

Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization
Technical Commission Minutes
December 11, 2015
Vadnais Heights City Hall, Lakes Room

Attending:

Paul Peterson	White Bear Township (WBT)
<i>Absent</i>	White Bear Lake (WBL)
Mark Graham	Vadnais Heights (VH)
<i>Absent</i>	Lino Lakes (LL)
Jim Lindner	Gem Lake (GL)
Chris Mann	North Oaks (NO)

Others in attendance: Stephanie McNamara, Kristine Jenson, Brian Corcoran, Vanessa Strong, Tyler Thompson (VLAWMO); Margaret Behrens (Ramsey Conservation District – RCD); Justine Roe (SPRWS); Kimberly Murray (NOHOA); Bob Larson (NO Natural Resource Commission)

I. **Call to Order** Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 7:32am.

II. **Approval of Agenda**

Stephanie requested the addition of an Administrator Report. It will be placed as item VIII. A. after Commissioner Reports

It was moved and seconded by Mann & Lindner to approve the December 11, 2015 agenda as amended. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

III. **Approval of Minutes**

It was moved and seconded by Lindner & Graham to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2015 Meeting of the VLAWMO Technical Commission as presented. Vote: 3 aye, 1 abstain (Mann). Motion passed.

IV. **Administration & Operations**

A. **Water Plan**

1. Draft Projects Table/Lake Fact Sheets/Cover Design

TEC was asked to review and comment on the updated subwatershed information. Vanessa suggested keeping “other studies” listed in the subwatershed plans to keep options open for future studies.

Graham stated to make a footnote stating that the estimated budget is in 2016 dollars.

TEC looked at the Lake Fact Sheets and said they were well done.

2. Discussion Points

Questions for the TEC to consider:

- a. Birch Lake: Generally in maintenance mode (non-degradation) which involves monitoring, public education and cost-share projects in targeted locations. There are AIS (plant) species but they are currently not targeted for anything more than monitoring & education. But there is one project associated with the wetland on Otter Lake and 4th Street. The funding here is for a feasibility and design study & does not reflect installation. Are we missing an opportunity or issue in this subshed?
- b. Gem Lake: VLAWMO hopes to delist the lake, getting it off the impaired waters list. We are hoping the trends will have it off without further assistance within the next 2-4 years. However, there may be opportunities yet in the commercial area draining toward the lake. *Brian stated that the overall nutrient load has gone down and is*

crystal clear for most of the monitoring season but for the last few years, later in the summer the lake flips and has an algae bloom. We ruled out septic issues causing the bloom. There was discussion about fertilizer or grass clipping runoff but the lake has a buffer around it so it is unlikely to cause a big change. Vanessa said there are studies about how macroinvertebrate populations have been changing in metro lakes and can change the nutrient levels.

- c. Gilfillan-Tamarack-Wilkinson-Amelia: Gilfillan and Wilkinson are both impaired water lakes and targeted for effort in the first five years of the updated Water Plan. VLAWMO is focused on science-driven action to help these waters. To do that more information is needed. Please review and comment.
- d. Lambert Creek: Is impaired for nutrients and bacteria. Opportunities for more streambank stabilization will be pursued. The Water Plan will continue the bacteria study and then move to more implementation based on the study. More intensive monitoring, education programs, wildlife surveys and the Whitaker Wetlands project are identified.
 - i. Goose Lake: This is another focus Impaired waters lake. Most possible, remaining best management practice installations will be very expensive and potentially controversial (e.g. alum treatment, lake drawdown or dredging, lake use regulation). Some additional resource assessment test and monitoring are proposed before the internal load mitigation project.
Discussion about the Ski Otters activity and the need for their cooperation for any future projects.
- e. Pleasant-Charley-Deep AND Sucker-Vadnais: This system is plagued by high nutrient levels & AIS which have put Pleasant Lake on the impaired waters list and Charley & Deep would qualify. The river water flowing through the chain of lakes has a significant impact which is not fully understood. It will require close partnership with the St. Paul Regional Water Service (SPRWS). Additional assessment, analysis and dialogue are needed with all partners. Additional shoreline and channel restoration projects have been identified.

