

Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization
Technical Commission (TEC) Minutes
January 11, 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)
Andy Nelson	Lino Lakes (LL)
Terry Huntrods	White Bear Lake (WBL)

Absent: North Oaks (unassigned), Jami Philip (WBT)

Others in attendance: Phil Belfiori, Dawn Tanner, Brian Corcoran, Lauren Sampedro, Nick Voss (VLAWMO staff), Bob Larson

I. Call to Order

Chair Farrell called the meeting to order at 8:00 am.

II. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Nelson to approve the January 11, 2023 TEC agenda Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes (December 14th, 2022)

It was moved by Commissioner Tessier and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to approve the December 14th, 2022 meeting minutes as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

IV. Administration & Operations

A. Bob Larson recognition

VLAWMO staff congratulated Bob Larson for serving 5 years on the Technical Commission and recognized his contributions. Chair Farrell presented a water drop award and certificate to thank him for his service.

B. Financial Report for Payment

Administrator Belfiori outlined the financial report. Notable projects are the Oak Knoll Pond spent lime demonstration study effort and the Wilkinson best management practice (BMP) project. Belfiori remarked that VLAWMO is right where it anticipated to be for starting 2023.

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

C. 2023 Technical Commission officer appointments

Administrator Belfiori reviewed the past TEC appointments from 2022.

Chair Farrell facilitated discussion on considering candidates for chair and vice chair for 2023. Additional positions include the financial officer and liason to the Board. Nominations include Chair Farrell to continue as Chair, Vice Chair Tessier to continue as Vice Chair, Commissioner Huntrods as liason to the Board, Commissioner Nelson as financial officer.

Chair Farrell requested that the TEC return to the discussion of appointments when new members from WBT and North Oaks are present at the next meeting.

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Tessier to approve the 2023 Technical Commission officer appointments. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

D. Confirmation of 2023 TEC meeting dates

Administrator Belfiori presented the discussion on 2023 TEC meeting dates including the option to keep the routine meeting date the same as 2022 or to make adjustments. TEC discussion confirmed keeping the meeting routine the same as 2022, meeting on the second Wednesday of each month at 8 am at Vadnais Heights City Hall.

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Tessier to approve the 2023 TEC meeting dates as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

E. 2023 working budget overview

Administrator Belfiori presented the 2023 working budget as included in the TEC packet. Major projects for the year will include the Wilkinson Lake project, spent lime water quality study at Oak Knoll Pond, pleasant lake carp management, public drainage system inspection and maintenance, smart irrigation efforts with cities, website renovation from the education budget.

V. Programs

A. Drone stream/ditch inspection overview

Corcoran reviewed VLAWMO's public drainage authority role under state statue 103B and the creation of the VLAWMO public drainage management policy. This policy includes inspection of the ditch system. Prior to 2022 staff had conducted inspections by staff walking the length of the ditch during winter months.

In fall of 2022, VLAWMO coordinated with the city of Vadnais Heights to obtain drone footage of the main ditch system. The intent of using drone footage for the inspection was

for higher efficiency in observing downed trees, bank issues, or other blockages instead of a staff member walking the ditch.

Corcoran played a video of the drone footage to the commission and remarked that it worked well to use the drone for inspections. Tanner noted that staff have used the video to meet the MPCA's site visit requirements for the 319 grant and both the MPCA and EPA commended the video.

Chair Farrell noted the City is happy to continue partnership on drone usage and that the quality of the drone imagery is an asset for developing future relationships with partnering entities such as the MPCA and EPA.

B. Elevator speech discussion

Voss provided a summary of tips and talking points for TEC members and VLAWMO affiliates communicating about VLAWMO in their respective communities. Items that could be highlighted when talking to the public about VLAWMO include the 2023 website update, VLAWMO's 40th anniversary, and upcoming projects. He also discussed how communities become communities of influence through using a balance of communication methods. Talking points to pull from could be mission and scope or the organization nuts and bolts. Voss then gave a demonstration of what an elevator speech could be and encouraged TEC members to practice their own elevator speech.

