

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS – August 27, 2025, REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Attendance		Present	Absent
Jim Lindner, Chair	City of Gem Lake	X	
Rob Rafferty	City of Lino Lakes	X	
Sara Shah	City of North Oaks	X	
Ed Prudhon	White Bear Township	X	
Andrea West	City of White Bear Lake	X	
Katherine Doll Kanne	City of Vadnais Heights	X	
Phil Belfiori	Administrator	X	
Dawn Tanner	Program Development Coord.	X	
Brian Corcoran	Water Resources Mgr.	X	
Lauren Sampedro	Watershed Tech & Program Coord.	X	
Angela Hugunin	Communication & Outreach Coord.	X	

*= with prior notice
 **= alternate

Others in attendance: Susan Miller (TEC)

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Lindner.

II. Approval of Agenda 🐦

The agenda for the August 27, 2025 Board meeting was presented for approval.

A motion was made by Director West and seconded by Director Shah to approve the August Board meeting agenda. Vote: all: aye. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes 🐦

The minutes from the June 25, 2025 Board meeting were placed on the agenda for approval, as presented. Board Chair Lindner noted that there had been a few alternates present at the June meeting. No further comments from the Directors.

A motion was made by Director Prudhon and seconded by Director Rafferty to approve the June 25, 2025 minutes. Vote: Lindner: aye; Prudhon: aye; Rafferty: aye; Doll Kanne: abstain; Shah: abstain; West: abstain. Motion passed.

IV. Visitors and Presentations

A. TEC Report to the Board for August & Finance Report

TEC Member Susan Miller provided an overview of the August TEC Report to the Board. She highlighted three key items to share with the Board.

Commissioner Miller began with a description of the East Vadnais Lake Subwatershed Resiliency Study. She explained that the study was done last year, and this year staff has been looking for funding for a proposed project from the study with the City of Vadnais Heights to help reduce runoff. Miller shared that the project proposal was included in the

Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)'s list of projects recommended for funding from the state legislature in 2026.

Commissioner Miller also highlighted the Vadnais Heights Resiliency Study, which looks at the entire city of Vadnais Heights. Miller commended the City of Vadnais Heights for their proactive approach to stormwater management. Miller shared a highlight of a Facebook post asking residents of Vadnais Heights to share places where they have seen standing water or flooding for over 48 hours.

Director Shah asked whether the post was from the City of Vadnais Heights Public Works. Commissioner Miller responded that she had seen the post through VLAWMO's Facebook page, which had shared the post originally from the City of Vadnais Heights page.

The final topic Miller described was the TEC's support of the Storm Sewer Utility (SSU) rates resolution as included in the Board packet. Miller explained that the SSU is the backbone of VLAWMO's funding, and support at the recommended levels is key to keeping VLAWMO a proactive water management organization rather than a reactive one. For these reasons, she explained, the TEC supports the resolution for the updates to the SSU rate.

Board Chair Lindner thanked Miller for sharing these updates on behalf of the TEC and asked whether there were any questions from the Directors. Chair Lindner asked Administrator Belfiori whether a project Miller described – the Wilkinson Lake deep-water wetland – had been a stop on the 2024 Board tour. Administrator Belfiori confirmed this as correct.

Director Shah asked about where the educational sign for the deep-water wetland will be placed. Miller responded that she was not sure but believed the sign's location would be discussed by VLAWMO and the North Oaks Company (NOC). Administrator Belfiori responded that the NOC is now in possession of the educational sign. He shared VLAWMO's understanding that the NOC team is in the process of selecting a location for the sign, then they will install it.

B. Public Visitors - Non-agenda items

None.

V. Consent Agenda

Chair Lindner asked if any Board members wished to take items off the consent agenda for discussion.

Consent items on the agenda and included in the August Board packet were as follows:

- A. Consider Biannual Solicitation for Auditing Services
- B. Consider Final Report from Dive Guys Regarding Work on Birch Lake
- C. Update on Draft Watershed Management Plan 60-day Review and JPA
- D. Update Phase 1 of Wilkinson Project for MPCA Small Watershed Grant Program
- E. Consider LL2 2025-03 Estates of Evergreen Ponds HOA Smart Irrigation Application

A motion was made by Director Shah and seconded by Director West to approve the consent agenda. Vote: all: aye. Motion passed.

