



State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council
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MEMORANDUM

To: Budget & Finance Committee
From: Lisa J. Plevin, Executive Director
Subject: Committee Meeting Minutes – December 18, 2020
Date: January 4, 2021

A Budget and Finance (B&F) Committee meeting was held via teleconference on Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. The following participants were in attendance:

Committee: Council Chair Richko, Committee Chair Holtaway, Members James and Visioli.

Highlands Staff: Lisa J. Plevin, Christine LaRocca, James Humphries, Gabrielle Gallagher, Keri Green, Kelley Curran, Ranji Persaud, Herb August, and Annette Tagliareni.

Committee Chair Holtaway opened the meeting at 11:00a.m.

FY2021 Highlands Protection Fund Capital Budget

Herb August, Grants Manager, reported that the Highlands Protection Fund Capital Budget (Plan Conformance Grants) is an estimate of potential expenditures between the date of July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 on tasks required by either the Regional Master Plan or the Department of Environmental Protection. While grant funds were frozen due to COVID-19, all appropriations were restored on October 1, 2020, after the signing of the FY2021 Appropriations Act. Highlands Council staff has budgeted for the use of almost all the appropriated funds with a balance of \$249,127.00 left to address unanticipated but required programs that may need to be funded prior to the end of the fiscal year.

At this time there was discussion regarding unencumbered funds over the years and if there is a formula used to close out these funds. Ms. Plevin reported that there is no formula and Council staff looks at unencumbered funds on a case-by-case basis. Mr. August added that some of the reasons why funds are stalled relate to:

- Turnover at municipal level
- New Mayors/Administrators

- Multi-phase projects
- Capacity issues
- Time lag with awards

FY2021 Highlands Protection Fund Grants

At this time Council staff gave overviews on four (4) grants to be considered by the Highlands Council at a future meeting.

Rockaway Township (Morris County) – Lake Management Planning (\$175,525)

Keri Green, Science Manager, gave an overview of Rockaway Township's request for a Lake Management Planning grant. Rockaway Township wishes to take an active role in the management of the surrounding watersheds of numerous small and medium sized lakes. This regional approach to lake management has recently been implemented in Ringwood Borough and West Milford Township. The scope of work proposes to conduct a watershed assessment of the watersheds surrounding eleven (11) public/private lakes all leading to Rockaway River.

At this time, there was some discussion regarding funding work on private lakes. The Committee concurred that this is the only way to conduct meaningful work on a watershed level.

Independence Township – Initial Assessment Grant (\$10,000)

James Humphries, Director of Planning & Science & GIS, gave an overview of Independence Township's request to complete an initial assessment of the impacts that Plan Conformance may have on the Township. Once complete the Township will evaluate possible next steps, including pursuing Plan Conformance.

Ms. Plevin commented that this can be the first step towards plan conformance.

White Township – Water Use and Conservation Management Plan (\$75,000)

Mr. Humphries gave an overview of White Township's Water Use and Conservation Management Plan (WUCMP) grant. As part of RMP Implementation, all towns are required to develop and adopt a WUCMP. Additionally, WUCMPs are required to be adopted if a project triggers the Highlands Council's review under Executive Order 114. The Highlands Council was notified by the NJDEP of an application for a site-specific amendment to the Upper Delaware Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) in reference to a development proposed in White Township. This proposed development would require White Township to adopt a WUCMP.

At this time, there was some discussion regarding the proposed project and water demand.

Randolph Township – Water Use and Conservation Management Plan (\$60,000)

Mr. Humphries gave an overview of Randolph Township, a fully-conforming Highlands municipality, and proposed grant funding to develop a WUCMP. Randolph Township currently has a grant budget allocation of \$10,000, but it is estimated that a total of \$60,000 in additional funding will be needed to complete the WUCMP as required by the township's plan conformance petition.

At this time, there was some discussion on doing these WUCMPs one at a time. Mr. Humphries commented that Council staff tries to regionalize these where we can.

In conclusion, Committee Chair Holtaway asked for motions on the FY2021 Highlands Protection Fund Capital Budget and the four grants.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the FY2021 Highlands Protection Fund Capital Budget to the Council for consideration. Member James made a motion and Member Visioli seconded it. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the FY2021 Highlands Protection Fund Capital Grants to the Council for consideration. Member James made a motion and Member Visioli seconded it. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor.

At 11:33am, all staff left the meeting, except Lisa Plevin, Christine LaRocca, Ranji Persaud, and Annette Tagliareni.

Highlands General Operating Budget – FY2021

Ranji Persaud, Manager of Human Resources, Fiscal and Office Services, gave an overview of the Highlands General Operating Budget for FY2021. Mr. Persaud noted that the Council's operating budget remains generally flat except for a small increase in salary expenses, IT hardware and software, and other equipment and services that may be needed for COVID-19 related expenses.

There was some discussion regarding Highlands Council staff salaries impacted by the current collective bargaining agreement but these matters are still under negotiation and could not be ascertained at this time.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the FY2021 Highlands General Operating Budget to the Council for consideration. Member Visioli made a motion and Chair Richko seconded it. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor.

The committee meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.