

**Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization
Technical Commission (TEC) Minutes
February 14, 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)
Jami Philip	White Bear Township (WBT)
Terry Huntrods	White Bear Lake (WBL)
Susan Miller	City of North Oaks (NO)
Andy Nelson	City of Lino Lakes (LL)

Absent: None

Others in attendance: Phil Belfiori, Brian Corcoran, Lauren Sampedro, Dawn Tanner (VLAWMO staff), Jennifer Morris and Therese Galatowitsch (The Pines HOA), Erin Spry (City of Vadnais Heights).

I. Call to Order

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

II. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Miller to approve the February 14, 2024 TEC agenda. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes (January 10, 2024)

It was moved by Commissioner Ousky and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to approve the January 10th meeting minutes as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

IV. Administration & Operations

A. Financial Report for February and Authorization for Payment

Administrator Belfiori outlined the February financial report as included in the packet.

He highlighted income from the stormwater utility fees and interest. He also summarized some of the expenses such as administrative/operations items and the spent lime project payment for seven spent lime applications at Oak Knoll pond. Staff recommended approval of the February financial report for payment.

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Nelson to approve the February Financial Report for payment. Vote: All aye. Motion passed.

B. February TEC Report to the Board

Administrator Belfiori presented the February TEC report. He discussed VLAWMO is working with SRF consultants on the completion of the East Vadnais Lake Subwatershed Resiliency Study and potential pursuit of a grant application to implement projects from the Study. He also highlighted staff are getting ready to start carp work and continue vegetative management at the Wilkinson project in the spring, and staff are working on a partnership with the City of Vadnais Heights on a raingarden at Elmwood Park. He thanked the City for its third partnership year on adding raingardens in City parks.

Belfiori stated planning for the 2025 budget and the five-year project table is already in progress and the final budget will be presented in December. He recommended approval of the February report.

It was moved by Commissioner Ousky and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the TEC report to the Board. Vote: All aye. Motion passed.

V. Programs

A. LL2 2024-01 The Pines HOA Smart Irrigation Controllers

Sampedro summarized the LL2 grant application from The Pines HOA and mentioned the applicant was in attendance and could answer any questions. Sampedro described the proposed project includes upgrading five irrigation controller systems to smart irrigation controllers. The controllers will monitor weather and help the HOA reduce their use of groundwater for irrigation. Sampedro noted the bids varied widely and the recommendation is based on the lowest bid. She recommended approval of the application in the amount of 90%, not to exceed \$19,115.96.

Commissioner Miller stated she would like to see tailored education and outreach efforts on smart irrigation controllers for HOAs and asked if an outreach event could be scheduled for HOAs in the North Oaks area. Sampedro responded that the smart irrigation controller program is in its second year and staff are planning to analyze the groundwater usage data from the projects that were completed last year to have information that can be used for tailored outreach.

Commissioner Ousky noted it is important to have pre- and post- water usage data for the irrigation systems, but it can still be difficult to quantify groundwater conservation. Commissioner Nelson concurred and noted the pre-and post- data can be in different units and difficult for a direct comparison. He stated it would be a good idea to have a broader public outreach program on smart irrigation controllers and asked if the HOA would be willing to allow people outside of North Oaks to see the controllers. The applicant responded they would welcome the public if they would like to tour the project.

Chair Tessier stated the TEC should require education and outreach and reporting components with the application. Sampedro responded the grant application already

integrates education and outreach requirements and the operation and maintenance agreement for the project will require groundwater usage reporting.

Commissioner Miller asked how much funding is available in the 2024 grant programs budget. Sampedro responded there will be around \$33,000 left in the Landscape Level 2 program budget if the application is approved.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Ousky to approve LL2 2024-01. Vote: All aye. Motion passed.

B. 2024 VLAWMO Education and Outreach Plan

Administrator Belfiori presented the 2024 education and outreach plan, which is updated annually and is part of VLAWMO's annual report. Some of the 2024 goals include focusing on capital improvement campaigns related to major projects and programs, engagement for the next Watershed Management Plan, supporting communities with MS4 permit Minimal Control Measures, working with community members on projects, continuing to partner with volunteers and help them be community leaders, providing education at schools to promote ecological awareness, and providing professional support to the Board of Directors, TEC, and WAV for supplemental learning.

Administrator Belfiori thanked the TEC for being the eyes and ears in the community and a vital component of the education and outreach plan.

No questions from the TEC.