VI. Business

A. Financial/Administrative

1. Consider 2026 SSU Rates

Administrator Belfiori outlined the information regarding the proposed 2026 Storm Sewer Utility (SSU) rates as per the packet and Resolution 07-2025. He explained that the Board approved VLAWMO's budget in June. Based on that approved budget and the calculations of the necessary revenue needed to implement that budget, which in 2026 is \$1.335 million for income through the SSU, VLAWMO staff worked with their consultant at Ehlers to set the SSU rates.

Administrator Belfiori highlighted a few new SSU elements for 2026. The first change was approved by the Board in 2024: the modification of VLAWMO's boundary on the northern part of the watershed facilitated by Rice Creek Watershed District, a change that involved the communities of Lino Lakes, White Bear Lake, White Bear Township, and North Oaks. From that, 177 parcels were removed from VLAWMO while 265 parcels were added, which added approximately \$9,000 in revenue.

Administrator Belfiori stated that the proposed SSU rate for 2026 is \$74.28 per unit for a standard residential land use classification and for all other land use classifications it is \$107.64 per acre. Administrator Belfiori described that overall, the 2026 SSU is an increase of 10% over last year.

Next, Administrator Belfiori gave a comparison of total tax levy income for VLAWMO's SSU income to neighboring Ramsey County watersheds' property tax levy income. Administrator Belfiori then gave more of an "apples to apples" comparison as requested at the April Board meeting, to compare the total tax income per square mile in neighboring watersheds to VLAWMO's total income per square mile from the SSU.

Administrator Belfiori outlined remaining steps in the timeline, beginning with tonight's Board decision regarding Resolution 07-2025. VLAWMO staff will then work with Ehlers to finalize any last modifications. At the October Board meeting, the Board will certify all parcels in VLAWMO to then certify those with the two counties in VLAWMO.

Administrator Belfiori pointed out the inclusion of a new element in the SSU documents: a technical memo from Houston Engineering that illustrates the process for determining its Storm Sewer Utility (SSU) fee. He noted that the JPA development process revealed the benefit of having the policies utilized to calculate SSU charges more publicly visible and clear. The engineer identified that the existing SSU fee calculation is reasonable and equitable. Their recommendation was to update or review this calculation every 10 years.

Staff recommended approval of Resolution 07-2025 which sets the Storm Sewer Utility Rates for 2026.

Director Rafferty asked for a clarification: was the \$107.64 referenced previously in regards to the charge per acre or per lot?

Administrator Belfiori answered that the amount was per acre per year for 2026.

Discussion:

Director Prudhon motioned and Director Doll Kanne seconded to approve Resolution 07-2025 which sets the Storm Sewer Utility Rates for 2026. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**Resolution No. 07-2025
of the Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO)**

A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE STORMSEWER UTILITY RATES FOR 2026

Resolution 07-2025 was moved by Director _____ and seconded by Director _____.

WHEREAS, the 2026 Budget of the Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO) has been approved by the VLAWMO Board of Directors and

WHEREAS, Storm Sewer Utility (SSU) Rule of the Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization, has been applied to the properties within the boundary,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF THE VADNAIS LAKE AREA WATER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION, The SSU Rates for 2026 will be as follows:

Classification	Total Amount	R. E. F.	Rate
Residential 1-3 Units	\$786,179.52	1.00	\$74.28/ Unit
Residential 4 or more Units	\$55,258.27	2.72	\$107.64/ Acre
Commercial	\$192,123.01	4.23	\$107.64/ Acre
Industrial	\$164,161.19	3.30	\$107.64/ Acre
Institutional	\$116,855.71	3.30	\$107.64/ Acre
Golf Courses	\$17,702.86	0.74	\$107.64/ Acre
Agricultural	\$10,445.20	0.25	\$107.64/ Acre
Vacant Land	\$0	Exempt	\$0.00
Road/Railroad ROW	\$0	Exempt	\$0.00
Wetland/Public Waters	\$0	Exempt	\$0.00
Other Exempt	\$0	Exempt	\$0.00
Totals	\$1,342,725.76		

