

**Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization
Technical Commission (TEC) Minutes
November 8, 2023
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), Rachel Olm (Houston Engineering), Jeremy Erickson (SPRWS)

I. Call to Order

Chair Tessier called the meeting to order at 8:01 am.

II. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Ousky to approve the November 8, 2023 TEC agenda Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes (October 11, 2023)

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Miller to approve the October 11th meeting minutes as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

IV. Administration & Operations

A. Financial Report for November and Authorization for Payment

Administrator Belfiori outlined the November financial report. Highlights included payments related to Minnesota Watersheds lobbying that serves watershed management organizations across the state, lab work for lake and creek sampling, cost share projects, Wilkinson deep water wetland project, Lambert Creek loan, spent lime project, and project maintenance through Natural Shore Technologies. Staff recommends approval of the November financial report and authorization for payment.

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

V. Programs

A. Annual Watershed Awards Voting

Administrator Belfiori described the annual watershed awards voting process and the nominations received. One nomination for Kristie Elfering was received for the Watershed Partner award, who is the engineer for NOHOA. Two nominations were received for the Watershed Steward award, which were Carol Nelson with the White Bear Lake Rotary Club and Joe Coyne a North Oaks resident. Administrator Belfiori encouraged TEC members to consider watershed leadership throughout the year and asked if there are any questions about the nominations received. He said the award winners will receive a water drop and have their pictures taken with Board Chair Jim Lindner.

TEC members voted during the meeting and Tanner counted the received votes. Tanner announced the award winners to be Kristie Elfering for Watershed Partner and Carole Nelson for Watershed Steward.

B. SHG 2023-06 Hill Bee Lawn

Sampedro introduced the Soil Health grant application for a conversion of a turf grass lawn into a bee lawn and native plants. She noted that this project is located within the VLAWMO volume reduction priority zone. She described the landowners did site preparation work to remove the lawn and weeds and are proposing to seed the bee lawn this fall. Native plants are also proposed to add to the property for a whole lawn restoration.

Staff recommends approval of the application for \$1,250.

Commissioner Miller asked if the landowners did the landscape preparation work on their own and Sampedro confirmed.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Ousky to approve SHG 2023-06. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

C. Consideration of 2024 Cost Share Program Policy Changes and RCSWCD Design Contract

Sampedro introduced the minor policy changes for three of the cost share programs for 2024; Soil Health, Landscape Level 1, and Landscape Level 2 grant programs. These include adding clarification to the Soil Health grant policy that landowners in and within 500 feet of a priority zone are eligible for priority funding, native trees are eligible on a case-by-case basis if providing pollinator and stormwater benefits, and landowners are eligible to do multi-phased projects for up to three years in a row. For Landscape Level 1 grant program, she proposed the same policy changes as the Soil Health Grant program of adding native trees and multi-phase project eligibility clarification. For the Landscape

Level 2 grant program, she proposed adopting by reference the BWSR native vegetation establishment and enhancement guidelines.

Sampedro then highlighted the proposed two-year service agreement renewal with Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Division for services primarily for partnership projects through the Landscape Level 2 grant program. The total cost of the contract is \$20,000.

Commissioner Nelson agreed with the native tree policy changes. He also recommended adding a one-page tree guidance document with a species list, planting detail, and size specifications to help applicants and save on staff time.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Ousky to approve the 2024 cost share program policies with an added one-page native tree guidance document and the 2024-2025 RCSWCD agreement to the Board of Directors. Vote: All aye. Motion passed.

VI. Projects

A. Consideration Agreement with HEI for VLAWMO Watershed Plan Development Scope of Work and Consider Resolution to Initiate Watershed Planning Process

Administrator Belfiori introduced the comprehensive watershed management plan process that is beginning for the development of a new plan. He said the current plan expires in 2026 and VLAWMO is required to have a 10-year plan by Minnesota state statutes and BWSR rules. He stated the Board, TEC, municipalities, state agencies, and other stakeholders will be involved in the plan process.

Administrator Belfiori said the plan development will be a two-year process and involve updating the VLAWMO JPA. He said staff will be looking for the TEC's assistance with the development of the plan and discussions regarding the JPA.

Tanner introduced the four-phase, 21-step plan development process that watershed districts and watershed management organizations are required to follow. She said it will be an expedited process since it is an update to an existing 10-year plan, rather than a completely new plan. She highlighted the components of the four plan development phases of: 1) initiating the plan process, which requires a Board resolution stating VLAWMO is starting the update process, 2) drafting the new plan content, 3) formal review of the plan by BWSR and stakeholders, and 4) plan adoption.

Rachel Olm with Houston Engineering (HEI) introduced herself and provided her watershed management plan writing experience. She discussed HEI's proposed role of building off of the VLAWMO 2021 strategic direction process and supporting VLAWMO to ensure the MN Rule 8410 requirements will be met, including being the lead for drafting the plan. Rachel added the plan development process is a great opportunity to review current priorities in the existing watershed management plan and determine if new priorities will be pursued in the future.

Tanner discussed the short-term next steps, starting with consulting with BWSR staff next week. She said staff are also asking the TEC to serve as the plan advisory committee and additional key stakeholders will be invited to participate. She explained the subsequent step of formally notifying entities of the plan update initiation that will occur at the December TEC and Board of Directors meetings. She described HEI's draft scope for assisting with the development of the plan.

Commissioner Miller asked if there are any known major updates or issues that are needed for the new plan. Tanner responded that the project table will need updating with our partners, which will be the most important step. She added staff may also be considering new climate resiliency and equity sections for the plan.

Commissioner Philip motioned and Commissioner Huntrods seconded to approve a recommendation to the Board for VLAWMO to enter into an agreement with HEI for a two-year scope to encompass Plan development and adoption for an anticipated \$140,000-180,000 and requests that the Board authorize a resolution at the December Board meeting to initiate the update process.

B. Wilkinson Update

Tanner provided an update on the Wilkinson project. She said major earthwork mobilization has been completed and HEI staff have continued coordinating on final punchlist items, with a few items remaining before final payments can be made, including water control and vegetation establishment in the spring. She added the Board of Directors approved VLAWMO to partner with Natural Shore Technologies to work on removing invasive vegetation to help facilitate future maintenance, at a cost of ~\$9,000, and that work will likely get underway next week.

C. Spent Lime Update

Tanner provided an update on the spent lime project and stated applications of the spent lime have resumed. She said six applications have been completed total, with three completed in deep-water areas since the water treatment plant reopened. She added it is unlikely that the project will be fully completed this year due to weather conditions, but she will continue keeping the TEC informed of what has been accomplished on the project.

D. CPL Grant Announcement

Tanner announced VLAWMO was selected for CPL grant funding. She described the project, which will include purchasing native seed for the wooded wetland at the Vadnais Heights City Hall, and adding it after another round of munching by the Munch Bunch to remove more invasive species. She said she appreciates the partnership with the City of Vadnais Heights and thanked them for their support on the grant application.

I. Commissioner Reports

None.

II. NOHOA

None.

III. Ramsey Soil & Water Conservation Division

None.

IV. St. Paul Regional Water Services

None.

V. Public Comment

None.

VI. Next Meetings:

Next TEC meeting December 13th, Next BOD meeting December 13th.

XIII. Adjourn

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to adjourn the meeting at 8:51 am. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.