



MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS - FEBRUARY 28, 2023 REGULAR BOARD MEETING
 GEM LAKE HERITAGE HALL 4200 OTTER LAKE ROAD - GEM LAKE, MN 55110

Attendance		Present	Absent
Jim Lindner, Chair	City of Gem Lake	x	
John Shuman	City of North Oaks	x	
Rob Rafferty	City of Lino Lakes	x	
Ed Prudhon	White Bear Township	x	
Dan Jones, Vice Chair	City of White Bear Lake		x*
Steve Rogers	City of Vadnais Heights	x**	
Phil Belfiori	Administrator	x	
Brian Corcoran	Water Resources Mgr.	x	
Dawn Tanner	Program Development Coord.	x	
Nick Voss	Education & Outreach Coord.	x	
Lauren Sampedro	Watershed Tech & Program Coord.	x	

*= with prior notice

** = alternate

Others in attendance: None

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 February 28, 2023 Board meeting was presented for approval.

A motion was made by Director Rafferty and seconded by Director Rogers to approve the February Board meeting agenda.

Vote: Shuman: aye, Rogers: aye, Lindner: aye, Prudhon: aye, Rafferty: aye. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the December 16, 2022 Board meeting were placed on the agenda for approval, as presented. No comments from the Directors.

A motion was made by Chair Lindner and seconded by Director Rafferty to approve the December 16th meeting minutes. Vote: Shuman: aye, Rogers: aye, Lindner: aye, Prudhon: aye, Rafferty: aye Motion passed.

IV. Visitors and Presentations

A. TEC Report to the Board and February Finance Report

Administrator Belfiori presented the February finance report and February TEC report to the Board as included in the packet. Notable items include finalization of the biochar project, efforts in spent lime studies, and a TEC elevator speech resource from the February 2023 TEC meeting.

B. Public Visitors

None

V. Consent Agenda 

Chair Lindner asked if any Board members wished to speak on any of the consent agenda items, no requests were made from directors.

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

- A. Consider MOU for Deep Lake shore land wetland restoration with NOHOA**
- B. Consider Rotary Park MOU with City of White Bear Lake on wetland restoration plan development**
- C. Update February 1 public meeting on spent lime demonstration feasibility study at Oak Knoll Pond**
- D. Consider 2022 annual report draft and monitoring report for submittal to BWSR et. al.**
- E. Consider designation of legal publication – Press Publications and VLAWMO website**
- F. Consider 2023 Board meeting dates**
- G. update on Vadnais-Sucker Lakes Regional Park restoration project**

A motion was made by Director Rafferty and seconded by Director Prudhon to approve the consent agenda. Vote: Shuman: aye, Rogers: aye, Lindner: aye, Prudhon: aye, Rafferty: aye Motion passed.

D. Public Visitors – Non agenda items

None

VI. Business

A. Administration

- 1. Consider tabling oath of office for new members, election of Board, subcommittee officers and appointment of TEC chair/officers to April 26, 2023 meeting** 

Chair Lindner proposed tabling this item until the April 2023 Board of Directors meeting.

A motion was made by Director Rafferty and seconded by Director Shuman to approve tabling oath of office for new members, election of Board, subcommittee officers and

appointment of TEC chair/officers to the April 26, 2023 Board meeting. Vote: Rafferty: aye. Shuman: aye. Rogers: aye. Lindner: aye. Prudhon: aye. Motion passed.

B. Projects and Programming

1. Consider landscape level 2 grant application LL2 2023-01 WBT smart irrigation controllers pilot

Sampedro presented the proposed project locations at Polar Lakes Park, the Township administration office, and Columbia Park, noting that the projects support the North and East Metro Groundwater Management Area conservation efforts. Upgrades to the irrigation systems will be installed with weather sensors, creating more efficient watering schedules and reducing groundwater use. It is anticipated that the project will result in a groundwater use reduction over an area of 46 acres.

Discussion:

Chair Lindner asked what a smart irrigation controller is. Sampedro explained that it's a programmable irrigation system controller that corresponds to weather or soil moisture conditions. It also allows for remote scheduling using apps on a phone or tablet.

Director Shuman asked about if this smart irrigation is replacing another system. Sampedro provided that smart irrigation controllers are intended to replace the current system with technological advances and water conservation improvements.

Chair Lindner asked about whether the systems are dependent on wifi, Sampedro provided that the systems would be connected to cell service since the proposed locations are not set up to support wifi.

Director Prudhon inquired on whether the cell reception might connect to other municipal communication systems such as well monitoring, Sampedro responded that this was a good question and stated that it's possible but it would require further investigation.

