



South Lake Champlain Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC)

December 16, 2024, 3:00 pm

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

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting called to order 3:06 PM

Council Members present: Erin Rodgers, chair (TU); Adam Piper (VLT); Mike Winslow (ACRPC); Katy Crumley (PMNRCD), Dan Redondo (Town of Orwell), Sarah Pelkey (RRPC), Shayne Jacquith (TNC)

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

VTDEC present: Angie Allen, Basin Planner and Zapata Courage, Wetlands Biologist

Public present: None

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 pm by Erin Rodgers. Barbara Noyes Pulling informed the group that the meeting was not noticed in time for the Open Meeting Law, so the BWQC could not vote on anything on the agenda including the minutes from the last meeting.

APPROVE AGENDA

No action.

APPROVE MINUTES

No action.

REVIEW of TWO PROJECTS

Tri-Town Road Project Development

Hilary described how this came from landowner outreach to the CWSP, and it involves several roads in a neighborhood and multiple rows of houses that drain into Lake Champlain. The water drains between houses and creates erosion and sloughing at the shoreline. The Project before the BWQC is a scoping study to identify areas and projects that could infiltrate water and route it toward the lake in a less impactful way . This would be project development. The budget would be \$34,500.

Zapata encouraged consideration of Lake Wise best management practices and softer techniques as opposed to constructed practices along the shoreline, which may be better with the clay soils in the area. Zapata also encouraged landowner involvement in the finished projects. Concerns from Council members including Mike, Erin, and Shane included that getting all the landowners to sign onto the projects may be challenging and that operations and maintenance would need landowner buy-in as well. Shayne and Mike questioned projects that involve private roads. Mike indicated that he was uncomfortable supporting use of public funds for maintaining private roads, yet private roads were eligible for CWIP funding and would need to be maintained for the associated practices to work. Hilary suggested that the subcontractors be steered away from road-related projects and assured the group that no specific project would be funded at this time beyond project development (which will include 30% designs for select projects).. Angie said she agreed with many of the comments that had been made about private roads and other funding, however, this is project development which is intended to gather information, and she cautioned against putting any conditional approval of these types of projects.

Mettawee Community School Wetland Restoration Final Design

Barbara briefed the group on this project, which was funded by the BWQC for 30% design and now the CWSP is asking for 100% design funding. The 30% design was bare bones, and staff would like to double check the phosphorus reduction calculations and get solid implementation costs. Staff would like a report (and decision point) at the 60% design stage. The final design should include wetland restoration and possibly some floodplain reconnection as well; it would be combination of active and passive restoration. Under a separate project there will be a new boardwalk and a viewing platform. Budget is \$34,500.

Zapata mentioned the history of the project with multiple project engineers at Otter Creek Engineering, who have subsequently left.

Adam suggested that Donald Campbell of VLT be looped in to make sure the design is in compliance with the conservation easement at this site. CWSP staff will do that, since is the CWSP is the applicant for this project.

Shayne asked if it is becoming the norm for CWSPs to manage projects, and Mike indicated that is becoming the case in more situations.

There was a brief discussion about whether private firms should/can manage projects and that nonprofits, conservation districts, and other groups would be more traditional subgrantees.

It was decided by consensus that the group would hold a special meeting on December 20, 2024, to vote on the two projects.

EARLY-STAGE SUBCONTRACTOR RATES

The final item on the agenda that needed a vote was increasing the amount that subcontractors can be paid for early-stage projects. Staff recommends the cost cap be raised to \$2,000 per project for projects going forward (including the six under consideration now).

Erin indicated it was her preference not to put too hard of a cap on these costs; the BWQC will continue to consider options at future meetings.

EARLY-STAGE PROJECT REVIEW

Hilary gave a brief overview of the six early-stage projects. A RFP went out, and we got two subcontractors interested in doing three each.

Hilary mentioned that this brings our total number of early-stage projects to 11, and we had estimated 20, so we are well on our way. It is a bright spot for us, because it feels like we can keep projects moving forward even when we know little about them.

Mike suggested that the CWSP could cover small discrepancies with administrative funds without having to get approval from the BWQC. Or the BWQC can approve a certain percentage increase policy so that the CWSP can act on its own. Or the CWSP staff can ask subcontractors for an estimated dollar amount and then the costs can be adjusted to the projects.

Zapata asked to be looped into every phase of the projects, even early-stage ones to expediate communications going forward. Staff will get her the field sheets for projects #6-11 and will copy Alison Marchione, Shannon Pytlik, Josh Carvajal, Kyle Medash, and Laura Dlugolecki.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEXT MEETING

A special meeting to vote on the items in this agenda was set for Friday, December 20, 2024, at 1:00 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:03 pm

Respectfully submitted by Barbara Noyes Pulling & Hilary Solomon