DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE
COMFORT LAKE–FOREST LAKE
WATERSHED DISTRICT
Tuesday, May 12, 2020

1. Call to Order

President Spence called the May 12, 2020 special board meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. via online teleconference.

Present: President Jon Spence, Vice President Jackie Anderson, Treasurer Steve Schmaltz, Assistant Treasurer Jim Dibble.

Absent: Secretary Jen Oknich

Others: Mike Kinney, Emily Heinz (CLFLWD staff); Meghan Funke, Rosie Russell, Camilla Correll (Emmons & Olivier Resources).

2. Watershed Management Plan Update

Dr. Funke summarized past studies including diagnostic studies, Six Lakes Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), and others. She presented several data layers using the Lower St. Croix (LSC) One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) interactive web map. Reaches of the Sunrise River and Bone-Birch-School-Little Comfort Tributary Stream are impaired for nutrients. Comfort Lake, Little Comfort Lake, Bone Lake, Shields Lake, Moody Lake, Second Lake and School Lake are impaired for nutrients. Forest Lake is impaired for mercury in fish tissue contaminants, which are dealt with at the state level. Dr. Funke presented the altered watercourses layer including multiple ditch laterals in the Comfort Lake Management District (LMD) and Bone LMD. Little Comfort LMD has two of the few natural channels identified on the map. Lake Keewahtin and Forest Lake were identified on the Lake Phosphorus Sensitivity Significance Priority layer as "higher priority" and "highest priority" respectively. Manager Schmaltz noted these lakes were not included in the LSC 1W1P implementation plan. Groundwater flow dominated lakes include Forest Lake and Lake Keewahtin (in the Forest LMD), and Second Lake and Third Lake (in the Bone LMD). There was also a layer for MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR) shoreland classifications. There is a variety of General Development, Recreational Development and Natural Environment lakes. Dr. Funke reviewed Public Water Inventory waterbodies.

Dr. Funke described shoreland inventory results. Manager Anderson suggested the District obtain updated shoreland inventories for all lakes prior to plan update being finalized. Administrator Kinney was not sure if there was staff capacity to coordinate so many surveys at this point in the year, but staff would look into it. Manager Schmaltz noted that some waterbodies in the District are impaired for chlorides and some are at risk. How does this factor in? Dr. Funke recommended the Board set goals and priorities first and action/implementation items will come after. At this point in the plan update, priority setting

is key to figuring out how to proceed further. She suggested the District start whittling down the action plan list, so it is achievable in 10 years. Administrator Kinney indicated that a lot of issues seem to be high priority right now. The workload analysis will help the District understand what is achievable in the next ten years with current staff and/or needed capacity increases. He explained that, even though we have increased capacity with staff compared to previous years, there is a lot of work that needs to be done, so everyone's plate is full. We see no slowing down of construction activity, and there are a lot of work items on the wish list. Mr. Kinney suggested the District also consider, in addition to issue priority level (high, medium, low), what is the level of effort needed (high, medium, low).

Manager Anderson indicated the District needs to identify what is important for this next focus period. The paleolimnological lake sediment cores should tell us what the achievable end goal can be. President Spence indicated multiple levels of detail are being discussed here. Dr. Funke explained some goals are easier to make measurable; some are harder, such as education and outreach. The District should use the scientific data is has to decide what is achievable in the 10-year timeframe. There are two types of goals in the plan: long-term (i.e. desired future condition) and 10-year measurable (i.e. where can we get within 10 years?). Dr. Funke suggested managers provide feedback according to this, and whether something should be higher or lower priority. Manager Schmaltz suggested that the District start with in-lake phosphorus concentration as a high priority and decide additional priorities from there. For example, if phosphorus reductions are the top priority, shoreline restorations with low phosphorus reductions may not be a high priority for implementation. Dr. Funke suggested that, while shoreline buffers may not usually have large phosphorus reductions, they do result in other benefits – creation of habitat, reduction in sediment loss, etc. Manager Anderson indicated each manager is going to have different reasons for giving their priorities which will be discussed. It was agreed that June 1st would be an acceptable deadline for managers to provide written feedback to staff.

Rosie Russell presented information on wetlands and upland habitat. MN DNR provided several comments on this topic during the initial 60-day comment period last spring. The LSC interactive web map has several useful layers on these topics including Sites of Biodiversity Significance and DNR Native Plan Communities by System. There is a large area of biodiversity significance in a wetland complex just north/east of Forest Lake. There is also likely a significant portion in the Lake Keewahtin subwatershed, but that is not shown on the LSC map due to boundary cutoff. Emmons & Olivier Resources (EOR) will create an online interactive map specifically for CLFLWD, which will contain this info. DNR native plant communities overlap heavily with the biodiversity significance areas. Near Forest Lake there are some wet meadows and forested wetland systems. Forested wetland systems seem to be more threatened in CLFLWD, which the District may want to focus on more specifically. Near the Comfort Lake inlet there is a fire-dependent forest woodland system and wet forest woodland system. There was discussion about the Woods on Comfort Lake and Shoreview One developments in this area. Mr. Kinney noted this example points out the value of this type of mapping. When the District is talking to partner local government units, it should identify areas like this for protection in advance of proposed development. Manager Anderson suggested the first step is to develop a priority greenway corridor map identifying areas like this before they disappear. Ms. Russell explained she

DRAFT

has been reviewing the comprehensive plans for the cities of Forest Lake and Scandia (Wyoming is currently in the middle of updating its plan). She noted a reoccurring theme of cities valuing conservation design style development.