The question was on the adoption of the resolution and there were 6 yeas and 0 nays as follows:

	<u>Yea</u>	<u>Nay</u>	<u>Absent</u>
<i>Bill Walsh</i>	X	☐	☐
<i>Ed Prudhon</i>	X	☐	☐
<i>Rob Rafferty</i>	X	☐	☐
<i>Sara Shah</i>	X	☐	☐
<i>Katherine Doll</i>	X	☐	☐
<i>Kanne</i>			
<i>Jim Lindner</i>	X	☐	☐

Adopted this 27th day of August 2025.

BY THE VLAWMO BOARD

Chairperson

Attest:_____

Administrator

B. Projects and Studies/Plans

1. Update on Recent LCCMR Recommendation of Award of Grant for the Potential Regional Resiliency Partnership Project Behind Vadnais Heights City Hall

Sampedro provided an update on a grant application proposal submitted in partnership with the City of Vadnais Heights for a potential regional resiliency partnership project behind the Vadnais Heights City Hall. The Board was initially sent an email about the development of the project's inclusion on the LCCMR's list of projects to recommend to the 2026 legislature for funding.

Sampedro began by giving background information on the proposed project site. Behind City Hall, about 21 acres of City-owned land, was the top recommended area from the 2024 East Vadnais Lake Subwatershed Resiliency Study for where to pursue a flood reduction and water quality improvement project.

Since the study's completion, VLAWMO has worked closely with the City of Vadnais Heights to pursue implementation of the recommended project. Part of this collaborative work has involved supporting the City's efforts to apply to state grant opportunities to help fund feasibility analysis, design, and potential construction.

Sampedro noted the Board's February approval of a letter of support for VLAWMO's partnership with the City of Vadnais Heights on a LCCMR Environment Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) proposal and to provide a cash match. From there, the City and VLAWMO developed a draft concept and partnered on writing the proposal.

Sampedro shared the draft concept and a drone video created by Nick Ousky, Senior Engineering Technician from the City of Vadnais Heights that was provided with the submitted proposal in hopes that it would help LCCMR members better understand the proposed project area, as well as its proximity to East Vadnais Lake.

Sampedro paused the video to point out the Metro Transit park and ride site, sharing that staff recently met with Metro Transit staff to discuss the possibility of replacing parking spaces with rain gardens and permeable pavement through VLAWMO's grant programs.

Board Chair Lindner asked whether the park and ride is still being used. Sampedro confirmed. Board Chair Lindner added that he knows the park and ride off of Highway 61 is being closed, as ridership is very different than it was pre-pandemic. Sampedro noted that ridership has also decreased at this site.

Director Doll Kanne asked about what kinds of trees are primarily in the area. Sampedro responded that she knows Cottonwood trees and Box Elders are present, but not many high-quality tree species.

Sampedro stated that after the LCCMR ranked all the proposals, they invited top applicants to present their proposals. The City of Vadnais Heights' proposal was one of 124 selected to present. The City's Public Works Director Jim Hauth gave the brief presentation in late June.

Sampedro summarized some of the content the City shared during the presentation to the LCCMR. The goal was to help LCCMR members visualize the project, imagine how the community could utilize the space, highlight the partnerships that have brought the proposal to this point, and tell a compelling story in just five minutes. The LCCMR selected the proposal to move forward through the process.

Sampedro stated that last month, the City was notified that the LCCMR selected this proposal to recommend to the 2026 legislature for funding. This proposal was one of 109 selected to move forward. The LCCMR is currently recommending \$2,842,000 in funding for this project from the ENRTF funding. Sampedro explained that further steps remain before funding is secured. In addition to this funding, the City was awarded \$150,000 from the MPCA for a successful Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grant application for the design of the ponds, another partnership effort with VLAWMO. The current estimated project cost is around four to five million dollars in total, meaning approximately one to two million dollars will be required in a local match.

Sampedro emphasized that all these factors are subject to change if LCCMR funding is officially secured, if unexpected expenses arise, and if additional partners contribute to match funds.