Director Rogers asked about estimated water savings, Sampedro provided that each system would have a flow sensor to measure the benefits. Director Rogers asked about how the effort began, Administrator Belfiori noted that it began in January 2022 as part of a Board strategic visioning meeting. Following this meeting, planning and discussions took place throughout 2022 to get the effort to the current status with a grant application that we see presented before the Board now. Per Board direction the findings of the pilot program will be brought to the Board for review regarding possible expansion or continuation of similar irrigation efforts.

Director Prudhon commented that it's a smart effort for a City or Township's array of water saving strategies. He asked if school districts are capable of using the program, Sampedro affirmed that they are eligible to apply.

Director Rafferty commented that the City of Lino Lakes implements a program for residents to purchase smart irrigation controllers, supported by an Anoka County grant program. Rafferty asked about future possibilities for applying it to other cities. Administrator Belfiori responded that the VLAWMO Board supported including irrigation

controllers in the scope of VLAWMO’s grant programs in 2022 and that VLAWMO will continue to seek opportunities through that venue until the funding is depleted. Chair Lindner provided that the 2024 budget conversation is soon to occur in upcoming Board meetings and this program may be included in it. Sampedro provided that more funding is available in the Landscape Level 2 grant program for 2023 due to the \$75,000 of additional funding that was received from BWSR for partnership projects.

A motion was made by Director Prudhon and seconded by Director Rafferty to approve the Landscape Level 2 grant application 2023-01 at 90% of eligible project expenses, not to exceed \$12,949.20 in accordance with VLAWMO staff’s recommendation and established program guidelines and authorize staff to sign grant agreement with the Township consistent with approved application. Vote: Shuman: aye, Rogers: aye, Rafferty: aye, Lindner: aye, Prudhon: aye. Motion passed.

2. Consider landscape level 2 grant application LL2 2023-02 City of VH smart irrigation controllers pilot

Sampedro presented the grant application proposed from the City of Vadnais Heights for smart irrigation controllers. This effort proposes updates to the irrigation systems at the Vadnais Heights City Hall and the Vadnais Commons Community Park. The project is within the North and East Metro Groundwater Management Area. The two locations will implement two types of irrigation controllers, and the pilot program will seek to compare the two controller types to determine the best fit for the City and which have the greatest groundwater conservation benefits.

Discussion:

Director Lindner commented that this effort benefits from evaluating technology at the very start, and that this helps balance the rapid pace at which technology is advancing.

Director Shuman asked whether equipment is being leased or bought. Sampedro responded that the soil moisture sensor (Baseline) is being leased for 1 year while the Hunter controller is being purchased with the expectation the City will use it for 5 years.

Director Rogers asked what the difference is between the two types of sensors as well as the difference between VLAWMO’s Landscape Level 1 and Landscape Level 2 grant programs. Sampedro responded that the Baseline controller uses a soil moisture sensor to determine when to water and the Hunter controller uses a weather-based sensor. She explained that the Landscape Level 1 projects are smaller scale and are primarily residential projects like shoreline stabilization projects and yard raingardens and the Landscape Level 2 grant projects are larger scale and focus on partnership projects with VLAWMO’s communities.

A motion was made by Director Rogers and Seconded by Director Shuman to approve the Landscape Level 2 grant application 2023-02 at 90% of eligible project expenses, not to exceed \$7,211.70 in accordance with VLAWMO staff’s recommendation and established program guidelines and authorize staff to sign the grant agreement with the City consistent with the approved application. Vote: Shuman: aye, Rogers: aye, Rafferty: aye, Lindner: aye, Prudhon: aye. Motion passed.

3. Consider landscape level 2 grant application LL2 2023-03 City of VH Westfield Park

Sampedro presented the grant application from the City of Vadnais Heights for a bioswale at Westfield Park northwest of the park's warming house. The project would be over 3,700 sq feet and would involve the installation of a dry creek bed and rock checks to slow down runoff coming from the street, and over 600 plants. Sampedro noted that native plantings help to provide water quality benefits and improve pollinator habitat. She also noted this project would have high visibility from the public, and that formal education signage is proposed to coincide with the bioswale.

Discussion:

Director Shuman asked about the neighborhood beautification benefits of the project, Sampedro responded that the project is designed with a planting plan that supports durability, practical maintenance, and diverse flowering plants.

Director Rogers asked about what a bioswale is. Sampedro provided that a bioswale is a vegetated channel designed to convey stormwater runoff while filtering it so that pollutants are reduced downstream.

Director Prudhon asked how a bioswale is different from a raingarden. Sampedro replied that raingardens have amended soil designed for infiltration and are typically 6-12 inches in depth.

