

**Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization
Technical Commission (TEC) Minutes
May 14, 2025
Vadnais Heights City Hall, Council Chambers
800 County Road E East, Vadnais Heights, MN 55127**

Commission Members Present:

Nick Ousky	Vadnais Heights (VH)
Gloria Tessier	Gem Lake (GL)
Susan Miller	North Oaks (NO)
Tom Hoffman	City of Lino Lakes (LL)
Jami Philip	White Bear Township (WBT)
Terry Huntrods	City of White Bear Lake (WBL)

Absent: None.

Others in attendance: Phil Belfiori, Brian Corcoran, Dawn Tanner, Lauren Sampedro, Angela Hugunin (VLAWMO staff); Jeremy Erickson (SPRWS), Ed Shapland (WAV).

I. Call to Order

Chair Ousky called the meeting to order at 8:13 am.

II. Approval of Agenda

Sampedro passed out a proposed revised meeting agenda. It contains two new agenda items under V. Programs: SHG 2025-07 Meir Pollinator Garden Phase 1 Application and SHG 2025-08 Lepoutre Native Plant Restoration Application.

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Tessier to approve the May 14, 2025 TEC agenda as revised. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes (April 9, 2025)

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the April 9, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

IV. Administration & Operations

A. May Financial Report and Consider Authorization for Payment

Administrator Belfiori summarized the May financial statement as included in the meeting materials. He noted income from interest and highlighted key expenditures including continuing consultant work to review items related to the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) and

Watershed Management Plan, the Lambert Sheet Pile Weir loan, and a payment for the Tamarack Alum project.

Staff recommended approval of the May financial report for payment.

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

B. TEC Nomination for June 5, 2025 VLAWMO Subcommittee Meeting – 2026 Budget Discussion/Recommendation

Administrator Belfiori shared that the VLAWMO Board of Directors approved a motion at the April 23rd Board meeting to request a member of the TEC to attend the June 5, 2025 Board subcommittee meeting (6:30 p.m. at the Vadnais Heights City Hall).

Staff requested that the TEC appoint a representative to attend the meeting.

Chair Ousky asked if anyone from the TEC would like to attend. Commissioner Huntrods said he'd be glad to do it, and the other Commissioners thanked him.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Philip to appoint Commissioner Huntrods as the TEC representative to attend the June 5, 2025 Board subcommittee meeting related to the discussion on the 2026 VLAWMO budget recommendation. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

V. Programs

A. SHG 2025-06 Tessier Turfgrass Replacement Application

Commissioner Tessier exited the City Council chambers for the discussion.

Sampedro presented a Soil Health Grant application from landowners Gloria and Ray Tessier to remove and replace turfgrass with native plants through seed mix and live plugs, low-mow fescue grass, and shrubs. She highlighted photos of the existing area and explained that the proposed project totals about 3,000 square feet at their 1.51-acre property in the City of Gem Lake.

Sampedro noted that this project presents an education and outreach opportunity, as few landowners in the City of Gem Lake have participated in VLAWMO's grant programs and many properties have turfgrass adjacent to Scheuneman road. Furthermore, this site is highly visible near the local golf course.

Staff recommended approval of SHG 2025-06 in the amount of \$516.00.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve SHG 2025-06 in the amount of \$516.00. Vote: Ousky: aye; Miller: aye; Philip: aye; Huntrods: aye; Hoffman: aye; Tessier: abstained (not present). Motion passed.

B. SHG 2025-07 Meir Pollinator Garden Phase 1 Application

Commissioner Tessier returned to the City Council chambers.

Sampedro shared an application for the first phase of a pollinator garden project in Vadnais Heights. Sampedro presented an overview of the location of the project and noted that this project will present an opportunity for education and outreach due to the adjacent yards being entirely turfgrass in the front yards.

Sampedro described the anticipated three project phases, sharing that phase one is slated for this year, which is a pollinator garden in the front yard. Down the road, the next phases will include a vegetated swale and replacing more turfgrass with native plants.

