

**Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization
Technical Commission (TEC) Minutes
September 10, 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)
Jami Philip	White Bear Township (WBT)
Terry Huntrods	City of White Bear Lake (WBL)
Tom Hoffman	City of Lino Lakes (LL)

Absent:

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

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to approve the September 10, 2025 TEC agenda as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes (August 13, 2025)

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Tessier to approve the August 13, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

IV. Administration & Operations

A. September Financial Report and Consider Authorization for Payment

Administrator Belfiori summarized the September financial statement as emailed to the TEC and distributed at the meeting. He noted income from interest and highlighted key expenditures including a new staff computer consistent with VLAWMO's five-year replacement policy, expenses for ongoing project work including closing out the Wilkinson project, and Soil Health Grant project close outs. Staff recommended approval of the September financial report for payment.

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

V. Programs

A. SHG 2025-11 Lamb Turfgrass Replacement Application

Sampedro presented a Soil Health Grant application for a turfgrass replacement project over an area of 5,000 square feet at a 0.24-acre property in Vadnais Heights. Sampedro showed an aerial view of the project area, explaining that the location falls within a VLAWMO priority zone for volume reduction before runoff drains to Lambert Creek.

Sampedro described the applicant's plan to overseed much of the backyard with low mow/no mow fescue grass to replace the turfgrass. The applicant proposes adding a 375-square foot pollinator garden as well as the addition of two new rain barrels. Plant species were specifically selected to conserve water and provide valuable pollinator habitat. Sampedro also noted two outreach connections with this applicant: first, that they adjusted their plan after attending the August Neighborhood Garden Tour, and second, that their front yard's visibility makes the proposed pollinator garden a valuable outreach opportunity.

The total estimated project cost is \$1,677.58. Staff recommended approval of SHG 2025-11 in the amount of \$1,250.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to approve the SHG 2025-11 grant application in the amount of \$1,250. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

B. SHG 2025-12 Ballering Turfgrass Replacement Application

Sampedro presented a Soil Health Grant application for a turfgrass replacement project in North Oaks. This proposal is the first phase of the applicant's proposed multi-phase turfgrass replacement and stormwater project at her 1.3-acre property, which is located on East Pleasant Lake Road. Sampedro explained that the property drains to a wetland before reaching Pleasant Lake. She also noted the landowner's commitment to improving pollinator habitat, reducing stormwater runoff from her property and surrounding areas for the benefit of water quality, and her desire to increase her yard's overall resilience.

Sampedro highlighted the first phase would be replacing turfgrass with bee lawn seed mix, over an area of approximately 4000 square feet. A later phase will incorporate a rain garden to capture runoff along the street, as well as the addition of native plants along the driveway in an area where erosion is currently occurring. Sampedro shared that this may be the first bee lawn in North Oaks. Sampedro stated that the total estimated project cost is \$3,756.38. Staff recommended approval of SHG 2025-12 in the amount of \$1,000 for phase 1.

Commissioner Tessier asked whether the applicant has started to kill her turfgrass yet. Sampedro responded that the applicant has not yet, noting that one area will not require removal as it is already bare soil from construction activities. She shared that the landowner will be doing some of the work herself and hiring a contractor as needed for preparing the land for bee lawn establishment.

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Miller to approve the SHG 2025-12 grant application in the amount of \$1,000 for phase 1. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

C. Update on LL2 2025-03 Estates of Evergreen Ponds HOA Smart Irrigation Controller Project

Sampedro provided an update on a Landscape Level 2 Grant application submitted by the Estates of Evergreen Ponds HOA. Their proposal involved irrigation system upgrades including the installation of a smart irrigation controller that will serve a 9.23-acre neighborhood in Vadnais Heights. She noted that the application was brought directly to the Board due to a tight project timeline.

Sampedro explained that the applicant completed an irrigation system audit through the City of Vadnais Heights' water conservation rebate program to identify potential areas of improvement. These improvement areas will be implemented as part of the proposed project as the HOA will upgrade their existing irrigation system with a newer-technology Hydrowise smart irrigation controller that is ultimately expected to conserve 672,000 gallons of water per season. The applicant will also be applying to the City of Vadnais Heights' rebate program to help cover costs for updating their sprinkler heads, a further step toward conserving water.

Sampedro noted that while the HOA obtained two bids for the project, one of them was incomplete. She shared that the total estimated cost of the second, complete bid that the HOA selected is \$11,575.00. Staff recommended a 90% grant funding level up to \$10,417.50 to the Board of Directors at their August 27th meeting and the Board approved the application.

