

**Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization
Technical Commission (TEC) Minutes
June 11, 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 8:15 am.

II. Approval of Agenda

Sampedro passed out a proposed revised meeting agenda. It contains two new agenda items under V. Programs: CB 2025-01 Incarnation Lutheran Church and SHG 2025-09 Novotny Bee Lawn and Wetland Buffer Applications.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the June 11, 2025 TEC agenda as revised. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes (May 14, 2025)

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the May 14, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

IV. Administration & Operations

A. June Financial Report and Consider Authorization for Payment

Administrator Belfiori summarized the June financial statement as included in the meeting materials. He noted income from interest and highlighted key expenditures including continued WMP development, water monitoring work, project work to complete Tamarack alum phase 2 with Barr Engineering, as well as a study in Lino Lakes.

Staff recommended approval of the June financial report for payment.

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

B. June TEC Report to the Board

Administrator Belfiori shared the June TEC Report to the Board, summarizing key items including ongoing project work, outreach program updates, and grant program applications. Belfiori thanked Commissioner Huntrods for representing the TEC at the recent subcommittee meeting where the 2026 budget was discussed. He noted continued work on the SSU due to the recent watershed boundary change and the WMP development process.

C. Update on VLAWMO Joint Powers Agreement (JPA)

Administrator Belfiori described continuing work to update the JPA, a guiding document for VLAWMO's work as a Joint Powers Organization. He highlighted minor changes for language accuracy, updates to voting requirements for the annual capital improvement budget, and revising the duration of the JPA to 10 years rather than 20 years. If approved by the BOD at their June meeting, it will move to action and signature from member communities.

Commissioner Miller asked if the end result of this process will be no major change to the JPA. Administrator Belfiori explained that the JPA has primarily needed wording updates to better reflect how VLAWMO conducts its modern responsibilities, as the prior language needed updating in the areas of financing, logistics of how commission meetings are run, voting requirements, etc. He clarified that from an overall standpoint it will not change how VLAWMO does business but rather will freshen up the JPA in tandem with the updated WMP as its development continues.

V. Programs

A. Update on Recent Outreach Activities

Huginin provided an overview of outreach activities that occurred in May throughout the watershed. She highlighted the WAV Cleanup day on May 10th, where a group of new and returning volunteers removed trash from around Vadnais-Sucker Lake Park. On May 15th, VLAWMO hosted a guest speaker from Monarch Joint Venture for a workshop focused on gardening practices that support pollinators and clean water. Staff joined members of the Vadnais Heights Green Team on May 17th to give a brief talk on the importance of storm drains for watershed health. On May 29th, VLAWMO staff participated in an exciting field day at the Rotary Nature Preserve as part of a partnership with the Rotary Club of White Bear Lake and City of White Bear Lake. The group welcomed kindergarten through second

grade students from Birch Lake Elementary to a macroinvertebrate lab, read aloud, and nature hike. Chair Ousky thanked Hugunin.

D. CB 2025-01 Application: Incarnation Lutheran Church

Hugunin presented an application for the Community Blue grant program from Incarnation Lutheran Church. She provided a brief overview of the Community Blue grant program given that the TEC had not see an application for this program in a while. She highlighted the program's outreach focus as a distinguishing feature from the landscaping grants. Hugunin then presented the application, summarizing the location of the project site and site conditions, which include a large parking lot with two rain gardens.

The application project plan includes five main elements, from rehabilitation of rain garden areas to outreach efforts including educational signage, educational puppet shows for youth, water stewardship workshops, and storm drain outreach in surrounding neighborhoods.

Staff recommended approval of the application in the amount of \$10,000.

Commissioner Miller asked if staff knew why the current raingardens were not maintained. Hugunin noted that management of the rain gardens had shifted over time, and the current group identified the need to change maintenance practices once the rain gardens are revitalized. They are aware of the shortcomings in current practice and have expressed interest in better maintaining the future project.

Commissioner Hoffman asked if staff knew whether the original rain gardens were required by the City. Sampedro replied that no record could be found of the rain gardens being required.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Tessier to approve the CB 2025-01 grant application in the amount of \$10,000. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

E. SHG 2025-09 Application: Novotny Bee Lawn & Wetland Buffer

Sampedro shared an application for the Soil Health grant program from landowners Angela and Jason Novotny for a bee lawn and wetland buffer project that will total about 4,100 square feet at their 1.16-acre property in White Bear Township.

Sampedro shared that the project drains directly to an adjacent wetland that covers much of their property, noting the proximity of the neighboring wetland. She shared that the homeowners regularly remove trash, debris, and other items that were previously dumped in the wetland. The proposed project would add a buffer with over 50 native plant species to filter runoff before it enters the wetland. In addition, they will add a bee lawn to their property after dethatching the majority of the front lawn.

The total estimated project cost is \$1,160.28. Staff recommended approval of SHG 2025-09 in the amount of \$870.20.

Commissioner Tessier noted that she has observed trash in the aforementioned wetland area. Sampedro affirmed that wetland is a primary feature of this area and noted the benefit of the landowners' interest in improving the health of the wetland.

Commissioner Miller shared that the retaining wall replacement process will help accelerate any de-thatching efforts.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to approve SHG-09 in the amount of \$1,160.28. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

VI. Projects

A. Vadnais Heights Grant Application Partnership & Resiliency Study Update

Sampedro provided an update on two MPCA grant opportunities through partnership with the City of Vadnais Heights, including the Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grant (OSG) and the Planning Grant for Stormwater, Wastewater, and Community Resilience (Planning grant). The OSG grant would be for completing feasibility work and project designs for the potential flood reduction and water quality project behind the Vadnais Heights City Hall.