Staff recommended approval of this Soil Health Grant application in the amount of \$1,250.

Commissioner Hoffman asked whether the cost was for all phases or just phase one. Sampedro responded the application is only for the first phase.

Chair Ousky highlighted that these projects are particularly beneficial given Vadnais Heights' recent watering ordinance changes. These visible projects can be helpful for demonstrating practices that require less water.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to approve SHG 2025-07 in the amount of \$1,250. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

C. SHG 2025-08 Lepoutre Native Plant Restoration Application

Sampedro presented a Soil Health Grant application for a large-scale native plant restoration that will include a prairie restoration and wetland buffer. Sampedro described the project location, noting that it drains to several wetland areas, then eventually Deep Lake.

Sampedro shared the proposed restoration area map. She noted native plants were selected to be appropriate for each of the areas: woodland edge, upland/savanna, and wetland edge. Sampedro highlighted that this project will provide a unique education and outreach opportunity, with this project being selected as a tour stop for the annual North Oaks Garden Club garden tours.

Staff recommended the approval of SHG 2025-08 in the amount of \$1,250.

Commissioner Miller asked whether the grant funds would be directed toward the seed. Sampedro confirmed that grant funding would help cover the native plants and erosion control costs.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Tessier to approve SHG 2025-08 in the amount of \$1,250. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

D. LL2 2025-02 White Bear Lake Sports Center Update

Sampedro gave an update on the White Bear Lake Sports Center bioswale project happening in partnership with the City of White Bear Lake and Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Division (RCSWCD). Sampedro shared the project developments that occurred since the last update the TEC received in February, including the receipt of construction plans and nine bids from contractors. She also shared the City's submission of a Landscape Level 2 Grant application for the bioswale construction. Sampedro explained that the application was reviewed at the April 23rd Board meeting, as state grant application deadlines and the project's timeline accelerated the process. The Board approved the LL2 grant application not to exceed \$89,791.65 and approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City and RCSWCD for partnering on the construction of the project. Project construction is anticipated to begin in late May or early June.

Commissioner Miller noted that this is a big project. She asked whether its primary goal was to take water off of the parking lot. Sampedro explained that the project is designed to capture runoff from the parking lot, as well as the runoff it receives from S. Birch Lake Boulevard. Sampedro stated that this will cover an approximately 23-acre drainage area.

Commissioner Miller asked about the state of the south lobe of Birch Lake. Sampedro responded that she believed it to be in good quality.

Commissioner Tessier asked how the bids had so much variety in terms of financial amount. Sampedro explained that contractors can vary in terms of their availability and staff capacity and will sometimes give higher prices if they don't need the work. There was discussion of past previous experiences in working with the low bid contractor. Chair Ousky confirmed that the City of Vadnais Heights had positive experiences with them on past projects.

VI. Projects

A. WMP and JPA Update

Tanner thanked the TEC for their involvement in the continued development of the Watershed Management Plan (WMP). Tanner shared that VLAWMO staff have sent the draft JPA to member communities for review. Comments are requested back to staff by May,

28, 2025. Tanner explained that staff and Houston Engineering Inc. are continuing to work on the draft WMP. They are anticipating to request TEC approval and authorization to recommend the draft WMP for Board consideration at the June TEC and Board meetings.

B. 319 Update: Remaining Scope for Phase 1 and Work Plan Submitted for Phase 2

Tanner shared that VLAWMO staff and project partners have continued to work closely with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to finalize the Wilkinson deep-water wetland project by August 31, 2025, through the small priority watershed grant. An update will be brought to the TEC in June.

Tanner noted that the second-round draft work plan was approved by the VLAWMO Board at their April 23, 2025, meeting and was accepted by the MPCA. She shared that VLAWMO will be notified of the status of the program, funding levels, and preparation of a grant contract in late summer or early fall.

