcing/monitoring**

Brian stated that our Burns & McDonnell consultant will be coming next week to walk the creek for the E coli study. Our annual monitoring has begun.

**2. Spring SLMP vegetation assessment**

With the recent bullhead removal and the change this year to weed harvesting by the Ski Otters rather than chemically treating the weeds VLAWMO will be conducting a weed survey on both basins of Goose Lake. Staff will work with Ramsey Conservation District and will be using Biobase sonar technology along with weed rakes for the survey. A fall survey was done by staff in 2011. Very little vegetation was surveyed in the east basin, west basin had considerably more vegetation. Curly leaf pondweed is also present in the west basin but was not surveyed in 2011. This new technology will be able to map the location and density of the vegetation giving us a good picture of weed populations before the lake changes begin to take effect from the rough fish removal and weed harvesting.

Both Goose and Black lake SLMP's have weed surveys in the implementation plan. VLAWMO would like to do both these surveys this summer. Below is an example of a heat graph showing the density of the weeds, this would be similar to what VLAWMO would get with the survey. These surveys would be baseline surveys to allow monitoring of changes in future years.

The cost to have RCD conduct the survey and complete the report for Goose would be about \$1210 and Black Lake would be about \$750.

Grisim asked if it was worth it for VLAWMO to purchase the equipment for this type of study. Brian stated that we looked into that but RCD has purchased it in order to help the watersheds.

It was moved and seconded by Lindner & Mann to approve to hire RCD to conduct the vegetation surveys as described. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**B. Cost Share Program**

There are 3 grant applications this month.

2014-01 is a shoreline restoration project on the north side of Birch Lake. The owner has met with Natural Shore Technologies and Nelco Landscaping for bids. She may do a multi-year installation to make it a more manageable project. The grant request is for \$2000.

2014-02 is a native plant restoration at a home in Vadnais Heights. The property has wetland in the front and a wet wooded area in the back. The homeowner wants to install all MN native plants and shrubs in these areas to help with water infiltration and provide habitat for birds, bees, and butterflies. The grant request is for \$2000.

2014-03 is a raingarden/native planting project at a property in North Oaks. The project will be done in a stormwater runoff area of the property. The homeowner wants to use native plants to help reduce erosion and provide habitat for birds and wildlife. The request is for \$2000.

Staff recommends approval of all 3 grants. There is still a little over \$12,000 left in the budget for the program this year.

It was moved and seconded by Mann & Lindner to approve Grants 2014-01, 2014-02, and 2014-03 as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**C. Workshops**

Kristine is in the middle of her spring workshops the next two are:

5/14 – Raingarden Design and Installation

5/21 – Raingarden and Shoreline Maintenance

Vanessa conducted teacher training with Community Blue partner Vadnais Heights Elementary. They will be having a student involvement day for the planting of the raingarden and will have educational stations for the kids, much like what was done at Chippewa Middle School. Vanessa will be meeting with Heritage Estates (another Community Blue partner). The Shallow Lakes Forum committee met and reviewed the feedback, which was very favorable. There will be another forum next year but it will be split between West side and East side of the cities. Vanessa was elected to be the liaison between the two sides of the cities for the next forum. There will be a Dragonfly Workshop at Tamarack Nature Center in July.

**D. Outreach**

**1. Media**

We have new business cards with the new VLAWMO logo as well as a new cost share brochure. We will get a new VLAWMO sign, name plates, and car magnets, and letterhead as well.

**2. WAV**

We are going to have a photo competition that WAV members will participate in. We are also going to include WAV members in our next 10 Year Water Plan to help with initial prep work.

**3. Website**

The new VLAWMO website is up and running. Lindner has volunteered to be the “unofficial” photographer for VLAWMO to help get pictures for the site.

**E. Community Events**

Upcoming events are:

North Oaks Fair – 5/31

Taste of Vadnais – 6/5

**F. TMDL Implementation Plan Update**

Vanessa stated that this plan will go out for comment in early June and will be submitted to the MN Pollution Control Agency for approval. This plan is a list of the activities, programs, and projects that the MS4 communities have agreed to work on over the next 10 years as part of the TMDL. VLAWMO pulls the report together on behalf of the MS4s.

**G. White Bear Lake 2014 Street Reconstruction Variance Request**

The City of White Bear Lake has requested a variance from the VLAWMO Water Standards due to road reconstruction plans. Floral Drive is having storm sewer installed and as a result the water that was naturally flowing to Goose Lake will now be sent to the east and over to White Bear Lake, and therefore out of VLAWMO and into Rice Creek Watershed District. VLAWMO asked Wenck to study if there would be an adverse impact rerouting the water from Goose. This change will result in 0.087% reduction in stormwater runoff and 2 pound reduction in phosphorus and is deemed to not be detrimental to Goose Lake. We are also working with the City to promote raingardens to the homeowners in the area. The City is asking for a temporary variance from our standards for the road work being conducted this year. In 2017, the City will be creating an underground treatment as part of another road project which would then bring them back within VLAWMO standards.

It was moved and approved by Graham and Linder to approve the variance to the City of White Bear Lake. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**VIII. Reports**

**A. Financial Report for May 2014 & Authorization for Payment**

It was moved and seconded by Lindner & Grisim to approve the May Financial Report and approve payment of checks. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**IX. Commissioner Reports**

Mann stated that she went to the State of the Water Conference. She got a lot of great information from the conference and shared some of the things she learned.

Asleson stated that the City has started working on their next wetland bank project. They have been using a drone plane to take high definition pictures. You can look at the video on YouTube under “Lino Lakes Drone Flyover”. They might use it to survey their nesting sites.

**X. St. Paul Regional Water Service (SPRWS) Report**

They will be going out on the lakes soon to get water data soon. They will be doing a lot of construction projects this year too.

**XI. Ramsey Conservation District (RCD) Report**

Behrens stated they will be having their meeting on Monday at 4pm and she invited anyone to attend.

**XII. Public Comment**

**XIII. Next Meetings**

TEC: June 13

Board: June 25

**XIV. Adjourn**

It was moved by Mann to adjourn at 8:52am. Vote: All aye. Motion passed.

Minutes compiled and submitted by Kristine Jenson.