

Winooski Basin Water Quality Council Meeting Minutes – July 20, 2023

Winooski Basin Water Quality Council Members:

NRCDs		RPCs	
✓	Peter Danforth, Lamoille NRCD	✓	Darlene Palola, CCRPC
	Emily Porter-Goff, Alternate		Garret Mott, CCRPC, Alternate
✓	Casey Spencer, Winooski NRCD	✓	Alan Quackenbush, CVRPC
	Russ Barret, Alternate		Robert Wernecke, CVRPC, Alternate
Land Conservation Organizations		Municipalities	
	Erin De Vries, VT River Conservancy		Annie Costandi, Essex
	Vacant, Alternate	✓	Sarah McShane, Stowe, Alternate
Watershed Protection Organizations		✓	Nigel Hicks-Tibbles, Northfield
✓	Michele Braun, Friends of the Winooski River	✓	Alice Peal, Waitsfield, Alternate
	Shawn White, Alternate		
✓	Ira Shadis, Friends of the Mad River		
	B. Shupe, Alternate		
✓	Kinny Perot, Alternate		

CVRPC Staff: B. Voigt, L. Frasca

Guests: Kimberly Ead, Dean Pierce (Senior Planner, Northwest Regional Planning Commission)

Meeting called to order: B. Voigt called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM.

Updates to the agenda: None

Public comment: D. Pierce, Senior Planner from Northwest Regional Planning Commission, introduced himself and noted that he was sitting in on this meeting to get a better understanding of how other Clean Water Service Providers organize their project review processes.

Review & Approve minutes from June 15, 2023 meeting

P. Danforth moved to approve the minutes of the June 15, 2023 meeting. A. Quackenbush seconded. No discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

Project Ranking & Prioritization

B. Voigt referenced the email sent to all committee members which included the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission's staff review and funding recommendation for the two proposals submitted in response to the FY23 Round 1 Project Solicitation. After consultation with the VT Department of Environmental Conservation the project proposal from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission for Project Identification and Assessment on a private road was deemed ineligible for funding through the Water Quality Restoration Formula Grant. There may be other funding opportunities to support this work, and the applicant was encouraged to apply for Design- and Implementation-phase funding in future project solicitation rounds.

N. Hicks-Tibbles asked if any action was required by the Winooski Basin Water Quality Council since this project is ineligible for Formula Grant funding. B. Voigt responded there was no action required. K. Ead asked for clarification about the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission proposal, wondering why the project is ineligible for funding even though it may yield a significant phosphorous reduction. B. Voigt responded that the FY23 Clean Water Initiative Program funding policy defines project eligibility and that Assessment- and Identification-phase projects on private roads are not eligible for Formula Grant funds. There are other grants that may fund this work, but there are currently no active Requests for Proposals that he is aware of. B. Voigt will continue to work with Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission and K. Ead to identify funding opportunities for this work.

Next, B. Voigt discussed the Vermont Land Trust project proposal. He emphasized that given the high initial estimate of Phosphorus reduction, the budget for this project could rise substantially and still be cost effective. B. Voigt reminded the Winooski Basin Water Quality Council that this project proposes to remove a berm and reconnect the river with its historic floodplain, greatly reducing the amount of phosphorus runoff into the river. A. Peal stated she is for this project and feels the co-benefits are significant. N. Hicks-Tibbles asked how the phosphorus reduction is calculated for a Design-phase project. B. Voigt explained the phosphorus reduction number is a preliminary estimate derived from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation phosphorous calculator. The tool considers factors such as project phase and project type among other factors. It is likely the phosphorus reduction estimate will change following the completion of the Design-phase work. He noted that even if the phosphorus value was cut in half the project would still be worthwhile. K. Perot mentioned that fields with berms in the Mad River Valley feature drain tiles that discharge phosphorus into the river with or without the berm present.

She emphasized the importance of thorough site evaluations at this project site so that project designs consider discharge from existing drain tiles.

