



## 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](http://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 – July 10, 2023  
**Date:** July 13, 2023

A Budget and Finance (B&F) Committee meeting was held on Monday, July 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 Members James and Visioli.

Highlands Staff: Ben Spinelli, Gabrielle Gallagher, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Ranji Persaud, Casey Eyzyske, Neda Hartman, Judy Thornton and Annette Tagliareni.

#### **General Operating FY2023 Budget Extension**

Committee Chair Holtaway announced that the first agenda item is the extension of the FY2023 General Operating and Protection Fund Budgets. Committee Chair Holtaway noted that this is a resolution that the Council considers every year which extends the existing budget at the same average monthly spending level until the next budget is formally approved by Council.

*Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the FY2023 Budget Extension to the full Council for consideration. Member James made a motion and Member Visioli seconded it. All were in favor.*

#### **Highlands Council FY2024 Highlands Protection Fund Grant Requests**

James Humphries, Director of Planning, Science & GIS first reported that on June 30, the Governor signed the Fiscal Year 2024 budget appropriating the same amount as last year (\$2,282,352) to the Highlands Protection Fund budget for the award of grants.

#### **West Milford Township, Passaic County: Stormwater Management (\$82,250)**

Mr. Humphries then reported that West Milford is requesting funding to comply with the enhanced regulations of the NJDEP Tier A Municipal Stormwater General Permit. Highlands Council grant funding will be used to supplement NJDEP grant funding for which the Township has already applied. Tasks associated with this funding request include:

- Stormwater facilities mapping/inspections
- Preparation of Stormwater Quality Units Inspection and Reporting
- Permit Compliance Tracking
- Preparation of Township Best Management Practices Manual
- Inlet/Catch Basin Labeling
- Development of a Watershed Improvement Plan (Phase I)
- Annual Report Submission

Committee Chair Holtaway asked how many municipalities are lined up for this funding. Mr. Humphries responded that West Milford's request is what triggered Council staff to hire (under Executive Director's authority) a consultant to provide a template for municipalities to use. The regulations will be phased over a five (5) year period. See more information about the consultant further below.

*Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the West Milford Township's grant to the full Council for consideration. Member Visioli made a motion and Council Chair Richko seconded it. All were in favor.*

#### **Mendham Township, Morris County: Initial Assessment Grant (\$15,000)**

Mr. Humphries reported that Council staff met with Mendham Township leadership to talk about Plan Conformance and they are interested in pursuing the first step in the process to conduct a self-assessment.

*Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the Mendham Township grant to the full Council for consideration. Member James made a motion and Council Chair Richko seconded it. All were in favor.*

#### **Byram Township, Sussex County: Park Improvement Plan (\$15,540 – transfer)**

Judy Thornton, Principal Planner, reported that the Township seeks a supplement to funding previously approved by the Highlands Council in December 2022 for planning and design work for improvements proposed to C.O. Johnson Park. The initial request was an estimate of \$122,250, which was refined with further detail as needed for the final scope of work (SOW). The requested supplement is for \$15,540 which will be transferred from funds remaining from other line items. Sufficient funding to cover the cost is currently available in Byram's Plan Conformance grant account. With the committee's okay, Council staff will transfer the funds to cover this request. Mr. Humphries noted that the full Council does not need to vote on this request. The committee agreed with the request.

### **RMP IMPLEMENTATION FUND**

#### **Watershed Restoration & Protection Plans Contract Award**

Casey Ezyse, Water Resource Management Specialist, reported that in January 2023 the Highlands Council released a Request for Proposal (RFP) to Develop or Update Watershed Restoration and Protection Plans (WRPP) within the Highlands Region. The ultimate objective of this project is to protect high quality subwatersheds as well as improving subwatersheds that are impaired by following the nine key elements identified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that are critical for achieving improvements in water quality. Once completed, the Plans can be used to apply for funding from the NJDEP for Water Quality Restoration Grants under the federal 319(h) pass-through grants of the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA).

Four (4) proposals were submitted and Council staff interviewed three (3) of the teams. Below is a breakdown of the teams, the watershed/s they support and the not to exceed budget amounts:

<b>Teams</b>	<b>Watershed/s</b>	<b>Not To Exceed Amount</b>
Engineering and Land Planning along with Stroud Water Research Center Watersheds.	Pohatcong Township which includes portions of Lopatcong Creek, Pohatcong Creek, and Musconetcong River	\$41,000
Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program along with Raritan Headwaters Association and NJ Water Supply Authority.	North Branch Raritan River, South Branch Raritan River, and Lamington River. The proposal includes 24 HUC 14 subwatersheds across 21 municipalities	\$371,562
Princeton Hydro	8 Lakes in Jefferson Township, 4 Lakes in Roxbury Township, and Mountain Lake Community in Liberty Township	\$334,915

It was noted that the Council received a budget transfer of \$750,000 at the end of FY2023 from unexpended Plan Conformance grant funding to the RMP Implementation fund specifically for these projects totaling \$747,477. The approval of these 3 contracts will result in a balance of approximately \$1.1M to be allocated to future programs. These awards will be reimbursement based, payable after contractors submit progress reports and invoices. It was also noted that one proposal (submitted by Musconetcong Watershed Association) was not interviewed because it was beyond the scope of the RFP with an estimated \$1.3M budget.

As requested by the committee, Council staff will provide a presentation to include a map of the watershed breakdown in the Highlands region. Staff is hoping to cover the entire region and another RFP may be issued next year to cover the watershed/s not included with this award.

*Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the contract awards to Develop or Update Watershed Restoration and Protection Plans within the Highlands Region to the full Council for consideration. Member Visioli made a motion and Council Chair Richko seconded it. All were in favor.*

### **Stormwater Compliance Solutions (no action required by Council)**

As a continuation to Mr. Humphries statement above, Council staff hired Stormwater Compliance Solutions, LLC (under the Executive Director's authority) for a not to exceed amount of \$25,000 to provide technical assistance related to the new NJDEP stormwater regulations, specifically:

1. Prepare a template scope of work for Tier B municipalities being moved to Tier A designation (a third of Highlands municipalities).
2. Prepare a scope of work to meet Tier A municipalities' needs.
3. Develop a comprehensive table and timeline with submission due dates and partial completion deadlines per permit to serve as a guide for municipalities to plan for future Highlands grant opportunities over the life of the permit.
4. Draft Stormwater Education: The MS4 permit puts strong emphasis on education of public, local decision makers and municipal employees. The NJDEP's public education materials were drafted approximately 20 years ago and need to be updated. Highlands Council staff will develop educational materials to facilitate permit compliance by municipalities. Highlands staff will have consulting sessions to discuss existing materials, review the educational requirements under the permit, and create a "to do" list.

Lastly, Mr. Spinelli noted that the Council did not receive an additional \$300K for its FY2024 General Operating Budget to hire additional staff.

Committee Chair Holtaway noted that he is unable to attend the July 20<sup>th</sup> Council meeting and asked Member Visioli to report out on the Committee's activities. Member Visioli was happy to report out.

*The meeting adjourned at 10:28am.*