



## State of New Jersey

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LISA J. PLEVIN  
*Executive Director*

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Budget & Finance Committee  
**From:** Lisa J. Plevin, Executive Director *LJP*  
**Subject:** Committee Meeting Minutes – March 12, 2020  
**Date:** March 30, 2020

A Budget and Finance (B&F) Committee meeting/call was held on Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 9:30am. Committee Members present were: Council Chair Richko, Committee Chair Holtaway, Member Visioli. Present via teleconference were: Member James and Stephanie Brown of GAU.

Staff Members present were: Lisa J. Plevin, Christine LaRocca, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Keri Green, Judy Thornton, Annette Tagliareni, and Karen Castanhas.

*Committee Chair Holtaway opened the meeting at 9:31 a.m.*

Ms. Plevin noted that two of the requests for Plan Conformance grants were from lake communities affected by the harmful algal blooms (HABs) and who are seeking assistance in addressing this situation.

#### **Wastewater Feasibility Study Grant – Jefferson Township, Morris County (\$100,000):**

Judy Thornton, Principal Planner gave an overview of a Wastewater Feasibility Study Grant requested by Jefferson Township. Ms. Thornton noted that the Township has significant property frontage along the north and northeast portions of Lake Hopatcong, much of which is occupied by single family homes on small lots served by aging septic systems. This area of Lake Hopatcong, as well as others in the drainage area of the lake, have been identified in studies conducted by Princeton Hydro as major contributors of phosphorous loading to Lake Hopatcong. Because high levels of nutrients such as phosphorous are known to encourage HABs, the area has become an important focus of attention in addressing the issue.

Ms. Thornton noted that the full extent of the study area includes properties within both the Planning and Preservation Areas. Phase I of the study would begin with the Preservation Area properties, analyzing existing developed areas for viability from a technical and logistical standpoint, for anticipated costs, and most importantly, for potential compliance with NJDEP rules and

regulations. Gaining NJDEP approval to extend public sanitary sewers into the Preservation Area would require that the project meet the criteria for public health/safety waivers. The study would provide for this evaluation. Phase I areas would include the Lake Shawnee neighborhood, the Mase Road neighborhood, and a commercial district on Route 15.

Ms. Thornton added that successful Phase I results would lead into a second phase to examine the Planning Area properties in the Lake Hopatcong drainage area for their potential inclusion in a larger sewer system.

Member James asked if all the homes in the area are served by septic systems. Mr. Humphries and Ms. Green each explained that yes, the areas in question are 100% served by septic systems; adding that Jefferson Township has no public sewer system, while most of the Hopatcong Borough portion of the Lake Hopatcong drainage area does have public sewerage.

Member Visioli asked if we could quantify the number of septic systems in the area. Ms. Thornton indicated that the entirety of the area (Preservation and Planning Area properties) includes approximately 3500 units.

Ms. Plevin added that Highlands staff has had its eyes on this area for a while as it was identified as a major contributor of phosphorous to Lake Hopatcong.

Ms. Green added that a Phase I would consider existing conditions/circumstances, pertinent regulatory requirements, need and potential for issuance of a NJDEP Highlands Preservation Area Application waivers, and estimated costs of implementation.

### **Watershed Management Program Grant – Phase I (2020), West Milford, Passaic County (\$200,000):**

Chair Richko is a resident of West Milford and asked Chief Counsel, Christine LaRocca to advise whether this presented any need to recuse himself from discussion or voting. Ms. LaRocca responded that being a resident does not require recusal.

Keri Green, Science Manager gave an overview of a Watershed Management Program Grant requested by West Milford Township. Ms. Green noted that Highlands staff has been working with the West Milford Lakes Committee for 1 ½ years, discussing how to conduct watershed-based assessments on many small and medium-sized lakes (private and public). A similar regional approach to lake management has recently been implemented in Ringwood Borough. This scope of work proposes to conduct a watershed assessment of the watersheds surrounding 22 lakes (private and public) in order to:

- identify, quantify and prioritize watershed-based factors that may cause eutrophication;
- identify the watershed management measures needed to address general causes of water quality impairments;
- identify the relative costs of the recommended general watershed management measures; and;
- generate a schedule based on priority for the implementation of the recommended watershed management measures.

Member James asked for a list of lakes. Highland staff will provide.

Ms. Green added that Phase I of the scope of work will include work to be completed in 2020, which covers:

- historic data review,
- hydrologic/pollutant loads,
- pollutant removal analysis, and
- stream/watershed water quality sampling.

Ms. Green noted that Phase II of the scope of work is not part of this request.

### **Trails Planning Grant, Parsippany-Troy Hills, Morris County (\$52,049):**

Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Planning Manager, gave an overview of a Trails Planning Grant requested by the Township of Parsippany-Troy Hills. Ms. Haddock-Weiler noted that for many years the residents of Parsippany-Troy Hills and Town of Boonton have enjoyed views of the Jersey City Reservoir (aka Boonton Reservoir), but have not been able to access it for recreational purposes. In 2018, the Jersey City Council passed an ordinance authorizing a 40-year lease agreement with the Morris County Park Commission to develop and manage a passive recreational trail around the Reservoir which would include an education component, water quality managements, and environmental monitoring. The Park Commission subsequently developed a Property Management Plan that addresses:

- security
- environmental management, and
- design of proposed publicly accessible trial system.