Sampedro shared that the City of Vadnais Heights was notified that both grant applications were approved by the MPCA, with both grants moving forward. Once the City has executed their grant agreements with the MPCA, the City and VLAWMO will enter an agreement to outline the roles for implementing the grant workplans. Sampedro shared staff's appreciation for the chance to partner on these grant projects.

Sampedro also shared a brief update on two LCCMR grant applications that were submitted, one in partnership with White Bear Township and one with the City of Vadnais Heights. Staff hopes to have an update on this at the next TEC meeting.

B. WMP Recommendation to the Board to Initiate 60-day Review

Tanner shared an update on the development process for the 2027-2036 WMP, noting that the complete draft WMP was provided to the TEC. She revisited staff's request for the TEC's review and recommendation to the Board to review and initiate the 60-day review.

Staff requested that the TEC recommend to the Board to review the completed WMP 2027-2036 draft and authorize staff to complete the steps to initiate the 60-day formal Review at the June 25 Board meeting.

Commissioner Miller asked if VLAWMO feels that state agency partners are OK with the plan as it is currently prepared. Tanner responded that the TEC+ process was a nice step toward receiving initial and in-depth feedback from agency partners on the draft WMP. Nevertheless, Tanner explained that there is still an expectation that more comments will be received from the 60-day formal review process.

It was moved by Commissioner Tessier and seconded by Commissioner Miller to recommend that the Board review the completed WMP 2027-2036 draft and authorize staff to complete the steps to initiate the 60-day formal Review at the June 25 regular Board meeting. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

C. 319 Update: Remaining Scope for Phase 1

Tanner shared that VLAWMO staff and project partners have continued to work closely with the MPCA to finalize the Wilkinson deep-water wetland project by August 31, 2025, through the 319 small priority watersheds grant program. Tanner explained that some funds remain from this grant due to the low bids received.

Tanner provided an update on objective 3, sharing that NST is out on site this week to continue with vegetation maintenance and enhancement through the approved contract, ensuring funds are utilized by the deadline.

For objective 2, Tanner highlighted cost savings that allowed for a 30% expansion of the project area. She shared that additional transplant efforts are in progress, with five trips planned for July. Development of an educational sign is also underway for the deep-water wetland.

Even with the work encompassed by these objectives, Tanner explained that there will be some funding remaining at the end of this period. Tanner listed the approximate funding amounts for both grant funding to return and cash match that will not be spent.

Staff requested that the TEC recommend to the Board to complete the remaining tasks as described above and work with the MPCA to return remaining funds once final invoices are received.

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to recommend to the Board to complete the remaining tasks as described above and work with the MPCA to return remaining funds once final invoices are received. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

D. Rotary Nature Preserve Restoration Contract and First Scope

Tanner gave an update on staff's restoration partnership work with the City of White Bear Lake at the Rotary Nature Preserve. She shared staff's work with legal counsel to prepare a contract and receive the first task order, with the first order beginning in summer of 2025 and continuing through 2026.

Staff requested that the TEC recommend that the Board authorizes and signs the contractor services agreement with NST and accepts and authorizes signed Task Order 1 with NST.

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Miller to recommend to the Board to authorize and sign the contractor services agreement with NST and accept and authorize signed Task Order 1 with NST. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

E. Tamarack Alum Engineering Scope for Phases 3 and 4

Tanner summarized engineering scopes for previous Phases 1 and 2 of Tamarack Alum. She explained that Barr Engineering has now provided a scope and letter agreement for engineering oversight and inspection for Phases 3 and 4 in the amount of \$13,600.

Staff requested that the TEC recommend to the Board to authorize and sign the Agreement for Tamarack Lake Phases 3 and 4 Alum Treatment Engineering Services in the amount of \$13,600.

It was moved by Commissioner Tessier and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to recommend that the Board authorize and sign the Agreement for Tamarack Lake Phases 3 and 4 Alum Treatment Engineering Services in the amount of \$13,600. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

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

Tanner shared that small carp removals were completed throughout the month of May. A total of approximately 2000 pounds of carp have been removed so far. Antennae monitoring is ongoing, and a biomass estimate will be completed later this season to inform plans for 2026. All estimates so far are showing that biomass this year is lower than in years past, which may be an indicator of an imminent shift toward the maintenance phase of this project.

Tanner noted that Big-mouth buffalo were moved over the barrier during each removal. The spawning run appears to be later than in previous years.

Tanner also noted that the new barrier at Chickadee Lane has been working well, and work is underway to remove the other barrier between Deep and Wilkinson Lakes. Carp Solutions and VLA WMO staff are conducting regular field checks and communicating with residents in the area.

For Birch Lake, Tanner shared that hand-pulling removal was completed by Dive Guys on May 29 and 30. Hybrid Eurasian watermilfoil and curly-leaf pondweed were removed. Tanner thanked Commissioner Huntrods for his involvement in this process and shared that a post-survey will take place next week.

VII. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Miller shared a report of beavers making their home in Pleasant Lake, causing some consternation through their tree removal. She shared that so far, NEST (of NOHOA) has advised residents that the beavers should be left alone. Tanner shared a book that could be of interest for residents looking to learn more about beavers. Commissioner Miller thanked Tanner for the information.

VIII. NOHOA

None

IX. Ramsey Soil & Water Conservation Division

None

X. St. Paul Regional Water Services

Erickson noted increased Saint Paul Regional Water Services boat traffic over Pleasant and Vadnais in recent days. He shared that much-needed maintenance has been taking place on the lake oxygenation systems. These efforts should keep algal blooms to a minimum on these lakes.

XI. Public Comment

None

XII. Next Meetings

TEC Meeting: July 9, 2025 at 8:15 a.m.; Board Meeting: June 25, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

XIII. Adjourn

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 am. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.