B. Fund Balance Carry Over

The Board met on December 9 and approved the carryover of funds as described in the table below:

<u>Fund</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
General	Office	Rent of additional office space and connections	\$1,375
General	Information systems	Purchase of IT equipment & help	\$7,750
General	Legal assistance	Draft new JPA/Water Plan	\$6,000
General	Engineering	Sucker channel or other	\$10,000
General	Tech assistance	Pleasant Lk SWA & other tech help	\$10,000
General	Admin-Payroll	Assist with staffing adjustment	\$4,600
General	Miscellaneous	Staffing assistance – GIS etc.	\$4,000
General	Financial Incentives	2015 Cost-share projects	\$1,000
General	Education & Marketing	Annual report project and other expense	\$2,500
General	Maintenance	Maintenance fund for watershed projects	\$12,000

General	Equipment	Expand sampling network	\$3,700
General	Monitoring & Analysis	More monitoring (bacteria, etc.)	\$10,000
General	Lambert Creek restoration	Identified projects in subwatershed	\$17,000
General	Water Quality projects	Sucker channel & others	\$64,000
General	Project research	Whitaker wetlands design	\$8,200
General	Implementation on Impaired waters	Implementation activity – Goose Lk. & Lambert creek	\$62,000
			\$224,325

The carryover is high because projects will be done in 2016 but have already been budgeted. Graham stated that the public may question why we carryover so much money yet still ask for an increase to the storm sewer fee. Stephanie stated that she doesn't like to carryover that much but it is necessary so that we can get our planned projects in the ground in 2016.

C. GIS – Water Resources Tech

Stephanie reported that the Board gave approval to post the job for the GIS – Water Resources Tech position. The job will be posted until 12/19 and hope to have the position officially filled by the end of the month.

V. Projects

A. Project Updates

1. Whitaker Wetlands Grant Work Plan

Brian has been working with Burns & McDonnell on the LCCMR work plan for the Whitaker Wetlands Grant. We won't get the final word on whether the Legislature has given us the funding until the end of March. Brian is now working with White Bear Township on the use of their land for the project installation.

VI. Programs

A. Grants

1. Landscape Level 2 Procedure Change

Since LL2 grants are able to reach up to \$15,000 - \$20,000, the Policy & Personnel Committee discussed how approval should work for this program. The Board has adjusted the approval process for Landscape Level 2 applications. For application requests up to \$10,000, the TEC has the authority to give approval and the Board will have veto authority if necessary so they will review the applications under \$10,000 to give the final sign off. For applications over \$10,000, the Board will make the decision whether to approve the grant.

B. Education

1. Blue Thumb 2016 Agreement

It is time to renew our partnership with the Blue Thumb program. The fees for membership went down this year to \$500. Staff still see value with being part of this group and request approval to sign the agreement and pay the 2016 dues.

It was moved and seconded by Graham & Mann to approve the continued membership with Blue Thumb and authorized payment of the \$500 annual dues. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

2. Newsletter

Tyler has been putting together the winter edition of the e-newsletter and it will be sent today.

C. Monitoring

Brian has done research regarding the purchase of an automated sampler to help provide information that will allow us to better prioritize BMPs in the watershed. The estimate for an ISCO 6712 Full Size Portable Sampler is just over \$6,000 for a basic setup. A more advanced system (with flow meters and wi-fi abilities to track and make adjustments from your desk) is about \$16,000. Brian said to keep in mind that maintenance costs and the additional sampling costs must be taken into consideration as well. Tyler and Brian examined possible locations for where an automated sampler could be used. Gathering data about the watershed input to the lakes and Lambert Creek would provide a scientific basis for where BMPs could be placed for the greatest effect.

Peterson asked how many we'd like to have. Brian said ideally it would be nice to have 3 or 4 on the creek and have 1 or 2 that can be moved around the lakes every couple of years. Having the samplers on the creek would allow for better information for the e.coli inputs because we know that the issues occur during rain events so capturing the first flush of water would be valuable.

