

MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL

Personnel and Finance Committee

1:00 – 3:00 pm, Tuesday, April 4, 2023

Present: Pete Aube – Chair, Patty Thielen, Kim Berns-Melhus, Rick Horton,

Absent: Jim Manolis, Mike Kilgore

Staff present: Eric Schenck, Sadie Mathison

Introductory Remarks and Roll Call—Pete Aube, Chair

Pete announced the location of the upcoming Council meeting and asked for additions or changes to the agenda. There were none.

MFRC Personnel Update—4/11 Interviews (Three Candidates)

Eric provided an update on the three finalists for the vacant Policy Analyst position. There will be in-person interviews on Tuesday, April 11.

Research Advisory Committee—New Members, Updated Mission

In Mike's absence, Pete reported that he feels it is now time to reconvene a reinvigorated RAC with some new members. Eric reported that he and David have been considering some potential candidates for new RAC members representing fields of expertise important to the current work of the Council.

FY23, FY24, FY25 Budget Review & Discussion—Eric Schenck

Manager's Financial Report 3/31/23 Overview

Eric provided an overview of the FY23 budget as it stands, he explained the situation with possible salary savings and gave a rough estimate of what is left to spend before end of FY23 (June 30, 2023).

HF2310/SF2438 Appropriations (FY24 \$906K/FY25 \$926K)

Did not discuss. No updates to report from legislative markup last week.

Budget Spreadsheet—Current Status, Projections, Proposed FY24/FY25

Eric explained his strategy for developing a budget for the upcoming fiscal year and the fiscal year beyond. He explained that the biggest unknown is the Policy Analyst position and where the new hire will fall on the salary scale. The operations budget is the area that would need to be adjusted

should adjustment be required. The group asked for a history of budget information for the Landscape program as it has not been funded or functioning in recent years due to staffing and the pandemic. Eric agreed to investigate further.

FY24-FY25 Landscape Budget Proposal (89A.06 Subd. 3.) The council must include in its budget request sufficient resources for each regional committee to carry out its mission as defined in this section.

Eric drew attention to the “change item” document and explained that it represents a proposal for a funding increase beginning FY25 and carrying through to FY27 and beyond. This envisions a funding amount for the Regional Landscape Program to provide grants or other agreements, primarily with SWCDs, to take over the administrative costs of hosting and administering Regional Landscape meetings and work. This would roughly total \$10k per committee. The purpose is the ramp up the Regional Landscape Program in terms of what they are expected and able to accomplish. Pete firmly stated that he would like Jim Manolis’s approval of this proposal. Rick talked about another option of utilizing [Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program \(CPL\)](#). The program requires 10% non-state match funds. This can be in kind and the labor rate is \$20/hr. Rick suggested that Jaimé dig into this and do a presentation for each regional committee.

Members of the P&F Committee approve the proposal with a recommendation that it be part of the next RAC Committee discussion, and possible other committees as well.

Communications Campaign Strategy & Funding—Climate, Carbon, Private Lands

Eric talked about communication strategy and revisited the communication strategy requirement of Resolution 2022-1 “Supporting Minnesota’s Climate Change Goals Through Development of Sustainable Forest Products Markets”. Pete provided background that this topic came out of a request from the DNR Commissioner’s office for help communicating the value of forests.

The question on the table is whether MFRC has a role. One member expressed concern that this could be huge and overwhelming. Another member did not see a direct charge in the SFRA stating that this type of thing is a directive of MFRC. A focus group was suggested. Another concern is that each member of the Council might want to express different messages.

A suggestion was made that if this committee thinks this is important, first convene a focus group, find an area where everyone agrees, talk about it, strategize, and *then* look for funds.

[New England Forestry Foundation \(NEFF\) Climate-Smart Commodity Project](#)

Eric reached out the Executive Director of NEFF. They are interested in talking to MFRC.

Eric asked if the group if they think MFRC would be ready to respond to a future RFP such as this that would include partners that are NGO and non-NGO organizations. The turnaround for proposals was very short.

Pete supports meeting with the NEFF group.

Spatial Information Group (SIG-NAL)—Wildfire Risk/Emissions Project Discussion

SIG-NAL is one the two groups that responded to the recent MFRC RFP. The grant did not go to this group; however, they are interested in doing an assessment in Minnesota that is connected to the analysis that UMN will be doing for the MFRC grant. They are looking for other funding to explore a companion project that has a wildfire component but using MFRC and the UMN team as a collaborative partner so that methodologies mesh to produce integrated results. This would also assist them in their fundraising efforts.

The Committee agreed to continue discussions and to inform the RAC.

Other/Adjourn

Rick shared that MFI has been communicating with Alabama Forestry Association about the workforce program they have created called Forestry Works. Workforce is becoming a huge issue and a barrier to getting work done in the forest. MFI is considering kicking off a major workforce initiative. Forestry Works operates like a franchise. The program has expanded into 5 states. MFI is investigating the potential to bring the program to Minnesota.

Meeting adjourned.