

**Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization
Technical Commission (TEC) Minutes
October 11, 2023
Vadnais Heights City Hall, Council Chambers
800 County Road E East, Vadnais Heights, MN 55127**

Commission Members Present:

Nick Ousky	Vadnais Heights (VH)
Jami Philip	White Bear Township (WBT)
Terry Huntrods	White Bear Lake (WBL)
Susan Miller	City of North Oaks (NO)

Absent: Gloria Tessier, Gem Lake (GL) (with prior notice). Andy Nelson (LL).

Others in attendance: Phil Belfiori, Brian Corcoran, Lauren Sampedro, Nick Voss, Dawn Tanner (VLAWMO staff), Ed Shapland (CAC), Jeremy Erickson (SPRWS) Anne Sawyer (BWSR).

I. Call to Order

Vice Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 8:06 am.

II. Approval of Agenda

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

III. Approval of Minutes (September 13th, 2023)

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Ousky to approve the September 13 meeting minutes as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

IV. Administration & Operations

A. Financial Report for October and Authorization for Payment

Administrator Belfiori outlined the October financial report. Highlights included payments related to the Lambert Lake sheet pile weir, a Community Blue Grant in association with the Minnesota Water Resources program, website renovation, and the Wilkinson deep-water wetland project. The stormwater utility fee is being developed with VLAWMO's consultant.

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

B. October TEC report to the Board

Administrator Belfiori outlined the October TEC report to Board. The spent lime project is anticipated for restarting after the water plant was shut down for repairs. Staff are hoping for more applications for fall. The 2023/2024 audit and budget will be considered at the October 2023 Board meeting. The new 10-year watershed plan is starting as it is a two year planning process and is schedule for completion in early 2026.

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Ousky to approve the October TEC Report to the BOD. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

C. BWSR 40th Anniversary plaque presentation

Administrator Belfiori introduced Anne from BWSR for a presentation with the gift of a plaque from BWSR commemorating VLAWMO's 40 year anniversary.

V. Programs

A. SHG 2023-04 Hawkinson Bee Lawn

Sampedro introduced the Soil Health grant application for a conversion of a turf grass lawn into a bee lawn. Turf grass conversion in this location is within two grant priority zones. The site has sparse turf and bare soil due to an ash tree removal. The neighborhood is also fully developed with minimal bmps. A bee lawn here presents an education and outreach opportunity for the neighborhood. The total project cost is expected to be \$2,280 and staff recommends approval of SHG 2023-04 at 75% not to exceed \$1,250.

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Ousky to approve SHG 2023-04. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

B. SHG 2023-05 Valdez & Smith Property Restoration

Sampedro introduced a Soil Health grant application for two 600 square foot downspout raingardens that is the first phase of a multi-phase property restoration. The raingardens would capture runoff from the roof of the home and back patio, and will create pollinator habitat. The raingardens will also receive water from the home's water filter and water conditioning system to prevent runoff from the pipe outlets. The landowners are enthusiastic to restore their property with native vegetation and to reduce as much stormwater runoff from their property as possible. The total estimated cost is \$1,644.45. Staff recommends approval of SHG 2023-05 at 75% not to exceed \$1,000 for phase 1.

Commissioner Ousky asked about the phased approach and if this is a common strategy for homeowners. Sampedro provided that it's not typical however is becoming increasingly common with a growing interest in restoring properties. Sampedro commented that she guides grant applicants to create stages so that they have manageable projects.

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve SHG-2023-05. Vote: All aye. Motion passed.

C. LL1 2023-06 Wiens Raingardens Phase 1

Sampedro introduced this Landscape Level 1 application located just east of East Vadnais Lake on Tessier Trail. The proposed dry creek bed and raingarden would capture runoff from the property owner's roof, deck, and patio, as well as several nearby properties that drain to this concentrated runoff area. The applicant has attained two bids and has also divided the project into phases. This application is for the first phase. The expected total cost is \$10,503.73. Staff recommends approval at 50% of eligible project expenses, not to exceed \$5,000.

It was moved by Commissioner Ousky and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to approve LL1-2023-06. Vote: All aye. Motion passed.