VI. Projects

A. Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (WMP): Public and TEC/CAC/Partner Surveys

Tanner provided an update on the Watershed Management Plan (WMP) process, which is currently focused on the initiate steps. Staff are working closely with Houston Engineering to complete the required steps. One of the first initiate steps included contacting review authorities for an initial 60-day review of VLAWMO's WMP. This was completed and VLAWMO received comments from seven state agencies and the City of White Bear Lake that provided specific guidance for VLAWMO, which will be synthesized by staff.

Tanner described staff have created surveys for gathering input on the WMP, including one for the general public and one for the TEC. She encouraged the TEC to complete the TEC survey and promote the public survey through their networks so it reaches more people. She stated all of the information VLAWMO receives will contribute to identifying and specifying the content that will go in the new WMP and be used to discuss priority issues with the Board.

B. Spent Lime Demonstration Project Update, Recommendation for Payment, and Barr Recommendation for 2024

Tanner presented an update on the spent lime demonstration project. She said seven loads of spent lime were applied to Oak Knoll pond in 2023 and staff and Barr Engineering have been collecting and analyzing samples from the pond. VLAWMO would like to resume the project in 2024 to work to achieve the full dose and have a better understanding about how well spent lime works to improve water quality and how long it lasts.

She stated the contractor and the City of White Bear Lake are supportive of the project continuing into 2024 and recommended authorizing the extension of the project through 2024, signing and returning the contract extension, and authorizing staff to pursue an amendment extension of the temporary easements with the landowners.

Commissioner Miller asked if the spent lime applications have to be completed regularly or indefinitely, or if the applications are only applied at an interval like once every five years. Tanner responded spent lime is a substitute for alum, which needs reapplication if phosphorus continues to enter a waterbody. She said it is not currently known how long spent lime lasts, but VLAWMO is expecting it to last for a number of years before needing to do another dose. Tanner added that VLAWMO will be analyzing the results over the next three to five years or so and possibly more depending upon results.

Commissioner Miller asked if spent lime is less expensive than alum. Tanner responded spent lime itself is free, but applying it to waterbodies is still expensive.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to approve extending the demonstration project through 2024, sign and return the contract extension, and authorize staff to pursue an amendment extension with existing temporary easements. Vote: All aye. Motion passed.

C. Wilkinson Deep Water Wetland Restoration Minor Status Update

Tanner provided a quick update on the Wilkinson deep water wetland project. She shared before and after pictures of buckthorn removal that Natural Shore Technologies completed on the islands. The work was done this past January when there were frozen conditions, which allowed the contractors to access the islands safely. She said maintenance of buckthorn removal is anticipated to be part of ongoing site maintenance.

D. NOHOA Partnership MOU on Invasive Yellow Iris Removal

Tanner summarized the invasive yellow iris survey and removal work that has been completed thus far on Deep and Pleasant Lakes. She stated a MOU with NOHOA is included in the packet for partnership on yellow iris removal. This year the effort will include adding the channel between Deep Lake and Pleasant Lakes in addition to continuing the areas previously underway. Tanner recommended approval of signing the MOU.

Commissioner Miller asked if staff are seeing yellow iris in any waterbodies outside of North Oaks. Tanner responded that the majority of infestations have been found in North Oaks, but yellow iris has been found in small areas outside of North Oaks as well. She explained that yellow iris was previously found in a shoreline restoration project on Birch Lake, which was removed after staff contacted the homeowner, and around a stormwater pond in Vadnais Heights.

Commissioner Huntrods asked how the yellow iris spreads. Tanner replied yellow iris spreads by seed pods, which easily spread when they float in the water. Commissioner Huntrods asked if the yellow iris can spread through birds. Tanner responded that she did not think birds were a vector for spreading this species and that they spread largely from the seeds in water.

Commissioner Miller recommended VLAWMO to write another educational article on yellow iris in the local newspapers in North Oaks and surrounding communities.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve signing the MOU with NOHOA for 2024. Vote: All aye. Motion passed.

E. Pleasant Lake Aquatic Plant Article #3

Tanner provided an update on the Pleasant Lake education efforts. She described a series of articles that were featured in North Oaks News. These discussed how aquatic plants will increase as the lake improves in quality. She stated that the most recent article focused specifically on recent plant survey work with the Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Division that included a graphic of the distribution of plants in Pleasant Lake. She added that drafts of two signs are currently in progress for educating the public on aquatic plants and the completed water quality efforts around Pleasant Lake that will be sent to NOHOA when completed for review.

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 March 13th. Next BOD meeting February 28th.

XIII. Adjourn

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Philip to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 am. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.