



State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council
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Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

To: Budget & Finance Committee
From: Benjamin L. Spinelli, Esq., Executive Director
Subject: Committee Meeting Minutes – May 10, 2023
Date: May 15, 2023

A Budget and Finance (B&F) Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, May 10, 2023, at 1:30pm via Zoom.

Committee Chair Holtaway opened the meeting at 1:30pm. 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, Kelley Curran, Corey Piasecki, Sarah Friend, Carole Ann Diction and Annette Tagliareni.

Highlands Council FY2023 Highlands Protection Fund Grant Requests

Committee Chair Holtaway announced that the committee will review/discuss five (5) grants for today's meeting.

Town of Clinton, Hunterdon County: Traffic Analysis Grant (Phase 1) (\$75,000)

Corey Piasecki, Principal Planner, reported that the Town of Clinton is requesting grant funding to perform a traffic study that will help assess the nature and capacity of their roads. The purpose of the Phase One Traffic Study will be to complete an initial assessment of the current conditions. This may then be used in the subsequent development of a means & methods plan to address the situation.

Member Visioli asked if warehousing is a big issue in the town. Mr. Piasecki responded that given the town is near Routes 78 and 31 there is an increase in traffic diverted to Route 173.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the Town of Clinton grant to the full Council for consideration. Member James made a motion and Member Visioli seconded it. All were in favor.

Town of Belvidere, Warren County: Initial Assessment Grant (\$15,000)

Mr. Piasecki met with the Town of Belvidere, a 100% Planning Area municipality, after the last Budget & Finance Committee meeting. The town is interested in plan conformance. The first step in the process is for the municipality to conduct a self-assessment.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the Town of Belvidere grant to the full Council for consideration. Council Chair Richko made a motion and Member Visioli seconded it. All were in favor.

West Milford Township, Passaic County: Wallisch Homestead Preservation Plan (\$30,500)

Judy Thornton, Principal Planner, reported that the Township seeks to prepare a Preservation Plan for the Wallisch Homestead Historic Site (99 acres). The property is currently owned by the Township of West Milford and intended to be used by the public for educational purposes and the preservation of the community, as well as the surrounding property. The goal of the Preservation Plan is to identify and prioritize recommendations for restoration and/or stabilization projects associated with the Wallisch Homestead. Development of the Preservation Plan will be done in accordance with the standards of the New Jersey Historic Trust and NJ DEP Historic Preservation Office.

Member James recused himself from voting on this grant.

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

Jefferson Township, Morris County: Water Quality Assessment Grant (\$43,500)

Sarah Friend, Environmental Scientist, reported that the Township of Jefferson has prepared a Scope of Work with the support of Princeton Hydro, LLC, to complete a second year of study to define trout habitat and population dynamics at Lake Hopatcong. The present study focuses on water quality measures during peak summer conditions. The data generated may also inform other important lake management decisions such as watershed improvements, HAB management, and aeration needs.

Member James commented that this grant is essential and a huge economic factor for the entire area.

Council Chair Richko added that this is a great study and is an example of how climate change has impacted fish in the lake.

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

Committee Chair Holtaway commented that the Council has made a number of grant awards related to the health of Lake Hopatcong and suggested that staff prepare a map to show all the various projects the Council has approved.

Ms. Curran added that she regularly receives status updates for these projects.

Council Chair Richko supported the suggestion to create a map and also suggested the Council should do more to publicize the significant amount of work the Council has funded for the largest lake in New Jersey and its surrounding communities. Carole Diction, Communication Manager, agreed.

Stormwater Management Planning Grants (Discussion)

James Humphries, Director of Planning, Science & GIS reported that due to the recent changes in the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit requirements, there is a need to provide additional grant funding to assist municipalities with compliance beyond funding that is being provided by NJDEP. The need exists in all Highlands municipalities regardless of RMP conformance status. To effectively implement this important component of water resources protection, Staff is looking for guidance from the Committee on the feasibility of providing funding to both conforming and non-conforming municipalities. Mr. Humphries noted that the Highlands staff will come back to the Committee when these grants are requested.

At this time Ben Spinelli, Executive Director provided some reasons why we should provide these grants to non-conforming municipalities.

- 1) Stormwater Management is a critical component of water resource protection, which is the mission of the Council.
- 2) Smaller municipalities with fewer resources will get hit the hardest.
- 3) Providing this support may be a catalyst for municipalities to work with the Highlands more closely.

Mr. Spinelli added that one third of the towns moved from Tier B to Tier A are in the Highlands.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked if the NJDEP timelines for meeting the new MS4 permit requirements are reasonable. Mr. Spinelli responded that the timelines may be extended.

Ms. Curran added that we have one scope of work in so far and it can be a basis for a template. This request may appear on Council's July meeting agenda.

RMP IMPLEMENTATION FUND (No Action Required by Committee)

Affordable Housing Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Mr. Humphries updated the committee on the RFQ for assistance with Affordable Housing closed on March 17th. He noted that five (5) responses were received. Staff reviewed the responses and recommended that the Affordable Housing Committee interview 3 of the respondents. Interviews were completed. The Affordable Housing Committee is scheduled to meet on May 15th to make a final recommendation to the Council for the May 18th meeting. The contract will be set at a not-to-exceed amount of \$100,000.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00pm.