C. Rotary Nature Preserve Restoration Update

Tanner gave an update on staff's work with legal counsel and the City of White Bear Lake to prepare a contract for the Rotary Nature Preserve Restoration project. Since the last TEC meeting, the Board authorized the MOU with the City, the Conservation Partners Legacy grant contract with DNR, and authorized moving forward with the quote received from Natural Shore Technologies (NST). The City, NST, and VLAWMO staff met in the field to plan activities for the first scope of work within the 5-year contract.

D. Tamarack Alum Pay Request and Phase 3 Amendment

Tanner provided an update on Phase 2 of the Tamarack Lake alum project. VLAWMO is conducting monitoring and providing data to Barr Engineering to continue to evaluate progress and inform Phase 3.

Tanner noted that Phase 2 of the alum treatment was completed in April, and from here staff will wait until fall for the Phase 3 application, with Phase 4 anticipated for spring of 2026. VLAWMO staff worked with Lake Restorations, Inc., and Barr Engineering to prepare an amendment for Phase 3 with updated alum costs, as included in the packet.

Commissioner Miller asked when staff will know if treatments have had the desired effect. Tanner replied that monitoring is underway to look at Secchi depth, phosphorus and chlorophyll-A. Corcoran is providing water monitoring data to Barr Engineering. Tanner explained that because some phases of the color range of lake water don't respond equally to Secchi depth, color tests were requested by Barr Engineering to provide data that may be important in understanding project results for the remainder of the season.

Staff requested that the TEC recommend that the Board authorize and sign the Second Amendment to the Contractor Services Agreement for Phase 3 pricing for the Tamarack alum project, for a total of \$27,380, and authorize staff to return the fully executed amendment to LRI and coordinate Phase 3 in the fall.

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Miller to recommend that the Board authorize and sign the Second Amendment to the Contractor Services Agreement for phase 3 pricing for the Tamarack alum project for a total of \$27,380, and authorize staff to return the fully executed amendment to LRI and coordinate Phase 3 in the fall. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

E. Spring Project Update: Common Carp Removal and Birch AIS

Tanner shared that small carp removals were completed this spring, with approximately 1,000 pounds of carp removed so far. Three antennas are providing useful information on carp movements during spring. Carp Solutions and VLAWMO staff are coordinating closing including conducting regular field checks and communicating with residents in the area.

Commissioner Miller noted that from personal observation, there has been much less carp activity than in past years. She asked for clarification on whether bigmouth buffalo are native. Tanner confirmed, noting that the species have different impacts on water quality partially due to their feeding behavior. Carp use their downturned mouths to feed in the sediment and uproot plants, while bigmouth buffalo have a forward facing mouth and feed in the water column.

Commissioner Philip asked if it was true that the average lifespan for bigmouth buffalo is up to 127 years. Tanner confirmed that bigmouth buffalo are long-lived and late to reproduce.

Tanner explained that the Birch Lake pre-survey for hybrid Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) and Curly-leaf (CLP) pondweed was completed. CLP was not detected on the survey this year. The DNR permit for EWM and CLP removal has been received, and a hand-pulling removal by Dive Guys is tentatively scheduled for May 29 and 30.

F. Invasive Phragmites: New Site Detected and Partners Notified

Tanner shared that VLAWMO staff were notified by RCSWCD of a new location that is confirmed as infested with invasive Phragmites. This infestation is near I-35E, not far from Otter Lake in White Bear Township, where previously confirmed and treated infestations are located. She noted that this new infestation is on MnDOT property, and MnDOT is planning to treat this infestation. VLAWMO was asked to communicate this message to partners and request that partners keep an eye on wetlands in the area to detect and report possible spread, should that occur.

Commissioner Miller asked how the Phragmites were discovered. Tanner replied that one of the members of the Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) noticed this from the road and reported it to the group.

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

TEC Meeting: June 11, 2025 at 8:15 a.m.; Board Meeting: June 25, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. Board Subcommittee meeting June 5, 2025 at 6:30pm

XIII. Adjourn

It was moved by Commissioner Hoffman and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 am. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.