D. Annual Awards: Nominations

Voss summarized the 2023 annual watershed awards nomination process. He noted this is the 5th year of this program. Voss discussed that the purpose of these awards is to acknowledge local community leaders, celebrate partnerships, and build storytelling. He stated there are two awards: Watershed Steward Award and the Watershed Partner Award. The Steward Award is for volunteers, businesses, or residents stepping up in a leadership role. The Partner Award is for city, township, county, and school partner staff. The nominations deadline is November 1st.

E. MN Climate and Current Drought

Voss presented some Minnesota climate long-range data and information on the current drought. He specifically highlighted precipitation data and the drought severity index in simple graphs that identified long-range trends. Voss stated that a drought can still be present despite increases in precipitation. Vice Chair Miller noted that short, intense rain events are becoming more frequent, but there are longer dry periods between precipitation events.

Vice Chair Miller asked how VLAWMO handles these intense storm events and if the watershed is equipped to handle them. Administrator Belfiori responded VLAWMO is currently working on a resiliency study to look at this for the East Vadnais Lake subwatershed, which will look at flood-prone areas where projects could help alleviate the flooding.

Voss presented a graph that pointed to the coexistence of increasing carbon dioxide emissions and the trend of increasing rainfall events that exceed four inches. He drew attention to the MN Climate Adaptation Partnership's mailing list that provides updates on MN climate information.

VI. Projects

A. Wilkinson deep-water wetland restoration update

Tanner provided an update on the Wilkinson restoration project, including photos of the project site and the design of the 50% expanded project footprint.

The 50% expanded project footprint was implemented as a change order for the project immediately upon signing the contract for construction, following approval from the Board at the August meeting. The expanded footprint project design was included in an update article to North Oaks News for the October issue. Project construction began in early September. HEI has been conducting oversight and inspection during construction. VLAWMO has been conducting the eagle nest monitoring. Natural Shore Technologies visited the site with VLAWMO staff in September to inform a plan to continue supporting the project area and function by removal of additional invasives (possibly yet during this coming fall and winter) and enhancing the site with larger native plantings (in 2024).

B. Spent lime update

The City of White Bear Lake is conducting maintenance on the water treatment plant. While the water treatment plant is shut down, spent lime is not available for the Oak Knoll spent lime treatment project. The project was anticipated to resume on ct. 2nd when the plant maintenance was completed, however the maintenance has not been completed according to the original schedule. The plant is now scheduled to have spent lime available for the project to resume on Oct. 23rd. Updates will continue to be provided as they are received by VLAWMO staff.

C. Flowering rush treatment with RCSWCD update

RCSWCD has taken the lead on treating the invasive flowering rush infestation that was detected at a wetland near the south side of Amelia Lake as part of the SLMR completion. VLAWMO is providing funding for that treatment and native seed for reestablishment once the flowering rush treatment has been completed. The infestation was quite extensive. RCSWCD has treated it multiple times during 2023. Additional treatment is planned for 2024. VLAWMO is planning to carry over the funding designated for seed for this project and provide it to RCSWCD when the treatment is completed. Tanner concluded with an acknowledgement of partner contributions.

Vice Chair Miller asked if flowering rush has a risk of reproducing and spreading downstream. Tanner provided that the flowering rush report was originally made in a time when water levels were very low. With higher water occurring in the years that followed, it has been hypothesized that the stand was drowned out. The flowering rush found in the metroonly reproduces asexually (through rhizomes), opposed to other strains (e.g., some found in Canada) that also have viable seed. Thus the current infested area appears to be localized, and treatment/rechecks will help prevent spread.

I. Commissioner Reports

None.

II. NOHOA

None.

III. Ramsey Soil & Water Conservation Division

None.

IV. St. Paul Regional Water Services

Jeremy Erickson stated the Highland water tower is open this weekend for its annual tours.

V. Public Comment

None.

VI. Next Meetings:

Next TEC meeting November 8th, Next BOD meeting October 25th.

XIII. Adjourn

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Ousky to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 am. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

Minutes compiled by Nick Voss.