A. Quackenbush asked, why is there no estimate to implement the Vermont Land Trust project? B. Voigt responded that since the 30% design is not complete there is no estimate for implementation costs. M. Braun noted that implementation costs will be included with the project final design once alternatives have been considered. Based on her experience, M. Braun expects project construction costs to range between \$100,000 - \$150,000.

N. Hicks-Tibbles mentioned that in evaluating what projects to vote for (during a Project Solicitation round), it would be helpful to have some insight regarding proposals that may be submitted in response to future project solicitation rounds. Is there any way for us to know how we may be impacting funding of future projects? B. Voigt responded that the Basin Water Quality Council does know about all the projects that were proposed under the current project solicitation. However, he has not been contacted about future project proposals. The FY23 budget of ~ \$1 million has rolled over into FY24, meaning there is currently almost \$2 million available to fund eligible projects. P. Danforth expects to submit 2-3 Design-phase proposals in the next Project Solicitation round. M. Braun is also planning to submit a few proposals but is concerned about the Sept. 1st deadline. Her projects need to be reviewed by Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation staff (Staci Pomeroy) who is busy filling the roles of two people while simultaneously dealing with flood response efforts. P. Danforth mentioned that he has worked frequently with S. Pomeroy in the past and recommends reaching out with plenty of notice to get design projects approved in a timely manner. B. Voigt added that if people see the Department of Environmental Conservation as a barrier to submitting projects, that Project Implementors should alert the Winooski Clean Water Service Provider so that this can be communicated with Department of Environmental Conservation staff. M. Braun does not think this is the case, noting that the real issues include a lack of staff and additional responsibilities due to flood response. B. Voigt reminded the committee that there will be another Project Solicitation round later this year if the September deadline is too tight. He asked if the deadline for the current Project Solicitation round should be extended in light of recent flooding. Council members did not consider this necessary.

P. Danforth moved to approve the funding request of \$44,604 for the Vermont Land Trust berm removal project. D. Palola seconded. All members voted in the affirmative except M. Braun who abstained. The motion carried.

Election of Officers

B. Voigt noted that since this is the Annual Meeting that the Winooski Basin Water Quality Council needs to hold elections for the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair. He reviewed the pertinent Articles of the Winooski Basin Water Quality Council Bylaws.

M. Braun nominated N. Hicks-Tibbles for Chair. P. Danforth seconded the nomination. N. Hicks-Tibbles would be happy to continue serving as Chair, but would also be fine if someone else desired to take on this responsibility. He noted the challenges with attending meetings during the legislative session. All members voted in favor of N. Hicks-Tibbles retaining the position of Chair for FY24.

N. Hicks-Tibbles nominated A. Quackenbush for a second term as Vice Chair. D. Palola seconds. B. Voigt asked if anyone else was interested in nomination. Hearing no other nominations, the nomination advanced to a vote. All members (except A. Quackenbush) voted in favor of A. Quackenbush retaining the position of Vice-Chair for FY24. A. Quackenbush abstained.

Announcements

B. Voigt will continue to staff the State Emergency Operations Center over the next couple weeks, and his response to calls / emails may be delayed as a result.

D. Palola asked if the flooding impacted anyone's project(s). B. Voigt responded that the recently installed sand filters at a project in Moretown held up fine. A. Peal asked about the types of structures installed at Moretown. B Voigt responded that the project includes three sand filters, a swirl separator, sediment filters and an artificial wetland will be installed to treat water from the project site.

M. Braun visited many Friends of the Winooski project sites since the flood. One site had an abutment washed out, another culvert in Cabot is gone, and various dam removal projects will need reevaluation. The Barre Town Recreation field looks good and the Barre Department of Public Works parking lot underground storm chambers functioned well. The Dog River Park floodplain restoration project functioned as designed and the project engineer estimated the flood elevation was ~6" lower than it would have been without this project.

The next Winooski Basin Water Quality Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 21 September 2023.

Adjourn

K. Perot moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:01 PM. P. Danforth seconded. Motion carried unanimously.