

*Stormwater Coalition of Albany County
Board of Directors*

**Friday, September 18, 2020
Skype for Business – Videoconference
8:35 am to 10:14 am**

MINUTES

Board of Directors Attending:

Lucas Rogers, Albany County (Liaison to County Executive's Office and Board alternate)
Dennis Feeney, Albany County
Neil O'Connor, City of Albany
Paul Penman, Town of Bethlehem
Garry Nathan, City of Cohoes (Note Taker)
John Dzialo, Town of Colonie (Chairperson)
Peter Barber, Town of Guilderland
Sean Ward, Village of Green Island
Paul Reuss, Village of Menands
Doug LaGrange, Town of New Scotland
Richard Straut, Village of Voorheesville

Also Present:

Nancy Heinzen, Coalition Stormwater Program Director

Absent:

David Dressel, City of Watervliet
Frank Fazio, University at Albany – SUNY

I. Approval of June 25, 2020 Minutes and Board minutes request

A motion to approve the June 25, 2020 Board Meeting minutes was made by Garry Nathan and seconded by Doug LaGrange. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Nancy Heinzen explained that these Board minutes had been requested by Susan Laurilliard from Save Colonie and that they would be sent to Susan and posted on the Coalition website. This had been communicated to Susan in an email correspondence.

II. Reports

A. Coalition Administration

1. 2020 Budget Report (Encumbrances/Liquidations)

Nancy Heinzen explained various budget lines in particular those salary lines which

remain vacant due to a County-wide hiring freeze. She mentioned the effect of these vacancies on other budget lines (health insurance buyout, travel expenses, and fringe). There are also encumbered funds which need to be liquidated, in particular \$19,710.03 in the Fees For Services line; \$443.26 in Equipment Repair and Rental; and \$5110.00 in Miscellaneous Contractual.

She went on to explain that the \$6331 remaining in the Miscellaneous Contractual line for 2020 when combined with the re-budgeted \$5110 and the \$7039 budgeted for 2021 will equal \$18,480, the amount of our new contract with VHB for GIS services.

2. 2020 Budget RLA? (SW Prog Tech – not hired? Reimburse MS4s?)

The part time Stormwater Program Tech salary line is funded by four MS4s who agreed to contribute additional dues to pay for additional Tech provided services. Specifically, the City of Cohoes contributed \$6,930; the Village of Menands \$4831; the Town of New Scotland \$2315; and the City of Watervliet \$9252 for a total of \$21,328. This person however, has yet to be hired and one of the municipalities asked if they would be reimbursed. In response, Nancy Heinzen agreed to bring it up at the September Board meeting.

Nancy Heinzen reminded the Board that at the June meeting because hiring activities were suspended and WAVE cancelled that she was interested in helping these municipalities address various permit requirements. There were no objections and since then she has tracked time spent working on tasks for each municipality making it possible to easily calculate the dollar value of services provided to date.

Nancy Heinzen asked the Board what they wanted to do and mentioned two options. To reimburse municipalities in 2020, the Board would need to move funds from the salary line to miscellaneous contractual, an action that requires the approval of the County legislature with the first legislative action deadline September 28. This would mean calculating a reimbursement rate based on hours worked up until September 28.

Assuming there may be additional time spent helping municipalities, an alternative would be to calculate a reimbursement amount at the end of the year. Then in April once we have our reserve balance calculated, funds could be transferred from the reserve to the miscellaneous contractual line and the four municipalities reimbursed accordingly.

While no formal resolution was adopted, the Board agreed to let the year play out and arrange for any reimbursements next year. Nancy Heinzen asked what hourly rate to use, that of the Stormwater Program Tech or her own salary. The response was her own salary.

During the course of the discussion, some municipalities raised concerns about devoting her time to the four municipalities at the expense of the other municipalities. Nancy explained that she was mindful of fairness and felt that other responsibilities hadn't been overlooked, but would keep an eye on that.

3. VHB SwIM/County Contract #5719 for 2020 (\$18,480.00, end date 12/31/2021)

Nancy Heinzen explained key elements of the VHB SwIM/County Contract #5719 for 2020, pointing out the contract amount; an end date of December 31, 2021; a Scope of Services which included technical and training support for ArcGIS Online Survey123 form updates; and continued SwIM Mapper support. While the contract has yet to be fully executed, it is very close.

4. 2021 Statement of Intent – Status

All of the current Coalition members have recommitted for 2021 at the same dues level as 2020, with the same four municipalities paying in additional dues for additional services.

5. 2021 Proposed Meeting Schedule

Nancy Heinzen reviewed the proposed meeting schedule for both Board and Working Group meetings. Paul Penman made a motion to adopt the meeting schedule, which was seconded by Peter Barber. The motion passed unanimously

B. NYSDEC - Stormwater MS4 Permit – Updates (if any)

Nancy Heinzen contacted Mary Barrie from NYSDEC Region 4 about the MS4 Permit. The draft MS4 permit might be released by the end of the year,

III. Coalition 2020 Work Plan

COMPLETED: Working Group Meetings – Covid/Skype; AR2020 –Save Colonie Public Comments/Responses; Coalition Website Refresh; Construction Activity Permit Training – SW Training Center – Saratoga; Watervliet Reservoir Watershed Protection Study - Stakeholder Group – Coalition Rep; City of Watervliet 9 Municipal Facility Audits; Village of Menands – Outfall inspections; Cohoes-tablet training. **FUTURE:** Continue to support V/Menands, C/Cohoes, T/New Scotland, C/Wvliet? Hiring?

