



South Lake Champlain Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC)

February 28, 2024, 3:00 pm

Online and in-person at the Rutland Regional Planning Commission offices.

Meeting Minutes

Council Members present: Erin Rodgers, chair (TU); Mike Winslow (ACRPC); Katy Crumley (PMNRCD), Dan Redondo (Town of Orwell), and Paul Donaldson (Town of Poultney)

Staff present: Hilary Solomon (PMNRCD/CWSP), Barbara Noyes Pulling (RRPC/CWSP), and Devon Neary (RRPC/CWSP)

VTDEC present: Angie Allen, Basin Planner

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Erin Rodgers at 3:03 pm.

APPROVE AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Dan Redondo and seconded by Mike Winslow. The agenda was approved as written.

APPROVE MINUTES

Dan Redondo moved to approve the minutes from the November 21, 2023, meeting, and Katy Crumley seconded. The minutes were approved as written.

REVIEW of RFP ROUND PROJECT

Castleton Village School Stormwater Treatment, Castleton

This project was from the Round 4 RFP for South Lake CWSP funding. The Town of Castleton submitted the project application. Hilary Solomon introduced the project, which had been identified by a downtown Castleton stormwater scoping study in 2022-2023. Fuss and O'Neill was the contractor, and Poultney Mettowee NRC managed the project. The project was the highest-ranking project from the stormwater study and the town is enthusiastic to implement it, as they are considering retrofitting the entire stormwater drainage system in that downtown area. The project consists of infiltration modules being installed under the Castleton Village School basketball courts. The project is a final design, and the request is for \$26,000. The projected phosphorus reduction is 7.2 kg/yr.

Barbara Noyes Pulling explained the staff and DEC review process. Angie Allen had requested several changes to the Eligibility Screening Form. Those changes were made by staff and she now supports the project. Barbara Noyes Pulling performed the staff review and explained in scoring the project she used a very conservative approach by adding the expected implementation costs into the scoring. That is a departure from our scoring for most earlier projects which did not have implementation estimates. As a result, the overall score is 40 out of 100. It is 10 (out of 50) for cost benefit due to the high cost of stormwater projects, 10 (out of 10) for relatively straightforward Operations and Maintenance, and 10 (out of 10) for local importance (listed in SWMP). The co-benefits score is estimated to be another 10 (out of 20). Despite the low score, she indicated staff nevertheless supports this project and anticipates a higher overall score due to more phosphorus reduction than projected.

During the BWQC discussion, Dan Redondo asked if the school was still using the property and if we limiting the uses of the property if we install this project and do not know what the final uses will be? Staff said that the town had submitted the application, and they own the land, so we assume they are in favor of the project, no matter what the final use of the property is.

Katy Crumley wondered if there are other pots of funds that we might use, if this project is too expensive and does not meet our efficiency goals? Options like the LCBP Healthy Ecosystems Funds were discussed, which Angie noted had increased their per project limits, so that they might offer substantial funds for a project like this.

Mike Winslow made a motion to give the CWSP the option to fund the project and Dan Redondo seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the CWSP will work with the Town of Castleton to secure a contract.

UPDATE ON EARLY-STAGE FUNDS

Hilary Solomon informed the group that five projects have been identified as appropriate for the early-stage funds. An RFP went out to four approved/qualified contractors last week and three of them bid on the projects. Staff will review the bids and notify the consultants by the end of this week. The projects include multiple gullies from Pawlet to Addison, and a stormwater project near Crystal Beach on Lake Bomoseen. The gullies are a little tricky as only one definition or gully project type exists in the CWIP funding policy and that is for a stormwater practice, with the focus being slowing or stopping the water flowing to the gully. This will be part of the focus of the early-stage work, figuring out if the project is fundable.

ROLLING RFQs for PRE-QUALIFIED SUBGRANTEES AND SUBCONTRACTORS

Staff explained that we have several potential subgrantees and one subcontractor interested in submitting their qualifications. We are accepting them on a rolling basis but are making a concerted effort to reach out to groups who have expressed interest in February and March, while we are between grant rounds.

THRESHOLD for PROJECT COST EFFICIENCY

Staff explained to the group that DEC is aware that its formula to score the cost efficiency of projects does not always take into account the actual costs of projects. As an alternative, it has asked CWSPs and BWQCs to come up with thresholds for how much they are willing to spend on projects.

Mike Winslow suggested we wait until we have more projects.

Katy Crumley said that we did not have enough information about implementation project types and costs, nor did we have enough projects to make this decision. She wondered if we should at least consider creating a threshold that we could adjust over time?

Erin Rodgers noted that we should either wait or set a limit so high that it would not exclude projects, so that we could at least discuss them as a group and make individual decisions.

Barbara Noyes Pulling suggested funding the potentially cost-effective projects and then waiting to fund the more expensive ones until we see if we will have money remaining at the end of the grant.

Mike Winslow reminded us that we had one implementation project so far and did not think that was enough information to determine a threshold. He suggested that we make a motion to not consider a threshold until we have funded at least ten implementation projects. Dan Redondo seconded and acknowledged the need to get more projects completed before setting a limit on projects we will discuss. He also asked about how to get towns more involved, and we discussed methods to market the grant rounds. The motion to wait until we had funded ten implementation projects before setting an efficiency threshold passed unanimously.

CWSP SUMMIT – APRIL 5, WATERBURY

Barbara Noyes Pulling informed members that they were invited to the Clean Water Service Network Summit on April 5 in Waterbury. It is an all-day event, in-person only, and will cover such topics as the vision of Act 76 in 2019 and where we are now, comments from each CWSP, projects toward phosphorus targets and capacity building, project segment updates, and identifying and developing projects.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEXT MEETING

A poll will be sent out to set a meeting during the last half of May.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Erin Rodgers at 3:58 PM.

Following the meeting, BWQC member Mike Winslow emailed to staff some additional thoughts on the threshold discussion:

I was thinking more about the P cost efficiency thresholds this morning. I thought, as a BWQC member, how do I make decisions about which projects to fund. The answer is really that I follow the recommendation of the CWSP, unless something comes up in the discussion to steer me in another direction. It's the CWSP that's responsible for meeting P reduction goals with the funds available, so if the CWSP says we should fund a project, chances are I'll vote to fund the project. In practical terms, that means it would be the CWSP that sets the P reduction threshold, at least for this one member.

Respectfully submitted by Barbara Noyes Pulling & Hilary Solomon