

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE
COMFORT LAKE–FOREST LAKE
WATERSHED DISTRICT
Thursday, August 20, 2020**

1. Call to Order

President Spence called the August 20, 2020 special board meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. via online video conference

Present: President Jon Spence, Vice President Jackie Anderson, Secretary Jen Oknich, Treasurer Steve Schmaltz.

Absent: Assistant Treasurer Jim Dibble.

Others: Mike Kinney, Jessica Lindemyer, Emily Heinz (CLFLWD staff); Meghan Funke, (Emmons & Olivier Resources); Chuck Holtman (Smith Partners).

2. Draft 2021 Budget

Watershed Technician Heinz explained that the budget was revised in accordance with the discussion held on July 30th. Manager Anderson requested that staff add a note to the budget explaining projects may be added as a result of the ongoing Comfort Lake Diagnostic Study.

Manager Schmaltz requested an update on the paleolimnological sediment cores. Dr. Funke explained Little Comfort Lake is the only major lake that neither has a sediment core taken nor has one planned. She explained the District's 2020 monitoring data suggest an alum treatment is appropriate, even without additional sediment core data. Dr. Funke indicated she would talk to the St Croix Research Watershed Research Station about its methodology. There was consensus to add \$60,000 to the budget for sediment cores on Little Comfort Lake and all three basins of Forest Lake.

Dr. Funke noted the Board has recently discussed groundwater as it relates to the 10-year plan update. One initiative may be to coordinate with neighboring watershed districts and watershed management organizations to define the groundwatershed. She noted the District could also use modeling to identify groundwater protection practices for Lake Keewahtin. This all depends on the Board's vision for involvement in groundwater work. Manager Anderson asked if Forest Lake is a groundwater dependent lake. Dr. Funke explained there is groundwater input into the 3rd (east) basin, but groundwater is not the dominant source of input for Forest Lake. Lake Keewahtin is a true groundwater dependent lake. The total 2021 expense budget was \$3.3 million.

Manager Schmaltz indicated the City of Forest Lake may increase its operating budget by 6% next year. He suggested the District increase the levy by 3-4%. Ms. Heinz explained the Clean Water Partnership loan is flexible in that the District can request another year for the

disbursement period or request more funds. She noted that the loan funds need to ultimately be paid back and she displayed the present repayment schedule.

Administrator Kinney clarified that the levy can only be decreased after it is certified, whereas the expense budget may be revised to increase or decrease later on. Manager Schmaltz noted the general increase in property values throughout the District. Mr. Kinney explained that market values may be increasing, but the COVID-19 pandemic may be causing financial distress for some households. He suggested it may not be a good time to increase the levy. Manager Schmaltz recommended the District increase the levy in accordance with the increase in market value so that tax impacts do not change significantly. President Spence suggested the District increase the levy by \$75,000 to account for the \$75,000 loan repayment which is due December 15, 2021. He explained this is a relatively small increase and should not change the tax impact significantly. There was l consensus to raise the levy to \$1.475 million.

3. Watershed Management Plan Update

The Board discussed goal prioritization for streams, wetlands, uplands, and groundwater.

Streams

Ms. Heinz introduced the topic of streams, explaining each lake management district (LMD) may have a different priority level depending on major streams and rivers present. Proposed stream goals include water quantity (reduce volume and peak flows), water quality (reduce sediment loads and chlorides), and buffers (preserve/promote native shoreline buffers). President Spence suggested ranking for streams should not be low if they are related to lake water quality, which is a high priority. Manager Schmaltz indicated lake diagnostic studies are not showing that in-stream water quality is a big source of pollutant loading to lakes. Manager Anderson indicated streams are much more important in Comfort Lake and Little Comfort Lake management districts. She noted the District will still use targeting strategies to determine precisely where stream projects are most needed. President Spence stated that if a goal has a lower priority ranking, that does not mean it is not still important. All issues being discussed are important, but the District cannot do everything. Dr. Funke explained the hydrologic and hydraulic (H&H) model updates throughout the District will be useful in setting more targeted goals. There was consensus to revise the section name to “Rivers/Streams” to improve topic clarityto readers.