In coordination with the Open Space Institute (OSI), Parsippany-Troy Hills has agreed to facilitate the planning, design, and engineering required to complete the trail system. The Township has requested Highlands grant funding to support Survey and Geotechnical work necessary to move the project forward, specifically for:

- land surveying,
- project management, and
- Historical and Archaeological Surveys.

Ms. Haddock-Weiler added that non-Highlands funding has been secured for the first phase (Part A. Geotechnical) and that work has commenced. The Township is requesting funding to support the second phase (Part B. Survey and Geotechnical) which is expected to take place between April and June 2020.

Ms. Haddock-Weiler noted that Parsippany-Troy Hills is currently in the Plan Conformance Petition process. Highlands staff has received drafts of Petition materials and is currently reviewing to prepare a Draft Consistency Review and Recommendations Report for Council's consideration. The grant funding is being advanced prior to the completion of the Petition because of important scheduling needs as noted.

Responding to an inquiry from Ms. Plevin, Chief Counsel LaRocca confirmed that despite being a resident of Parsippany-Troy Hills, Ms. Plevin need not recuse herself from discussion. Ms. Plevin noted that the Highlands Council had made Plan Conformance funds available to a number of other jurisdictions prior to approval of Petitions for Plan Conformance. She indicated that there is thus precedent for funding project/s that support the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) regardless of conformance, including, for example:

- Warren County – Light Industrial Site Capacity Assessment
- Hunterdon County – Tourism Research Initiative
- Borough of High Bridge – Redevelopment Analysis of a brownfield site

Member Visioli asked the timeframe for Council review of the Township's Petition. Ms. Haddock-Weiler responded that with a 30-day public comment period, staff anticipates the Council may review the Petition at its June meeting.

Member James indicated that he supports this plan and is particularly pleased to know that the project will address reservoir security.

#### **Beach Restoration Grant, Mount Arlington Municipal Beach/Park, Morris County (\$60,000):**

Keri Green, Science Manager, gave an overview of a Beach Restoration Grant requested by Mount Arlington Borough. Ms. Green stated that the Lake Hopatcong Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) addressed causes and effects of HABs in four municipalities around Lake Hopatcong. It identified a number of projects important for improving water quality, including development of a beach restoration plan for the Mount Arlington Municipal Beach. This proposal would address that recommendation, providing a focused analysis to identify local needs and specific implementation strategies. The Scope of Work includes nine elements, which follow the US EPA mandated structure for watershed restoration plans, a recognized standard used by EPA and State regulators. The nine elements are used to develop a clear, concise and implementable plan. The plan includes 9 tasks, in line with the elements:

1. Identification of Causes and Sources of Pollution
2. Estimate of Load
3. Description of Management Measures
4. Technical and Financial Assistance
5. Information and Education
6. Implementation Schedule
7. Interim Measurable
8. Monitoring

Chair Richko asked what the final goal of the restoration project is. Ms. Green responded that the goal is to restore the beach, park and associated stream areas. The resulting plan would recommend specific improvements for the site to address erosion and other water quality degradation issues, such as installing rain gardens or removal of aquatic weeds. The plan would outline multiple strategies and options, including short-term immediate components and future, potentially longer-term improvements, as well as identifying funding sources for the completion of each.

Member James asked who owns the beach area. Ms. Green stated that this is a municipal beach.

Mr. Humphries added that the restoration plan would build on the existing work of the Highlands Council by directly addressing recommendations of the Lake Hopatcong Watershed Implementation Plan. This Plan was also funded by the Highlands Council and we have a significant interest in seeing its recommendations implemented.

Member Holtaway asked if the DEP is involved with this plan. Ms. Green stated this project may need DEP permits from Division of Land Use Regulation, and also be considered for applicable Planning Area exemptions.

Member Holtaway asked about the \$2.5 million in funding just announced by the DEP for addressing HAB's. Ms. Green stated that the DEP had awarded \$2.5 million in grants for specified projects. Ms. Plevin added that our funding does not overlap with the DEP funding, but supplements the Highlands Council's efforts. She indicated that we are in frequent coordination with the DEP to accomplish our mutual goals.

Member Holtaway asked about additional studies. Ms. Green stated the Lake Hopatcong Commission has identified additional studies and tasks, but Highlands Council grants cannot be used as matching funding for the DEP grant funding.

Ms. Plevin will share the press release regarding the DEP funding with members.

At this time, Committee Chair Holtaway asked for individual motions for the four grants being considered:

*Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to approve the Wastewater Feasibility Study Grant in the amount of \$100,000 for Jefferson Township. Committee Member Visioli made a motion and Committee Member James seconded it. All were in favor.*

*Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to approve the Regional Watershed Based Assessment Grant in the amount of \$200,000 for West Milford Township. Committee Member Visioli made a motion and Committee Member James seconded it. All were in favor.*

*Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to approve the Trails Planning Grant in the amount of \$52,049 for Parsippany-Troy Hills Township. Committee Member Visioli made a motion and Committee Member James seconded it. All were in favor.*

*Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to approve the Beach Restoration Grant in the amount of \$60,000 for Mount Arlington Borough. Committee Member Visioli made a motion and Committee Member James seconded it. All were in favor.*

*The committee meeting adjourned at 10:07 a.m.*