

Lamoille Basin Water Quality Council (BWQC)
Wednesday, April 3, 2024
9:00 -11:00 AM
Virtual Meeting/Held Via Zoom* (computer/smartphone/tablet etc.)

Meeting video posted at <https://youtu.be/12nKxAkwZjM>

**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: Richard Goff (Q), Kent Henderson (Q), Brad Holden (Q), Peter Danforth (Q), Erin De Vries (Q), Jed Feffer (Q), Brent Sheets (Q), Katherine Sonnicks (Q Alternate counting), Adelaide Dumm (Q Alternate counting), Mel Auffredou (Q Alternate non counting as first counting alternate present),
Q= towards quorum unless otherwise indicated

Staff: Dean Pierce

Others present: Karen Bates, Meghan Rodier, Dana Hazen, James King, Ted Sedell, Zach Shaw, Alberto Della Torre

1. Welcome and Introductions

Peter Danforth opened the meeting as Chair at 9:02 a.m. Attendees introduced themselves.

2. Meeting protocols

Meeting protocols were reviewed.

3. Conflict of interest declarations, if any

Peter Danforth announced his intention to recuse himself. Richard Goff also later indicated his intention to recuse himself.

4. Review/adjust and approve agenda

Peter Danforth asked if there were any additions the members would like to propose and if none if there's a motion to approve the agenda as is. Erin de Vries moved to approve the agenda, which Kent Henderson seconded. The motion was approved.

5. Approval of Minutes

Peter Danforth moved on to the approval of the minutes. Kent Henderson moved to approve the minutes, while Brent Sheets seconded. The 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)

Dean Pierce described the council's protocol for admitting alternates, noting that while the council votes to admit alternates, no vote is required to confirm representatives like Brent Sheets, who previously introduced himself.

Brent Sheets shared a few words about his background and expressed eagerness to contribute to the council. With over 26 years of experience in water and wastewater infrastructure from Texas, Brent notes the adjustment to Vermont's more aggressive approach to water and wastewater management and expressed his hope that his insights will be beneficial to the council.

Peter Danforth formally welcomed Brent and noted the council's appreciation for having him as a part of the team, especially valuing the perspective he brings as a new town administrator.

Richard Goff asked about the selection process for municipal representatives. Dean Pierce explained that appointments of municipal representatives are made by regional planning commissions serving the areas covered by the basin.

Responding to a question, Dean Pierce confirmed that Erin de Vries does not currently have an alternate, but one could be appointed.

Adelaide Dumm asked about the protocol for alternates attending meetings. Dean Pierce noted all alternates are encouraged to attend meetings if possible. He mentioned the policy of compensating alternates for their attendance, similar to representatives, to ensure engagement and informed participation.

Dean Pierce also described the preferred procedure for informing the council when a representative can't attend, allowing alternates to be better prepared.

8. Report on budget adjustments

Dean Pierce outlined the council's policy for handling budget changes, emphasizing that: small adjustments can be approved administratively; changes up to 20% require approval from staff in coordination with the Chair and Vice Chair; and that larger adjustments must be presented to the Council for approval.

The specific adjustment discussed involved a request by Peter Danforth, the Chair, which required seeking an additional council member's input due to the policy's stipulations. Kent Henderson was approached for this role. Dean Pierce also noted the policy's requirement to report any staff or Chair/Vice Chair adjustments at the next council meeting, ensuring transparency.

The request involved a relatively modest amount of \$500, exceeding the 10% allowance but not the threshold requiring full council action. The adjustment was necessary for invoicing related to a project.

Materials included in the meeting packet illustrate the adjustment's minor impact on cost-effectiveness and the overall budget.

Peter Danforth opened the floor for any questions regarding this or general budget changes, but there were none.

9. Review of applications

Temporary Chair

Peter Danforth noted his need to recuse himself from discussions on certain applications due to a conflict of interest. Dean Pierce suggested two options:

- A council member could volunteer to serve as a temporary Chair for the discussion of the particular item, with the group's consent.
- In the absence of a volunteer, Dean, in his staff role, would manage the proceedings.

With no volunteers from the council members and for the sake of procedural ease, Dean Pierce assumed the role of temporary Chair while Peter Danforth's applications were considered.