Graham stated that if we can get by with the basic system, he sees value in buying a few of them. Brian stated that he would want to just start with one so that we can learn how to use them and the actual costs involved. At this point, we are anticipating putting in the first sampler north of Wilkinson to assess watershed loads.

It was moved and seconded by Graham & Mann to authorize the purchase of one basic automated sampler at an estimated cost of \$6000. All aye. Motion passed.

Brian also stated that rather than doing one end of the year monitoring report covering all the lakes, we will cover 2 lakes at each TEC meeting so as to allow for the time to talk about the lakes in more detail.

VII. Reports

A. Financial Report for December 2015 & Authorization for Payment

It was moved & seconded by Linder & Graham to approve the treasurer's report and December payment of checks. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

VIII. Commissioner Reports

-Graham went to a meeting about augmenting White Bear Lake. There are two routes being looked at. One route is a 30" pipe out of East Vadnais and going up Centerville Road, cross beneath Goose Lake Road and then follow under Goose Lake Road and then around Goose Lake and into White Bear Lake. This would be about 4 miles of pipe. The second route is off of sucker Lake up to Hwy 96 and down to Otter Lake Road, then south on Otter Lake Road, east on Whitaker Road and then to the lake. The first route is the preferred one because it will require a little less pipe and the water quality coming out of East Vadnais is better and would require less filtering. The augmentation that has happened at Gilfillan and Snail Lakes were funded by the homeowners but the White Bear Lake group are saying that White Bear Lake is a regional resource and therefore the homeowners shouldn't be on the foot for the bill and it should be paid by taxpayers. Concerns expressed about the increased desire to augment lakes. White Bear Lake was augmented years ago by groundwater (like Gilfillan) but the DNR stopped allowing that. Discussion about whether the "leaks" in the lake have been sealed in the lake. At this point, the DNR hired engineering firm SEH to put together a concept report that must be submitted by February 1st. Graham stated that this issue has an engineering side, an environmental side, and a political side and he feels the political side will win. Stephanie stated this is another instance of water being diverted from one watershed into another watershed and the scientific side of her has concerns about this

trend. Discussion of who is footing the bill for maintenance. Concerns from the TEC that they still don't completely understand why the lake is shrinking. Stephanie said that data suggests that it is seeping out into the groundwater and that White Bear Lake is either fed or drained according to groundwater levels. Graham stated that he sent a memo about this meeting to Jim Bode at the SPRWS as well as to Stephanie because the SPRWS and watersheds were not invited to this meeting. Graham said he will keep us posted on any updates.

-Graham asked about our Joint Powers Agreement and its renewal in 2016. Stephanie said it is being worked on and will be going to our lawyer for review. There will be some cleaning up of language and some smaller changes to reflect how we actually run things. It should be going to the Cities this spring.

-Mann asked about an item from last month's meeting regarding floating islands in storm ponds. Stephanie explained that Midwest Floating Island approached us about using our storm ponds to put in floating islands to reduce nutrient loads. They applied for funding to do this but were denied. Midwest Floating Island is now going to pursue funding from the 319 grant. The floating island on Tamarack hasn't made a positive effect because it is too small but the size was based on their recommendation so Mann is concerned about VLAWMO putting any money towards more. Stephanie said that if VLAWMO was approached to put funding towards more floating islands, it would have to be approved by the TEC and could be discussed in more detail then.

A. Administrator Report

Stephanie stated that Vanessa has accepted a job with the City of Minneapolis and her last day is on December 30. The TEC wished her well in her new endeavors.

IX. St. Paul Regional Water Service (SPRWS) Report

Justine said that divers were out last week to check on the integrity of the pumps.

X. Ramsey Conservation District (RCD) Report

The next meeting is on Monday.

XI. Public Comment

XII. Next Meetings

TEC: January 8, 2016; Board: February 24, 2016

XIV. Adjourn

It was moved and seconded by Linder & Graham to adjourn at 8:55am. Vote: All aye. Motion passed.

Minutes compiled and submitted by Kristine Jenson.