



State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council
100 North Road (Route 513)
Chester, New Jersey 07930-2322
(908) 879-6737
(908) 879-4205 (fax)
www.nj.gov/njhighlands



PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
L. Governor

CARL J. RICHKO
Chairperson

BENJAMIN L. SPINELLI, ESQ.
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

To: Budget & Finance Committee
From: Benjamin L. Spinelli, Esq., Executive Director
Subject: Committee Meeting Minutes – January 10, 2023
Date: January 12, 2023

A Budget and Finance (B&F) Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, January 10, 2023 at 10:00am via Zoom.

Committee Chair Holtaway opened the meeting at 10:00am. The following participants were present:

Committee: Committee Chair Holtaway, Council Chair Richko, and Member Visioli.

Highlands Staff: Ben Spinelli, Gabrielle Gallagher, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Kelley Curran, Corey Piasecki, Allison Bittner, Casey Ezyske and Annette Tagliareni.

Highlands Council FY2023 Highlands Protection Fund Grant Requests

Committee Chair Holtaway announced that there are four (4) agenda items for today's meeting.

Township of Vernon, Sussex County: Lake Management Plan (\$149,000)

Kelley Curran, Science Manager, reported that Vernon Township is requesting \$149,000 to conduct an assessment of the watersheds of the Township lakes (total of 24 lakes) in two phases. This request is for Phase 1 only (13 lakes). The Township will come back to the Council for Phase 2 of this project. The objectives are:

1. Identify, quantify, and prioritize the watershed-based factors which may cause eutrophication.
2. Identify the watershed management measures needed to address general causes of water quality impairments.
3. Identify the relative cost of the recommended general watershed management measures.
4. Identify and quantify the lake-based factors which may cause eutrophication.

5. Generate a general schedule, based on priority, for the implementation of the recommended watershed management measures.

The Township is seeking funding for Phase I only. Phase I includes the analysis of 13 Township lakes' watersheds and tasks include a historical data review, hydrologic and pollutant loading analysis, analysis of pollutant removal achievable through the implementation of specific watershed-based management techniques, and a water quality assessment (watershed-based and lake-based). The Township anticipates that this work will take place in 2023. Phase II will include a similar analysis of an additional 11 lakes' watersheds as well as a tropic state assessment and general assessment report. The Township anticipates Phase II work for 2024 and will request funding for this upon the conclusion of Phase I work.

Chair Richko asked if Newark's Canistear Reservoir is included in this assessment. Ms. Curran noted that Canistear was not on the list, however, some lakes above which flow into Canistear are included. Ms. Curran noted that the assessment is for lakes greater than 10 acres. Ms. Curran provided the list of lakes for Phases 1 and 2. Mr. Humphries noted that Canistear is mostly within Vernon Township. Ms. Curran would follow up with the Township regarding Canistear and their thought process with this assessment and report back to the committee.

Mr. Spinelli, Executive Director, asked if we have ever engaged with the City of Newark and their water reservoirs. Chair Richko responded that he thought it is a good idea.

Lastly, Ms. Curran noted that this grant is applicable to the Regional Master Plan (RMP), Goals, Policies & Objectives - Policy 1L4: To establish and implement management strategies to help protect lake water quality and ecosystem values from the impacts of present and future development for all lakes.

Local Zoning Review - Warehousing: Multiple Municipalities (\$50,000)

Corey Piasecki, Principal Planner, reported that the growth of warehousing throughout the state is regularly grabbing headlines and even more so in the Highlands region. As warehousing is traditionally confined to arterial roadways, interstate highways, and industrial centers, warehouse proposals now seem to be expanding into farmland and small communities that may, or may not, have infrastructure capacity to support this type of growth. Traffic safety and the introduction of truck traffic, loss of important resources, alteration of community character, increased stormwater runoff, and impact on agricultural resources are just some of the impacts that warehouse development may have on a community.

Mr. Piasecki noted that the Highlands Council sent a letter last November to Highlands municipalities offering a non-competitive grant opportunity in the Region. The "Local Zoning Local Control" grant will provide an initial grant of up to \$5,000 to review a municipality's current zoning to ensure that all potential as-of-right development permitted by the zoning ordinance is consistent with the community's vision. An assessment of current zoning will help identify any deficiencies or issues that could lead to inappropriate, unintended, or unwanted development, as well as identify areas that may be better suited for development and redevelopment within the community. As some inquiries have come in, approval of this grant program will provide the Executive Director with the authority to issue grants for 10 municipalities under this program. Should additional municipalities request funding, staff will return to the Council with a future request.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the Highlands Council FY2023 Highlands Protection Fund Grants to the Council for consideration. Member Visioli made a motion and Council Chair Richko seconded it. A roll call vote was taken, and all were in favor.

PROPOSED REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ) AND REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Mr. Humphries noted that no committee action is required for these items, at this time. The funding for the RFQ and RFP would come out of the RMP Budget.

Affordable Housing RFQ

The Affordable Housing Committee is currently preparing an RFQ for technical services related to affordable housing. The Committee met in December and will meet again on January 19, 2023 to review and release the RFQ, after reporting out to the Council. There is \$250,000 set aside in the Planning and Science RMP Budget for this project and additional funding is available for the next phases of affordable housing planning.

Mr. Spinelli emphasized that the current affordable housing units exceed the Highlands buildout analysis for the region.

Watershed Restoration and Protection Plans RFP

The Highlands Council will solicit proposals from a multi-disciplinary team (including non-profit watershed associations) with expertise in watershed restoration and protection. This project (similar to Lake Hopatcong and Greenwood Lake Commissions) will be to develop or update Watershed Restoration and Protection Plans for one or more subwatersheds within the Highlands Region to improve water quality in the associated watersheds. These Watershed Restoration and Protection Plans can be used to apply for funding from the NJDEP for Water Quality Restoration Grants under the federal 319(h) grants of the Federal Clean Water Act. The Highlands Council focus is on protecting high quality subwatersheds as well as improving subwatersheds that are impaired due to any number of factors.

There is \$350,000 set aside in the Planning and Science RMP Budget for this project. It is expected that this will cover the cost of plans for up to 3 watersheds. The RFP will be finalized and released after reporting out to Council.

Committee Chair Holtaway noted that these are excellent ideas and he is pleased with the process.

The meeting adjourned at 10:21am.