Item 5Bii.
BCWMC 6-18-15

# Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

# MEMO

**TO:** BCWMC Commissioners
**FROM:** Laura Jester, Administrator
**DATE:** June 10, 2015

**RE: Northwood Lake Improvement Project – Choosing Concept(s) to Implement**

Choosing which concept(s) to implement to help improve the water quality of Northwood Lake presents a difficult situation for the Commission. The City of New Hope strongly supports the implementation of concept A (a stormwater reuse system) and concept C (a pond at the west end of the lake). See the City's letter of support in **Attachment A**. Also in support of concepts A and C are residents in the area and in particular, Friends of Northwood Lake. See their letter of support in **Attachment B**.

There have been discussions about the intangible benefits to the City of New Hope with regards to implementing concepts A and C, which has an estimated design and construction cost of $1,352,000. The city has pledged $206,000 toward the project and the Commission was recently awarded a Clean Water Partnership Grant for $300,000 to implement concepts A and C. However, questions remain about how implementation of this project could set precedence for future CIP projects. For instance, if the Commission implements concepts A and C, the Commission could receive future requests from cities that include a preference for highly priced project with little or no water quality benefits. Conversely, the Commission could be setting precedent requiring cities to "cost-share" on projects, which is not a Commission policy and has not been their practice to date.

For guidance, the Commission should look to its (draft) 2015 BCWMC Watershed Management Plan which contains a goal, policy, and a table of "eligible project costs" that may help with the decision (**See Attachment C**). It is important to note that when developing the table of "eligible project costs," the Commission and the TAC deliberated about which costs should and should not be eligible for reimbursement. Although it was a good discussion, in the end the groups decided it was too difficult to place "one-size-fits-all" parameters on such differing projects. Instead, the costs eligible for reimbursement would be decided on a project by project basis with consideration of "the cost per pound of pollutant removal (relative to guidance yet to be established by the BCWMC for water quality projects), partnerships, grant opportunities, and other factors."

Another way to consider this project is to "pretend" this project were being proposed in a completely developed area where there was no open space available for a stormwater pond. An underground storage system might be the only way to improve water quality in such a scenario. The residents and city council of New Hope consider this parkland "unavailable," just as we would consider it unavailable if a school, church, community center, housing development, or other structure existed on the park site.

## Administrator's Recommendation:

Although they are not necessarily quantifiable, there is a long list of reasons for the Commission to implement concepts A and C to improve the water quality of Northwood Lake.

- ✓ Project addresses multiple goals of the BCWMC including water quality, habitat, flood control, aesthetics, recreation, and education
- ✓ Project is strongly supported by the city council and staff, city residents, and Friends of Northwood Lake
- ✓ Project uses an innovative practice rather than an older practice that is becoming less and less popular with the public
- ✓ Project preserves drinking water resources by reusing stormwater
- ✓ Project preserves precious parkland in New Hope (e.g., New Hope has 103 residents/park acre; St. Louis Park has 62 residents/park acre; Golden Valley has 20 residents/park acre)
- ✓ City of New Hope has already converted land in the southern section of Northwood Park to stormwater ponds to improve water quality
- ✓ Grant funding was obtained and future grants are possible
- ✓ City is contributing financially to project
- ✓ Project scores higher on Envision process than the alternative

If the Commission is concerned about setting precedence for future projects – perhaps this list could be used as part of a "check off" to determine Commission involvement.

Additional materials available for review:

**Attachment D:** Project budget table revised to show awarded grant

**Attachment E** (available online): Clean Water Partnership Grant Application

**Attachment F** (available online): Northwood Lake Improvement Project Feasibility Study