D. Highlights from August Outreach Activities and Resiliency Study Outreach Update

Huginin provided an overview of outreach activities that occurred in August including the launch of the City of Vadnais Heights' flood resiliency map, which seeks to gather community input on flooding in the city. She shared that the map's first time being shared with the public was the Senior Picnic, part of Vadnais Heights Days, where VLAWMO staff joined City staff to gather initial community comments on the flooding map. VLAWMO's table at Vadnais Heights Kids' Day was supported by Minnesota Water Stewards (MWS) Ed & Ceci Shapland and VLAWMO staff, and attendees of all ages came to the booth to discover water-themed educational activities. The second and final neighborhood garden tour was held on August 19th and was well attended, with participants ranging in experience level and motivation for attending. Staff appreciates the coordination of MWS Ceci Shapland and the willingness of grant

recipient hosts to share their projects with community members. Hugunin also gave a brief overview of upcoming watershed events.

VI. Projects

A. City of Vadnais Heights LCCMR Proposal Drone Video

Sampedro reminded the TEC of the City of Vadnais Heights' LCCMR proposal project, a partnership effort with VLAWMO. She explained that the multi-faceted project will incorporate a blend of water quality improvement, recreational features, and education. Sampedro presented the drone video that was included in the City of Vadnais Heights' LCCMR proposal, which was submitted along with the application for the potential resiliency partnership project located behind the City Hall.

As the video played, Sampedro called out key locations of impervious surfaces along the path of stormwater as it flows toward East Vadnais Lake. She pointed out proposed project elements and where they would be incorporated along the way.

Sampedro explained that this video is a key way of illustrating the path of stormwater and thanked Chair Ousky for his work on the video, as well as the collaboration with the City. In addition, the drone path could be revisited during construction and beyond if the grant is awarded.

Commissioner Miller commended Chair Ousky's drone capabilities and the proposed project.

B. WMP 60-day Comments Received and JPA Status Update

Tanner gave an update on the Watershed Management Plan (WMP) 60-day comment period, which closed on August 25, 2025. She explained that comments were received from multiple entities, including the Board of Soil and Water Resources, the City of White Bear Lake, the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and Rice Creek Watershed District.

Tanner expressed VLAWMO's gratitude to the entities who participated in the TEC+ process and provided comments to help improve the WMP. Tanner explained that VLAWMO and HEI are working to organize comments, coordinate responses, and provide draft revisions to the WMP.

Commissioner Miller asked whether there had been any comments that surprised staff. Tanner responded that comments were within the realm of what staff anticipated. She shared that there will be further negotiation and conversation to make sure everyone is in alignment as the Plan moves toward finalization.

Tanner also shared that the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) has been authorized by all six member communities and received by VLAWMO. She noted that this document is an important source of support for the organization moving forward, and she thanked the TEC for their involvement.

C. 319 Update: Phase 1 and 2

Tanner gave an update on the 319 grant program, stating that the MPCA notified staff that the final report for phase 1 has been accepted. VLAWMO has not yet received notification that the grant is closed out.

Staff are awaiting notification about the phase 2 project work plan, final budget, and anticipated grant contract timing. HEI has completed survey work to continue to develop the next iteration of design, and work on that design is underway.

D. Carp Solutions Recommendation for 2026 Update

Tanner shared an update from Carp Solutions, who recently provided VLAWMO with cost information regarding potential activities for 2026. Staff are discussing options. More information, along with a recommendation are anticipated to be provided to the TEC and Board at October meetings.

Tanner explained that staff received three scenarios from Carp Solutions with discussions to come. She noted that staff anticipates scaled back efforts in 2026 given the success from recent years and low biomass of carp remaining in the lake.

Commissioner Miller asked whether we have carp in other waterbodies. Tanner said that carp move among connected lakes. No additional attempted spawning sites have been identified. Carp detected in Pleasant Lake are also detected at the Chickadee Lane location and Charley Lake, moving among connected lakes. There are not indications of separate populations that have been missed at this time. There are also signs of improvement in the aquatic vegetation coverage in connected lakes that had open areas with carp feeding and large areas of uprooted plants prior to initiation of the removal program.

E. Invasive Flowering Rush Planting by RCSWCD Update

Tanner gave an update on a multi-year effort of invasive flowering rush removal. She explained that RCSWCD staff has worked on flowering rush removal since its identification at a VLAWMO stakeholder meeting for Amelia Lake in 2022. In 2023, RCSWCD began chemical treatment on the site. After that, they transitioned to hand pulling in 2024 and 2025. This summer, RCSWCD determined that removal was at an appropriate level that native plants should be added. Working with VLAWMO, RCSWCD added plants instead of seed to help accelerate native plant establishment and expansion.

VII. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Philip shared that White Bear Township has Township Day coming up on September 20th. She invited all to join if they are available.

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: October 8, 2025 at 8:15 am; Board meeting: October 22, 2025 at 7:00 pm.

XIII. Adjourn

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 am. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.