Nancy Heinzen provided an overview of COMPLETED 2020 Coalition Work Plan items and described possible FUTURE items. Follow up questions were asked as needed and there was some discussion of the Coalition role in responding to Annual Report public comments directed to the Coalition which pertain to an individual municipality, in this case the Town of Colonie.

Nancy Heinzen agreed that it was confusing, but felt that Coalition led projects referenced in the comments some of which were grant funded or go back many years would benefit from the Coalition perspective. To that end she prepared information for the Town Stormwater Program Coordinator to review and consider.

IV. Discussion

A. 2020 Observations

1. Questionnaire - VzWireless TXR and ArcGIS Online Costs (The GIS Divide)
2. “SW Prog Tech” - NH Wvliet Fac Audits, Menands Outfalls, Cohoes Intern
3. Reflections–Website, ACWPD/ORI Kits, CGP/Local Laws, \$\$ Mgmt, WAVE, W-S (Weston and Sampson)
4. The Geospatial Investment – Consequences

Nancy Heinzen explained the decisions each Coalition member had made regarding Verizon Wireless data plans tied to iPad tablets. As agreed to by all Coalition members, these costs are to be transferred over to interested municipalities for 2021. Here’s how. Towards the end of December a transfer date will be arranged, as agreed to by Nancy Heinzen, Verizon Wireless, and the municipal representative responsible for managing data plan costs. Billing will then start for the municipality.

Transferring ArcGIS Online costs to municipalities is more complicated and will depend on a better understanding of ArcGIS Online (AGOL) technology. For example data and forms can be shared easily between others with Organization accounts and different types of permissions can be set up, each with different costs. The GIS services provided by VHB in Contract #5719 for 2020 will be useful when evaluating options.

When compiling member answers to questions regarding the AGOL Survey123 inspection forms, there emerged a clear divide between those member communities who have existing, full time GIS staff poised to help their municipal stormwater staff use mapping technology and those who don’t. Nancy Heinzen referred to this as the “GIS Divide” and mentioned it to help frame the challenges of continuing to use this technology for the benefit of all.

Nancy Heinzen went on to explain that as a consequence of using AGOL Survey 123 for inspections and preparing reports for the City of Watervliet and Village of Menands, she now has a better understanding of the technology. This experience will help guide future work with the VHB consultant.

She went on to reference an ESRI ArcUser Summer, 2020 publication titled, “Find the Best Way to Organize Your Geospatial Talent” which points out that getting the most out of your geospatial investment may depend on how people are organized within the organization. She thought that the content of the article was relevant to challenges now facing the Coalition and that if a GIS Coordinator were hired, the Coalition and County would need to think carefully about these administrative considerations.

Nancy Heinzen then provided a cursory snapshot of ongoing Coalition and member activities which for various reasons have forced a closer look at program strengths

and weaknesses.

In particular she pointed out that messaging about the Coalition on websites can be confusing for users; that her own experience using the ORI kits was frustrating and in practice there are only few items from the kit worth carrying around; that since the adoption of Construction Activity Permit Stormwater Management local laws (~2007, 2008) there has been noticeable and meaningful proficiency in how municipalities oversee Construction Activity Permit implementation; that our own public participation efforts may need to be revisited, potentially moving away from WAVE and doing something else; and finally that while Covid put the brakes on various Coalition initiatives, considerable effort went into the Weston and Sampson Stormwater Utility Study and she hoped that it would get some visibility.

B. Covid Uncertainty, Drop Dead Dates, Clarifications

1. The most absolute priority for the Coalition, what is it?
2. Hiring: Coalition SW Prog Tech - PT (To do what?) (County Committee To Fill)
3. Hiring: GIS Coordinator - FT (To do what, w/whom, why?) (County Committee To Fill)
4. Feedback: Public participation during Covid,- the virtual Clean Up idea.
5. Feedback: Communication Improvements – Website/Messaging - Social Media
6. Feedback: Training – In House, Visual, Informal - Social Media
7. Feedback: Transitions and Preparation

As a follow up to the 2020 Observations, Nancy Heinzen explained that while the County was in a hiring freeze, they had activated the County Committee To Fill making it possible to hire staff, provided it was approved by this Committee.

She asked the Board about going forward to hire the part time Coalition Stormwater Program Tech, which is exclusively funded by four municipalities and hiring the GIS Coordinator which is largely funded by County government. Both positions were funded in 2020 and are currently in the 2021 budget.

She mentioned that as an office staffed by one person, the Coalition was in an ideal position to cease operations, as there would be no effect on staff other than the Director. With this as an option, she asked the Board to consider the value of the Coalition and as indicated in the agenda, but not necessarily articulated during the meeting, to consider given staffing levels, what is the ‘most absolute priority’ for the Coalition.

A discussion followed related to staffing and the value of the Coalition with the Board agreeing to go forward with hiring paperwork for the part time Stormwater Program Tech position, but to hold off on the full time GIS Coordinator position. Given extreme uncertainty regarding the County budget, until there was clarity on funding that position, the Board didn’t want to initiate a process which would need to be stopped midway.

Nancy Heinzen then asked for clarification regarding the GIS Coordinator position, explaining that some minimal preparation could start now and asked if it was ok to proceed. The administrative questions referenced previously, for example will require some thought and starting that process could be beneficial. There appeared to be no objections.

In the remaining time, Nancy Heinzen described a virtual clean up idea she had read about which seemed plausible for the Coalition and explained that she would defer to the Working Group for feedback regarding the Coalition website messaging and in-house trainings.

Paul Penman made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Doug LaGrange. The motion passed unanimously.

NEXT BOARD MTG: Friday, January 15, 2021, 8:30am – 10:00am, location to be determined.

These minutes were approved at the November 13, 2020 Coalition Board of Director's meeting.