VLAWMO staff recently worked with City of Vadnais Heights staff to develop a draft work plan for the project. This also identified VLAWMO as a project partner providing a cash match. Pending the various factors, VLAWMO could spend approximately \$545,000 over the next four years during the implementation process. This project is currently listed in the 10-year project table included in the most recent draft of the Watershed Management Plan, as well

as the Sucker-Vadnais subwatershed budget. More local partners will also be contacted to discuss the possibility of joining local cash match opportunities.

Sampedro listed next steps for this process, including the City's finalizing of the draft work plan, with VLAWMO assisting as needed; the LCCMR's finalized bill language for 2026 funding recommendation by December of this year; LCCMR staff's presentation of the legislative bill with funding recommendations during the 2026 Legislative Session; and notification of final funding around July 2026.

Director West asked about the process of requesting funding through the legislature. Is there ever an "ask" of other VLAWMO communities to have their legislators support this request of funding? While this project would be beyond her community of the City of White Bear Lake, she wondered if their legislators could potentially support something like this proposal in some way.

Administrator Belfiori responded that the City of Vadnais Heights has worked with SEH, who has a lobbyist, to make sure that any questions surrounding the project proposal would be proactively brought to the City and VLAWMO.

Administrator Belfiori explained that for this proposal, other member communities were not contacted, but if there are future projects within the 10-year WMP that may have shared priorities with other communities, VLAWMO would collaborate with that community and their lobbyist to ensure that any questions relating to said proposals would be brought to VLAWMO and relevant partners as possible.

Director West asked at what point these proposals are voted on. She wondered if and when the representative and senator for our area are informed about these developments.

Administrator Belfiori said he anticipated that the City of Vadnais Heights would be involved.

Director Doll Kanne affirmed that the City of Vadnais Heights has lobbyists. She said she was not yet sure what 2026 priorities will be for the lobbyists. If the City of Vadnais Heights retains the lobbyists and the Council aligns with the priorities of the currently-discussed project, this could perhaps be another priority for 2026.

Board Chair Lindner noted that the drone video and storyboard were telling because they so clearly show the movement of water from one end – its origin near Walmart – to the other end – the water source for over 400,000 people. He said it lends itself well to a public relations opportunity for Walmart if ever they want to pursue a partnership.

Sampedro said staff's initial discussions with Walmart revealed some interest in partnership and marketing opportunities.

Director Prudhon suggested that any spreadsheet must show Walmart as the major contributor to area stormwater runoff given the extent of hard surfaces with their property.

Board Chair Lindner recommended using the video to its full capacity because it tells a great story.

Director Prudhon remarked that Saint Paul Regional Water Services will be gaining a benefit from this sort of project, so they should be involved as well.

Board Chair Lindner shared that there could also be an effort to invite the railroad to participate in some way given that this could benefit them as well. He said this is a great project, and he can imagine it as something future Boards will discuss, providing everything goes as everyone hopes.

Administrator Belfiori thanked the Board for their support of these large scale, higher-impact, higher benefit per dollar projects such as the LCCMR project proposal. None of these proposals VLAWMO is moving toward would be possible without the Board's support. He also thanked the TEC for their leadership and the staff team of VLAWMO.

Chair Lindner said he envisioned a future tour including these higher impact projects such as the LCCMR proposed project with East Vadnais Lake.

Director Doll Kanne stated that she inquired with the Vadnais Heights City Administrator Kevin Watson during the meeting about whether the LCCMR project was slated to be included in the 2026 priorities for the City's lobbyist. She shared the preliminary budget does have the project included and that the lobbyist would continue to lobby for this going into 2026. Director Doll Kanne suggested that VLAWMO staff collaborates with City staff to keep the Board informed of efforts toward moving this project forward.

VII. Discussion/Administration Communication

Chair Lindner asked if there were any anticipated conflicts for the next meeting. Director Doll Kanne answered that she had one potential work conflict but could likely secure an alternate if that were the case.

XI. Adjourn

A motion was made by Director Doll Kanne and seconded by Director West to adjourn at 7:44 pm. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.