

1 **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE**
2 **COMFORT LAKE–FOREST LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT**
3 **Wednesday, June 14, 2023**
4

5 **1. Call to Order**
6

7 President Schmaltz called the June 14, 2023, special board meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.
8 at 44 Lake Street South Forest Lake and via online video conference.
9

10 **Managers Present:**

11 Steve Schmaltz, President

12 Christopher Loth, Vice President

13 Dave Bakke, Secretary (Attending Virtually)

14 Jackie Anderson, Treasurer (Attending Virtually)

15 Douglas Toavs, Assistant Treasurer (Attending Virtually)
16

17 **Staff Present:**

18 Mike Kinney, Administrator

19 Bobbie Law, Office Manager

20 Emily Heinz, Planning Coordinator
21

22 **2. 2024 Budget Workshop**
23

24 Ms. Heinz explained that the purpose of this workshop is to give the managers time to bring
25 forth their questions, comments, or concerns about the current draft budget. She noted that
26 the additional materials provided to the board are based on questions raised at the May
27 special budget meeting.
28

29 Manager Toavs noted the increasing trend in the net tax capacity in recent years and asked
30 if it is safe to expect this trend to continue. Manager Anderson noted that the District is in a
31 high area of growth, and she expects the net tax capacity to continue its increasing trend.
32

33 Manager Anderson requested an update on the natural resources inventory, greenway
34 corridor visioning, and District capital improvement projects in the Comfort and Little
35 Comfort Lake Management Districts.
36

37 Manager Bakke requested more information on what areas (i.e., Admin, Programs, Projects)
38 the District needs to focus on in a budgetary sense. He noted that the District office space
39 and floodplain management are two big priorities for the next budget season. Administrator
40 Kinney noted that Ms. Heinz presented proposed budget priorities at the May budget
41 workshop, including maintaining staff, finishing up water quality capital improvement

42 projects, and dedicating more focus on key programs identified during the workload
43 analysis visioning.

44

45 Manager Loth requested information on the education and outreach program. He noted
46 that he would like to confirm the 2024 draft budget is enough to cover the newly enhanced
47 and updated program.

48

49 Manager Schmaltz requested an update on the greenway efforts. He would like to know if
50 there will be action on this project in 2024. He referenced the 5-year projection page in the
51 budget packet, noting the potential levy increases. He supported the idea of slowly
52 increasing the levy in order to rebuild the reserve fund. He stated he expects that there will
53 be minimal impacts on the taxpayers. Manager Anderson explained that it is her
54 understanding that expense budget will not change much, even though projects are slowing
55 down in the next few years; spending will merely occur in categories other than projects
56 (e.g., loan repayments, programs, and staffing).

57

58 Managers discussed the expenses in terms of office space for the District. President
59 Schmaltz explained that he thinks it will be important to understand rental prices in order to
60 understand the cost of renting versus owning. Managers discussed different financing
61 options for an office space including grants and loans.

62

63 Manager Loth asked what items would be replacing the costs of large capital projects.
64 President Schmaltz indicated the District would shift focus from 5000 Projects to 3000
65 Programs. Manager Toavs asked if the greenway corridor included land acquisition.
66 President Schmaltz confirmed that yes it would, but those acquisition or easement expenses
67 would be largely covered by grant dollars. Ms. Heinz added that acquisition is just one tool
68 in the toolbox when it comes to creating a greenway corridor. She noted the importance of
69 partnerships and explained that conservation easements could be used. Mr. Kinney
70 explained the District is currently partnering with Great River Greening to implement an
71 Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) grant to restore native vegetation
72 on a District-owned property north of Forest Lake's 3rd basin. He also noted the City of Forest
73 Lake's street sweeping program is a good example of a partnership that benefits water
74 quality.

75

76 President Schmaltz highlighted loan repayments to come in future budget years and
77 referenced the loan repayment page in the budget packet.

78

79 Manager Anderson explained that budgeting for a larger staff is something she would like
80 to focus on. Manager Toavs requested staff growth be included in ISG's office space analysis.

81

82 Managers discussed having written communications regarding the 2024 budget. President
83 Schmaltz indicated that it works well for managers to send their questions/comments to
84 staff via email in advance of the meeting so that staff can provide written responses. He

85 encouraged managers to send questions and comments in writing, and he noted that these
86 Q&A's can be discussed during the meetings.

87

88 Managers discussed the budget for the Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement cost-share
89 programs. President Schmaltz noted Mr. Kinney's expertise in the field of agriculture.
90 Manager Anderson noted that farming is diminishing in the area. Mr. Kinney explained the
91 District's programs and efforts working with local farmers.

92

93 Mr. Kinney gave an overview of recent planning efforts including flood hazard mapping and
94 updates to the District's hydrologic & hydraulic (H&H) model. He explained how the District
95 has begun prioritizing sites for wetland restoration and flood retention projects. Ms. Heinz
96 noted that flood *hazard* mapping is just the first step, and the next step will be to
97 comprehensively evaluate flood *vulnerability*. Mr. Kinney explained that the greenway effort
98 is generally a new concept for many organizations. He referenced the presentation given by
99 Al Singer with Dakota County in 2022 and noted staff can share the recording with the board.

100

101 Managers discussed the Highway 8 road reconstruction project. Manager Anderson stated
102 that floodplain vulnerability data will be critical to the Highway 8 project design. Managers
103 discussed flooding effects on residential wells. Mr. Kinney noted the soil type effects on
104 flooding. He noted that there are many factors that go into determining what is at the most
105 risk; it is very complex. Mr. Kinney explained that this information was shared with MnDOT
106 and Chisago County to utilize while planning the Highway 8 project.

107

108 Manager Anderson noted that the administration levy cap that was recently increased to
109 \$500,000. Managers directed staff to adjust the budget recap page to reflect this.

110

111 President Schmaltz asked all the managers if they would like a copy of the bylaws recently
112 presented by the District attorney.

113

114 Ms. Heinz summarized follow-up items:

- 115 • She will share the meeting recording for the Dakota County greenway presentation.
- 116 • She will send out an online survey via email in order to schedule the July workshop.
- 117 • Staff will give a presentation at the July workshop in order to more fully address the
118 questions raised today.
- 119 • She will make the following revisions to the budget packet: ensure headers are
120 shown for all columns, and increase the administration levy to \$500,000.

121

122 3. Adjourn

123

124 a) Next regular board meeting – June 22, 2023

125

126 Manager Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Manager Toavs.
127 Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:22
128 p.m.
129

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Dave Bakke	X			
Christopher Loth	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			

130
131 Dave Bakke, Secretary -----

DRAFT