Chair Lindner commented that while public works is expected to maintain the project, public works is also the applicant. Sampedro concurred and added that planning and conversations took place with the City and public works to compose the grant application.

Director Rogers asked how pollutant loads are calculated. Sampedro explained that they're derived from the Minimal Impact Design Standards (MIDS) calculator, which is a software tool from the MPCA.

Director Prudhon commented that he thought the bid turnout was impressive. Sampedro concurred and noted that the grant award is based on the lowest bidder per VLAWMO's grant policy.

A motion was made by Director Rogers and Seconded by Director Prudhon to approve the Landscape Level 2 grant application 2023-03 at 50% of eligible project expenses, not to exceed \$15,994.09 in accordance with VLAWMO staff's recommendation and established program guidelines and authorize staff to sign grant agreement with the City consistent with the approved application. Vote: Shuman: aye, Rogers: aye, Rafferty: aye, Lindner: aye, Prudhon: aye. Motion passed.

4. Consider in-lake management feasibility study of Tamarack and Wilkinson Lakes 

Tanner introduced the scope and contract as provided in the packet, noting that Tamarack and Wilkinson Lakes are listed by the MPCA as impaired waterbodies for nutrients. The scope for the feasibility effort is to be completed in 2023 by Barr Engineering and will include sediment core collection, phosphorus fractionation, development of an alum dosage and application plan, and an in-lake treatment feasibility report. Addressing the internal load of the lakes may be an appropriate action for lake improvements. The feasibility study will indicate if internal load treatment is a viable and cost-effective strategy for lake improvement. Tanner noted that this feasibility may have additional partner support from RCSWCD as part of their WBIF grant with BWSR.

Tanner concluded that VLAWMO has sufficient funds identified in the 2023 VLAWMO budget if support from RCSWCD/BWSR is not approved by BWSR.

Discussion:

Director Prudhon asked about a time estimate for the study. Tanner replied that the study will be completed in the growing season of 2023 with additional time for write-up and analysis.

A motion was made by Director Shuman and seconded by Director Rafferty to authorize the scope of work and contract with Barr Engineering for the In-Lake Management Feasibility Study of Tamarack and Wilkinson Lakes, at a cost to VLAWMO of \$26,500. Vote: Shuman: aye, Rogers: aye, Rafferty: aye, Lindner: aye, Prudhon: aye. Motion passed.

5. Update on Wilkinson BMP technical memos, permitting, and public engagement

Tanner presented the Wilkinson BMP project update starting with the Excel Dashboard project status to date. Tanner noted that the joint application for the wetland exemption was submitted by HEI, and the application comment period closes tomorrow (3-1-23). Tanner explained efforts in stakeholder engagement that have taken place in recent months including public meetings and a current newspaper publication update on the project.

Discussion:

Chair Lindner asked about whether this item requires Board action, Tanner replied that no action is requested and that the update is informational.

6. Update on drone inspection for public ditch 14 main stem

Corcoran provided background on County Ditch 14, Lambert Creek, noting that it operates under State statute 103 B. The ditch transfer from County authority to VLAWMO took place in the early 1980's. He discussed in 2022, the VLAWMO Board approved a public drainage ditch policy and in late 2022, VLAWMO and the City of Vadnais Heights surveyed a portion of the ditch using a drone. Another drone survey is expected to occur on the un-surveyed portion this spring. Corcoran added that the tool is especially efficient to take records and document problem areas. Corcoran played a video of the ditch survey with a narration of the visuals.

Discussion:

Director Rogers inquired about the benefits of the Lambert Lake meander. Tanner explained that the water will move through the system slower and sediment and nutrients will settle out and stay in the wetland system longer.

Director Prudhon asked to verify the date that the drone footage was taken. Corcoran replied footage was taken 11/22/22 and that it was intentionally selected to target partially frozen conditions with dead foliage for enhanced visibility. Corcoran concluded that drone surveys are intended to be completed annually and will be made available for the Board to view.

VII. Discussion

Administrator Belfiori relayed an update from the MPCA. The MPCA recently contacted VLAWMO regarding scheduling a meeting about beginning TMDL reports for Tamarack, West Vadnais, and Pleasant Lakes. The VLAWMO Board's 5-year plan includes strategies for these

studies. The status of RWMWD proposed boundary change in the West Vadnais Lake area has not been determined.

VIII. Administration Communication

None

VII. Adjourn

A motion was made by Director Rafferty and seconded by Director Rogers to adjourn at 8:09 pm.

Vote: Shuman: aye, Rogers: aye, Rafferty: aye, Lindner: aye, Prudhon: aye. Motion passed.

Minutes compiled and submitted by Nick Voss.