Ms. Russell presented the restorable wetland inventory layer. Points are scattered around the District. Some clumps of points are more concentrated, suggesting significant areas that could be restored. The National Wetland Inventory is another available layer showing freshwater emergent wetlands and freshwater forested/shrub wetlands. Hydrologic soil groups were displayed. There are a lot of well-drained soils in the District and some poorly drained. Many soil types are marked by human modification such as drain tile installation. There is another layer showing soil erosion risk. Manager Anderson noted this shows where shoreline restoration is important. Regionally significant ecological areas are identified in the metro area but are cut off at the Chisago county border where the DNR study ended. The Hardwood Creek Wildlife Management area is shown as a big regionally significant ecological area. Ms. Russell explained the DNR stacked multiple different layers to identify these areas. Manager Anderson asked if this layer could be replicated for CLFWLD's portion of Chisago County. Ms. Russell indicated EOR would need to inspect this further. Wetland goals were reviewed. There was discussion about groundwater interaction with the Sunrise River, and implications it has for the MnDOT I-35 reconstruction project. Ms. Russell encouraged managers to share additional comments and ideas as they think of them and make note of amount of detail desired.

Camilla Correll presented groundwater information. There is a lot of information about groundwater available in the CLFLWD, but is generally at the regional scale, not the local scale. As such, it provides a lot of baseline information, but does not answer all groundwater related questions the District may have. Ms. Correll reviewed several points from the DNR regarding the 2015 North and East Groundwater Management Area Plan and Washington County Groundwater Plan. Comments included using available tools, working with partners, and planning monitoring. Ms. Correll presented several groundwater data layers on the interactive map. The City of Forest Lake contains a drinking water supply management area. Vulnerability is low because the City is pulling from a deeper aquifer for its drinking water. However, when we look at water table aquifer vulnerability, we get a different picture. There is high vulnerability to the water table in the south end of the district. Groundwater is sensitive to contaminants like nitrogen and fluorides. The area around Heims Lake in the Comfort LMD is also sensitive to land use practices. The Forest Lake urban area has some moderate to high pollution sensitivity of wells. Two major wells are in the City of Forest Lake. There were two smaller wells shown near Little Comfort Lake, which EOR would investigate. Other water use permits in the District include golf course irrigation and gravel washing. Manager Anderson was surprised Comfort Lake was not shown as a groundwater flow dominated lake because there are springs all over the lake. Ms. Correll showed how MN Department of Agriculture (MDA) fall fertilizer restrictions overlap with high water table vulnerability. In response to a question about the area, Manager Dibble explained the whole east side of Forest Lake is serviced by private wells, a carryover from the township days. Manager Schmaltz asked what kind of strategies would the District employ for groundwater protection? Ms. Correll encouraged managers to provide feedback on whether protection or restoration is a higher priority, how important

DRAFT

groundwater dependent natural resources are. She recommended several potential groundwater protection strategies including working with LGUs so the District gets ahead of future development, setting some goals and priorities for conservation easements through the land acquisition program, establishing priority greenway corridors which can include groundwater recharge areas, public education and outreach on groundwater conservation strategies, and working with the golf courses to implement stormwater reuse. Mr. Kinney noted District staff met with City of Scandia staff this morning and discussed protection of the largely undeveloped area southeast of Lake Keewahtin, which is an area of vulnerability. He indicated the District needs to identify high ranking areas such as this. Ms. Correll recommended potentially developing a groundwater dependent natural resources management plan. In response to a question from Manager Dibble, it was noted that CLFLWD aquifers are listed in volume II of the Watershed Management Plan. Manager Schmaltz suggested working with county staff who may have expertise in the subject of groundwater. He suggested working with university students to perform some of the studies discussed.

Watershed Technician Emily Heinz reviewed the plan update timeline, which aims to publish a draft plan for official 60-day review by November 2020. She noted steps the District is taking to adhere to Board of Water and Soil Resources requirements ensuring the update process is transparent and collaborative with the public and agency partners.

3. Adjourn

a) Next regular board meeting – May 14, 2020

Manager Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Manager Schmaltz. Upon vote, the motion carried 4-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

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

Jen Oknich, Secretary _____

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