

**Missisquoi Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC)  
MINUTES**

Wednesday, June 5, 2024, 11:00 AM-1:00 PM  
Virtual Meeting/Held Via Zoom\* (computer/smartphone/tablet etc.)  
Meeting video posted at <https://youtu.be/T5D9wvliplk>

**A VIDEO RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE NRPC  
YOUTUBE CHANNEL (Link above).**

**THE WRITTEN MINUTES ARE A SYNOPSIS OF THE DISCUSSION AT THE  
MEETING. MOTIONS ARE AS STATED. MINUTES WILL BE SUBJECT TO  
CORRECTION BY THE COUNCIL. CHANGES, IF ANY, WILL BE RECORDED IN THE  
MINUTES OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Council Members: Lindsey Wight (Q), Ted Sedell (Q), Barry Lampke (Q), Beth Torpey (Q), Kent Henderson (Q), Dan Seeley (Q), Lauren Weston (Q), Sarah Downes (Q), Dave Allerton (Q during vote on application). (Q= towards quorum unless otherwise indicated)

Staff: Dean Pierce, Sara Gratz

Others present: Chris Rottler, Karen Bates, Jim Pease, Julia Crocker

**1. Welcome and introductions**

Lindsey Wight opened the meeting as Chair at 11:03 and participants introduced themselves.

**2. Meeting protocols**

Lindsey reviewed meeting protocols.

**3. Conflict of interest declarations, if any**

Lauren Weston announced that she has a project being reviewed today, so she will recuse herself when it goes to vote.

**4. Review/adjust and approve agenda**

Kent Henderson motioned to approve the agenda and Dan Seeley seconded. Motion carried.

**5. Approval of minutes**

Dan motioned to approve the minutes from the last meeting and Kent seconded. Lauren abstained due to not attending the last meeting. Motion carried.

**6. Public comment not related to items on agenda**

No public comments were made.

**7. Seating of any new reps or alternate(s)**

No new representatives or alternates were seated.

**8. Report on budget adjustments, if any**

There were no requests for budget adjustments.

**9. Review of application filed in response to round 5 “Call for Projects”**

Dean introduced the topic and later noted the inconsistency in the description of project type on some of the meeting materials. Lauren shared a project from FCNRD that is seeking funds for 30% preliminary design for a floodplain restoration in Enosburgh. She also shared that there are erosion concerns and an undersized bridge on location. This project would allow them to collect data and perform modelling to determine the best methods for restoring the floodplain.

Jim Pease asked if the project would involve tree planting. Lauren responded by stating that yes, the goal is to plant some trees before the project reaches final design, and then plant more trees after implementation.

Kent expressed support for the project and discussed similar projects that he’s had experience with at FNLC. He also asked about the site being on or near agricultural land. Lauren shared that the site is on farmland and that the owners have expressed a willingness to take some land out of production.

Kent motioned to approve the project for funding and Dan seconded. Lauren and Sarah Downes recused themselves. Motioned carried.

**10. Discussion of proposed increase in Project Development funding allocation**

Dean Pierce provided an update to an increase in funds for Project Development, sharing that the amount would go from 7% of total funds to 28% in the ‘year 3’ contract. These funds do not have a phosphorus-reduction target associated with them and are meant to help support organization’s capacities to complete more projects.

Lindsey proposed a question to the Council, asking what barriers exist that prevent organizations from doing more in Project Development. Lauren shared that the process for bringing projects forward can be daunting, adding that there is some confusion and frustration about which projects are fundable. There are also a limited number of people who are doing this type of work, and her organization, FCNRCD, has other priorities to focus on as well. She also shared that some other funding opportunities are much easier to navigate, so they utilize funds from those programs. Lindsey agreed that other grant programs are often easier to navigate.

A discussion about the cost effectiveness of stormwater projects followed. Karen Bates suggested that Project Development funds might be used to think outside of the box to find alternative solutions for stormwater projects that have a lower cost.

A discussion was had about O&M agreements being a barrier to completing projects. Several Council members shared that it is difficult to get landowners to sign the O&M agreement. Beth Torpey shared that the O&M agreement became an issue in the Memphremagog Basin, causing a project to be lost. Chris Rottler shared that he is aware of concerns about the O&M agreement and has shared them with the O&M team at DEC.

Kent shared that it takes a lot of time and effort to identify projects, and that he has not yet found a way to be adequately compensated. He shared that FNLC relies on fundraising to make up for some of it, so he is glad that more funds are being allocated for Project Development.

Lauren asked if Project Development funds can be used to pay landowners, which might help entice them to support clean water projects. Chris responded that it is not part of the policy, but it is something that others have asked as well. Discussions followed concerning focusing efforts on projects on public lands, where it might be easier to get landowner permission, and using other funding sources, such as the Tactical Basin Planning grants, for educational outreach.

Another discussion was initiated about a potential Communications Plan and the Public Participation Policy that NRPC has been developing. Many Council members expressed that DEC should have a Communications Plan to help get the word out to the public about clean water funds. Dean shared that NRPC's Public Participation plan will not serve as a Communications Plan, but that a Communication Plan would be a good next step. Barry Lampke asked if a Public Participation Plan would need to be adopted before the BWQC could advertise the availability of clean water funds. Dean responded that it is not necessary.

A final discussion touched on the desire to simplify the CWSP program. Karen suggested that the BWQC set aside time to discuss specific ways that the CWSP process can be improved. Chris shared that a lot of requirements for working with DEC have been removed to make the CWSP program simpler but agreed that there is room for improvement.

#### **11. Solicitation / Appointment of BWQC Member and Alternates**

Dean shared the process for reappointing BWQC representatives and alternates, stating that members need to be reappointed every 2 years pursuant to a DEC guidance document written after the creation of the BWQC. Returning and prospective new members will need to be identified by the middle or end of June so that they can be mentioned in a report to DEC.

#### **12. Future meetings, including annual meeting and hybrid meetings**

Dean shared that the election of the Chair and Vice Chair will occur at the next meeting in August. He stated that the election would need to go through a nomination process unless the Council decides today that they do not want to create a nomination committee. Sarah made a motion to forego creating a nomination committee and Dan seconded. Kent and Lindsey abstained. Motion carried.

Dean also shared a details on legislation known as S.55, which will go into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup> and places new requirements on the open meeting law. Under the new law, public meetings will have to provide a hybrid option so that participants can join in person. There is an exception,

however, for advisory bodies, which will still be allowed to meet remotely. The question is whether BWQCs qualify as advisory bodies. If the BWQC is required to make meetings hybrid, the NRPC office will be the designated location.

### **13. Updates and conclusion**

Dean shared that he is looking for suggestions for topics to discuss at the Annual meeting, which will be the next meeting in August. He also shared a possible presentation from Chris Smith, and the possibility to share a new Public Participation Plan being developed by NRPC.

The next round of funding opens on August 14<sup>th</sup> with a deadline of September 17<sup>th</sup>.

Sarah motioned to adjourn the meeting and Ted seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 1:00.