C. VLAWMO 40th anniversary campaign planning

Voss provided an overview of possible ideas for a 40th anniversary communication campaign. He asked the TEC to brainstorm ideas. Commissioner Nelson suggested the meander project drone footage with a voiceover of project details could be included as an important project as well as more video footage of staff narrating in the field. Voss noted he would be back throughout the coming months with updates.

VI. Projects

A. Wilkinson BMP update

Tanner provided an update on the status of the Wilkinson BMP project. A meeting to request feedback from Minnesota Land Trust regarding the early preliminary design was recently completed with Minnesota Land Trust and the North Oaks Company in December. Continued iterations of plans and specs are underway, and staff are currently waiting on written comment from Minnesota Land Trust. A sediment report from Braun Intertec was received in December 2022. Staff worked with Houston Engineering on interpreting the information in the sediment report. The compiled report with an explanatory memo from Houston are provided as a single document and were included in the TEC packet.

Arsenic levels were observed at the project site location, and this is communicated in the memo from Houston Engineering. The MPCA indicated that arsenic levels and

distribution does not indicate a potential spill, but is part of a naturally occurring glacial layer and wetland soils that frequently contain above baseline levels of arsenic in this area.

A joint NRC and NEST meeting is proposed to provide an overview for North Oaks partners in the coming months. An NRC meeting as scheduled in Dec. and Jan., but a quorum was not met in Dec., and the committee assignments are still being determined as of Jan. by the City of North Oaks. A permitting meeting is being held today 1/11 with BWSR and USACE to focus on the timing of permits associated with the project.

Chair Farrell complimented the spreadsheet dashboard Tanner used to convey the project updates and asked if it is available to the public. Tanner remarked that it's primarily for internal use, especially for communicating with the TEC and Board regarding project status, but can be useful when working with project partners.

B. Update on MPCA Community planning grant for stormwater resiliency application

Sampedro summarized the MPCA's community planning grant program that provides \$395,000 in funds for climate planning projects across Minnesota that improve community resilience. VLAWMO is submitting a grant application on 1/11/23 in partnership with the City of Vadnais Heights, Ramsey County, Ramsey County SWCD, and Saint Paul Regional Water Services to improve stormwater resilience in a nearly 300-acre area around Edgerton Street and Centerville Road in Vadnais Heights. Sampedro will provide updates if VLAWMO is awarded the grant. Sampedro noted that this grant is highly competitive with a relatively small amount of state funds available for the entire State.

Chair Farrell noted that the proposed grant project area includes a wide variety of commercial, single family and multi-family residential, as well as key drainage and wetland areas. It's also a valuable location due to its proximity to East Vadnais Lake and its role as a public drinking water resource. Farrell also commented that the proposed project includes an area with frequent and historical flooding occurrences and that reducing the flood risk would greatly benefit the City.

C. Vadnais-Sucker Lakes Regional Park restoration update

Sampedro provided an update on the Vadnais-Sucker Lakes Regional Park restoration project. She described the RFP was posted by Great River Greening and Minnesota Native Landscapes was chosen as the contractor. She said the next steps for the project are to install temporary signage and for the education and outreach plan to go into place in the late winter/early Spring of 2023 once the buckthorn removal date is determined.

D. 2023-2025 BWSR WBIF grant update

Sampedro provided an update that the 2023-2025 BWSR Watershed-based Implementation Funding program workplan and grant agreement were approved and signed by the VLAWMO Board at its December 14, 2022 meeting. She added that BWSR executed the grant agreement and sent 50% of the grant award to VLAWMO. She explained that partners can move to the next step of identifying project opportunities.

I. Commissioner Reports

None

II. NOHOA

None

III. Ramsey Soil & Water Conservation Division

None

IV. St. Paul Regional Water Services

None

V. Public Comment

None

VI. Next Meetings:

Next TEC meeting February 8th. Next BOD meeting February 22nd.

XIII. Adjourn

It was moved by Commissioner Tessier and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 am. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

Minutes compiled by Nick Voss.