

**Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization
Technical Commission (TEC) Minutes
September 14, 2022
Vadnais Heights City Hall, Council Chambers
800 County Road E East, Vadnais Heights, MN 55127**

Commission Members Present:

Jesse Farrell	Chair, Vadnais Heights (VH)
Gloria Tessier	Vice Chair, Gem Lake (GL)
Bob Larson	Treasurer, North Oaks (NO)
Mike Grochala	Lino Lakes (LL) (alternate)

Absent: Paul Duxbury (WBT), Terry Huntrods (WBL) – prior notice provided for each

Others in attendance: Phil Belfiori, Dawn Tanner, Brian Corcoran, Lauren Sampedro, Nick Voss (VLAWMO staff), Patricia Orud (NOHOA)

I. Call to Order

Chair Jesse Farrell called the meeting to order at 8:03 am.

II. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Commissioner Tessier and seconded by Commissioner Larson to approve the September 14, 2022 TEC agenda. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes (August 10th, 2022)

It was moved by Commissioner Tessier and seconded by Commissioner Larson to approve the August 10, 2022 meeting minutes as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

IV. Administration & Operations

A. Financial Report for Payment

Administrator Belfiori highlighted stormwater utility expenses and parcels charged for the 2023 budget levy, Community Blue grants, and payment for the Landscape Level 2 Bridgewood Park raingarden. Staff recommended approval of the bills for September.

It was motioned by Commissioner Tessier and seconded by Commissioner Larson to recommend approval of the September 2022 financial report for payment. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

V. Programs

A. Education and Outreach update

Voss provided an overview of the open nominations for the two watershed awards. He identified that the nominations from last year are still active. He described the Watershed Partner Award and the Watershed Steward Award and stated nominations can be submitted to him via paper or online.

Voss also provided updates on the completed Good Neighbor Guide and St. Mary's Community Blue project. The St. Mary's raingarden renovation is completed and the results were successful.

Voss provided an update of the smart salting workshop which is a partnership with RCWD and RWMWD. He encouraged TEC members to assist in marketing this important training event.

He also discussed the MN Water Steward program for 2023 and highlighted staff will be recruiting the next cohort this year. Classes start in January.

He summarized the upcoming events of a Raingarden Palooza tour to look at curb cut raingardens and a Raingardens 101 online webinar for next year's cost share applicants.

Chair Farrell advocated for in-person smart salting workshops rather than online to keep attendees engaged.

B. Cost-share Program

Sampedro outlined the proposed soil health grant submitted by Dan Jones from the White Bear Lake Historical Society for a pollinator garden. Sampedro noted that this is a high use site due to the nearby soccer fields and location of White Bear Township community events. Sampedro described the location of the proposed native planting as well as the size and planting plan.

Commissioner Tessier inquired about the upkeep and maintenance plan. Sampedro provided that White Bear Historical Society volunteers are understood to continue the maintenance, and that director Dan Jones has expressed interest and commitment to ongoing maintenance.

Chair Farrell complimented the planting plan and encouraged education efforts such as signage. He also inquired about the labor and installation, which Sampedro verified is volunteer-based with assistance from White Bear Township. Chair Farrell also asked about how the site is prepped and how long it takes to get established and Sampedro

confirmed that topsoil and grading will be provided, and that some blooms will be visible in the spring.

It was motioned by Commissioner Grochala and seconded by Commissioner Larson to recommend approval of the SHG 2022-09. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

VI. Projects

A. Biochar project update

Corcoran provided an update on the biochar project as included in the September TEC memo. The bid award was given to Peterson Companies with a 15% contingency and SEH will complete construction inspections.

A project page has been posted on the VLAWMO website and a link to it is posted on the White Bear Township website. The White Bear Township website also includes an opt-in subscription for periodic updates via email and text message and a flyer was mailed to residents near the project.

It's anticipated the project will take two weeks to construct, starting as soon as October and finishing by December 2022. Monitoring will begin in Spring 2023 with a project close-out in August 2023.