Wetlands

Dr. Funke explained wetland coverage is based on available data which likely used a lot of aerial imagery. Looking at aerial photos over time shows increasing water levels, which make more wetlands appear on the map, thus increasing the number of wetlands being recorded. Dr. Funke indicated there are a lot of wetlands in the area, and the District could do more to reconnect ditched wetlands to their floodplain and restore high quality native vegetation. She noted one of the first proposed actions in the plan will be an inventory of wetland function. Dr. Funke suggested consolidating wetland goals with main implementation being through the inventory and protection efforts through the permitting program. She suggested wetland improvements beyond that might be actions that are more

directly supporting a floodplain (i.e. storage capacity), lake or stream goal. The H&H model would also inform where such projects would be needed. Manager Schmaltz agreed the District should do an initial analysis before proceeding with wetland projects. Manager Oknich suggested the District should make it clear in the plan that it does value wetlands. She indicated she was not comfortable framing wetlands as a different waterbody's purpose. Dr. Funke explained the plan will still contain a description of wetlands and their value.

Manager Anderson indicated there are different types of designations on the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Public Waters Inventory (PWI). The PWI indicates there are some waterbodies with the wetland designation that we also know are Natural Environment lakes. She suggested these waterbodies be managed differently than those without the "wetland" designation on the PWI. She suggested the District should also educate the public about this designation. Manager Oknich explained the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) regulates wetlands, and that Natural Environment lakes are typically shallow, have more aquatic vegetation, do not have much development, and are the lakes most susceptible to degradation. She indicated they are still lakes and should be listed both as lakes and wetlands, but they are more sensitive to pollution than Recreational Development or General Development lakes. Manager Oknich suggested including a glossary in the plan with pertinent definitions and to do what is necessary to ensure the more sensitive lakes are more protected as necessary.

Uplands

Ms. Heinz noted that state statute requires a watershed district's work on upland resources to be related to water resources. Dr. Funke explained the District needs to set measurable goals that convey what the District will do in the next 10 years. Manager Oknich suggested incorporating greenway corridors into upland areas and making it a priority to minimize impervious surface. Manager Anderson suggested the District look at what the cities are planning for zoning over the next 10-year period and incorporate green space based on zoning regulations. She stressed the importance of working with cities on this issue. Manager Anderson agreed that the District should prioritize areas for protection and reduced impervious surface.

Groundwater

Ms. Heinz described proposed goals surrounding groundwater quality (prevent nitrate contamination), groundwater quantity (maintain drinking water supply), and groundwater dependent natural resources (protect certain lakes and wetland systems from degradation). President Spence suggested the District focus on working with other local government units on groundwater issues and serve as a technical resource. He noted the District may also consider revising its rules to focus more on groundwater protection. Manager Anderson suggested the Plan include a statement about groundwater dependent lakes being high priority areas. Dr. Funke explained many groundwater implementation items will be relatively low-cost initiatives such as monitoring and interagency coordination.

Dr. Funke explained the next step in the process will be to take the Board's input from the prioritization exercises and develop the 10-year expense budget. There was discussion about

the timing of subsequent plan update steps. Ms. Heinz noted the original proposed deadline for publishing the plan for 60-day public review was November but may be pushed back to early 2021. After the 60-day review, the District will need to hold a public hearing and submit the plan to the Board of Water and Soil Resources for a final 90-day review. All steps must be completed prior to plan expiration on September 28, 2021.

4. Land Acquisition & Management

Manager Anderson moved to convene in closed session to discuss land acquisition negotiations for the property owned by Steinke, PIN 21.10640.20. Seconded by Manager Oknich. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent
Jon Spence	X		
Jackie Anderson	X		
Stephen Schmaltz	X		
Jen Oknich	X		
Jim Dibble			X

The Board reconvened in open session.

Manager Anderson moved to direct staff to obtain further information on the one property and report back to the Board for further direction. Seconded by Manager Schmaltz. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent
Jon Spence	X		
Jackie Anderson	X		
Stephen Schmaltz	X		
Jen Oknich	X		
Jim Dibble			X

Manager Schmaltz moved to direct the District Administrator to share the District's appraisal of the Steinke land with Mr. Steinke. Seconded by Manager Anderson. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent
Jon Spence	X		
Jackie Anderson	X		
Stephen Schmaltz	X		
Jen Oknich	X		
Jim Dibble			X

5. Adjourn

- a) Next regular board meeting – September 10, 2020

Manager Schmaltz moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Manager Anderson. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent
Jon Spence	X		
Jackie Anderson	X		
Stephen Schmaltz	X		
Jen Oknich	X		
Jim Dibble			X

Jen Oknich, Secretary _____