First Application

Peter Danforth provided an overview of the project, describing it as a strategic wood addition in Elmore, specifically for Rocky Woods LLC. He highlighted the project's innovative approach to phosphorus reduction and its benefits for geomorphology, wildlife habitat, and overall river ecosystem health. The project, having moved from design to implementation phase, seeks to verify and clarify data for a full design completion.

The ensuing discussion revealed further project details, including the source of wood for the addition, the estimated phosphorus reduction, the maintenance and monitoring plans, and the cost-effectiveness of the project.

There was a brief conversation about the estimates of phosphorus reduction, with Karen Bates from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) emphasizing that the calculations used are estimates and not officially approved figures. Dean Pierce noted for the importance of “holding harmless” in the future any decisions made based on current estimates.

Forestry Management Plan Compliance: The project's compliance with the Forest Management Plan, especially concerning tree cutting near streams, was discussed. Dana Hazen from Redstart, a consulting firm involved in the project, indicated that they have addressed these concerns with county foresters in the past.

Motion to Approve Funding: Kent Henderson made a motion to approve, seconded by Brent Sheets. The motion to approve the funding application passed unanimously among the council members present and voting. Peter Danforth recused himself from the vote, as previously mentioned.

Second application

Peter Danforth described the project as a tree planting across 3.5 acres in Hyde Park, emphasizing its significance due to the large buffer area of about 250 feet at its widest point. The project is also meant to serve as a memorial for an individual who was instrumental in facilitating similar projects in the past. The phosphorus reduction effectiveness for this project is cited as being notably cost-effective.

Peter noted the anticipated support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for about half of the planting efforts, highlighting the collaborative and community-driven nature of the project.

Members inquired about the types of trees to be planted and the specifics of the project's location and design. Peter noted various tree species planned for the project and explained the broad scope of land use contributing to the phosphorus reduction estimates.

Jed Feffer made a motion to approve the funding application, seconded by Brad Holden. Council members voted unanimously in favor of approving the project (again with Peter Danforth recusing).

Third application

The third and final application was presented by Alberto Della Torre from the Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC). The project aims to restore a floodplain in Johnson, Vermont, by

demolishing a building previously damaged by flooding and creating a more natural floodplain along the Gihon River. This restoration includes the removal of fill and riprap, lowering the gradient along the riverbank, and establishing a pollinator garden and educational pathway. This project is intended to enhance phosphorus reduction, increase floodplain storage, and offer educational opportunities about native plants and floodplain management.

Members of the council inquired about the benefits beyond phosphorus reduction, the types of plantings for stream stability, and the project's alignment with existing community features like the Johnson Arboretum. Additional discussions touched on the preliminary nature of the design and the importance of ensuring stream stability through appropriate plantings and slope adjustments.

A motion to approve funding for the preliminary design of the project was made by Erin de Vries and seconded by Brent Sheets. The vote was in favor, with one abstention from Richard Goff.

Dean Pierce provided additional insights into the cost-effectiveness and phosphorus reduction calculations. The project's cost per kilogram of phosphorus reduction is estimated at approximately \$11,000, considering both annual and one-time phosphorus benefits. This highlights the project's potential for environmental impact in terms of phosphorus reduction and flood mitigation.

10. Brainstorming session

The brainstorming session aimed to gather input from council members regarding the project development process, particularly in preparation for the Clean Water Summit. Dean Pierce initiated the session by presenting a digital whiteboard tool for collaborative input, although technical challenges limited its immediate use. Instead, the session transitioned to a more traditional discussion, with an emphasis on soliciting feedback via email. The primary objective will be to collect feedback on what is working well, what could be improved, and suggestions for future project development processes.

11. DEC clean water network summit

There was a brief discussion of the Basin Summit, scheduled to take place on Friday. There was an acknowledgment of potential travel difficulties due to weather conditions.

12. Updates and Conclusion

Updates

Dean Pierce informed participants that the next round of applications for funding opens April 4. The deadline for the application process opening tomorrow was specified as May 9.

Conclusion and Adjournment

Peter Danforth suggested concluding the meeting earlier than planned, allowing members to focus on submitting their thoughts via email regarding the brainstorming session topic discussed earlier. Jed motioned to adjourn the meeting and Kent seconded. The meeting was adjourned following a unanimous "aye" from the members, with no objections.