Chair Farrell inquired about how the monitoring for the project will occur. Corcoran described the flow process from the bench into a discharge port on the backside of the Whitaker Pond weir and samples will be taken before and after the biochar media. Chair Farrell also inquired about the long-term viability of the project, Corcoran responded that it should remain effective for 25 years. VLAWMO has a 10-year obligation to maintain the project.

B. Update on feasibility study for spent lime

Administrator Belfiori outlined the feasibility study as included in the September TEC memo. This study is a demonstration /pilot study to learn more about whether spent lime is an effective tool for internal phosphorus control. Partners at Barr Engineering will monitor spray rates, pH chemistry, and other water quality changes as the study continues. Belfiori noted that the Oak Knoll/Wood Lake pond was the original intent for the spent lime study, but two years ago it was deemed to be too large for the study. At that time the project shifted to a smaller pond in Lino Lakes for the initial testing.

Chair Farrell noted that this is a very innovative project and that it's a great potential to reduce the costs of lake improvement. He inquired about what it means for the project to be socially feasible. Belfiori noted that this element pertains to public understanding and support, especially considering that it's a public waterbody in a private setting, completely surrounded by private property. Belfiori notes that as the project happens,

there will be continued outreach and project updates to maintain that support. Chair Farrell also asked about the impacts spent lime has on wildlife and how those will be mitigated over time. Belfiori confirmed that engineers at Barr will monitor pH levels and ensure the dosing stays within a certain pH framework to protect wildlife, but the application in its intended use isn't known to pose a risk to wildlife.

Commissioner Tessier inquired about the pond's location and Belfiori described the cross streets in White Bear Lake.

C. Minor watershed amendment plan update

Tanner provided an overview of the minor watershed amendment as included in the September TEC memo. No comments have been received as of the day of the September TEC meeting. She stated after the comment period ends VLAWMO will have a public meeting at the October VLAWMO Board meeting before final VLAWMO Board consideration.

D. Wilkinson project update

Tanner outlined the upcoming activities for the Wilkinson project, which include starting outreach and communication processes with the North Oaks Community as well as website communications.

E. Cover It Up project update

Tanner outlined the closure of the Cover It Up project that took place at the Vadnais Heights City Hall wooded wetland.

Chair Farrell inquired about any preliminary insights pertaining to seed mixes. Tanner noted that the findings will be published later, but that plots with a thick cover of native grasses appeared to compete with buckthorn re-establishment. Tanner noted that U of M Community Engaged Learning will continue working on remaining buckthorn fruiting trees on the site this fall. Chair Farrell asked about how long buckthorn seeds remain in the soil. Tanner provided that buckthorn seeds are viable for up to seven years, with initial spikes in the first few years.

I. Commissioner Reports

Chair Farrell provided an update on ash tree removal along the Highway 96 median. This has ignited a renewed public interest from North Oaks, Vadnais Heights, and White Bear Township regarding low maintenance options and what this site could look like in the future.

II. NOHOA

Patricia Orud provided a thank you to VLAWMO staff for the partnership presentation on the North Oaks raingarden entrance, which is starting in September 2022.

VLAWMO hand-outs and literature was provided to a North Oaks new community members welcome event. Orud noted that the Good Neighbor Guide was very popular.

Buckthorn removal and maintenance is also continuing in North Oaks, including a partnership with the Munch Bunch, which employs goats for grazing.

The NOHOA NEST Committee is starting their winter planning work and invites VLAWMO staff to be present in the process.

III. Ramsey Soil & Water Conservation Division

None

IV. St. Paul Regional Water Services

None

V. Public Comment

None

VI. Next Meetings:

Next TEC meeting October 12th , Next BOD meeting October 26th.

XIII. Adjourn

It was moved by Commissioner Grochala and seconded by Commissioner Tessier to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 am. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

Minutes compiled by Nick Voss.