

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE
COMFORT LAKE–FOREST LAKE
WATERSHED DISTRICT
Tuesday, October 6, 2020**

1. Call to Order

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

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

Absent: Secretary Jen Oknich.

Others: Mike Kinney, Jessica Lindemyer, Emily Heinz (CLFLWD staff); Meghan Funke (Emmons & Olivier Resources); Curt Sparks (Citizen Advisory Committee).

2. Public Open Forum

There were no comments.

3. Groundwater Assessment

Dr. Funke noted there was a request from the Board to discuss this topic further during a workshop because there was not enough time to discuss all of the recommendations at the September 10th meeting. Prior to the meeting, Manager Schmaltz provided written comments which were distributed in the board packet.

Manager Schmaltz summarized:

1. Groundwater quality is high in CLFLWD
2. The risk of groundwater contamination is relatively low compared to other areas in Washington and Chisago Counties.
3. Groundwater availability/supply is high due to low demand and separate aquifers.
4. Groundwater interaction with CLFLWD lakes is minimal.
5. Separate from the study, CLFLWD has already made some significant contributions in reduction of groundwater use via work with the Forest Lake High School and the Shields Lake Stormwater Reuse Project. Manager Schmaltz indicated other groundwater opportunities will arise as CLFLWD continues to work on the lakes and other resource areas.

Manager Schmaltz indicated, overall, groundwater in the District is in good condition. He suggested starting with high priority but inexpensive initiatives first.

Manager Anderson noted Lake Keewahtin is a groundwater dependent lake that the District wants to keep clean. She recommended focusing groundwater protection efforts around Lake Keewahtin first. She noted that Forest Lake is a groundwater flow-through lake. Manager Anderson indicated it is hard to make any decisions without having full information for the Chisago County portion of the District. She noted there are a lot of high groundwater pollution sensitivity areas in all four lake management districts (see page 5 of the September 1, 2020 Groundwater memo).

President Spence asked how the information gaps for Chisago County can be filled. Dr. Funke explained a lot of studies cut off at the metro area. The District does have some information for Chisago County in the interactive web map being developed for the 10-year Watershed Management Plan (WMP) update. One of the recommendations from Emmons & Olivier Resources' (EOR) memo is to perform ground truthing for certain information.

Manager Anderson asked if there are any karst features in the District, and Dr. Funke confirmed there are not. Manager Anderson indicated the District needs to protect these high pollution sensitivity areas and work with cities to do that. Manager Schmaltz suggested starting with base building/information gathering activities.

Manager Anderson indicated this is not an initiative the District needs to shoulder alone. She suggested working with partners and pursuing grant funding for activities. Manager Schmaltz asked what the counties, MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and similar organizations are doing. President Spence suggested these organizations may be more focused on drinking water (i.e. deeper aquifers) rather than shallower water table interaction with groundwater dependent natural resources.

Dr. Funke indicated the pollution sensitivity map is helpful to identify projects with multiple benefits such as the greenway corridor which will also restore wetlands, upland habitat, as well as protect groundwater recharge areas.

Dr. Funke summarized the management recommendations from the memo:

1. Water appropriation permitting: is a relatively small cost
2. Groundwater dependent natural resource action plan: can be delayed for now
3. Keewahtin basin management: should be higher priority
4. Coordination with surrounding water management organizations: includes working with neighboring organizations to identify the groundwatershed.
5. Groundwater modeling: is a bigger effort, and can be delayed for now

Dr. Funke indicated staff can put these items in the 10-year WMP budget, and the Board can decide what items to keep and remove.

Manager Schmaltz asked to hear Curt Sparks' opinion on the matter. Mr. Sparks indicated he had a conference call with Dr. Funke and Mr. Grubb and reviewed the memo in detail. He indicated he generally came to the same conclusions as the Board – focusing around Lake Keewahtin and putting more emphasis on groundwater quantity feeding surface waters then groundwater quality.

President Spence summarized that the Board's direction is in line with Manager Schmaltz's written recommendations, except in that the Board recommends making the action plan a lower priority. Manager Anderson indicated the highest rated lake in the District is Lake Keewahtin and it should be protected. She indicated this information will inform zoning and development growth which are the biggest threat to groundwater in most of these sensitive areas. She suggested the District focus on the pollution sensitivity areas in Chisago County until more information is gathered for that part of the District.

4. Watershed Management Plan Update

Planning Coordinator Heinz noted the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on September 29, and a summary of the meeting is provided in the October 8th board packet.

There was discussion about interagency coordination and impact as it relates to the WMP update. President Spence indicated the regulatory issues lay less within the rules as they are written and have more to do with dealing with violations. He suggested the District focus more on being aware of what is going on around the watershed and working with partners to prevent issues and/or address issues that arise.

Manager Anderson suggested the District have a goal in mind for each regulatory area it deals with. She suggested the goals inform how the rules are written. She indicated much of the rules language is very subjective and need to be more specific. Ms. Heinz asked if there were any rules in particular that Manager Anderson had in mind. Manager Anderson indicated staff needs to go through each rule and identify which sections are too vague. There was discussion about revising the layout of the existing rules so that the purpose and policy language is more readily accessible. Manager Schmaltz indicated even if the language is exactly how the District wants it, people do not always know what the rules are. He suggested the District implement a more aggressive education program to combat the misinterpretation/neglect of the rules.

Administrator Kinney indicated the District continues to see shoreline alterations. He explained Forest Lake was probably once called Forest Lake for a reason, but now most lakeshore lots are devoid of trees. He indicated there is room to improve and adapt. He suggested the Board consider how it wants to make that improvement – through a regulatory program or an incentive program. There was discussion about Burnette County's shoreline buffer easement incentive program. Mr. Kinney indicated he would research this program further.

There was discussion about entering into memorandums of understanding (MOU) with some of the municipalities in the District. Manager Anderson was suggested the District have further discussions with the cities about this, both at the staff and council level. She expressed interest in working toward having the District take over implementation of city shoreline ordinances. She also suggested the District consider information from the DNR fact sheet, "Intralake Zoning for Sensitive Lakeshores."

Managers agreed that education is going to be very important over the next 10 years. President Spence suggested a shoreline easement incentive program could be part of the education program. Mr. Kinney indicated staff is currently engaged in some level of public education through its regulatory program – educating people about the cost-benefit of protection measures. He indicated in this case, an ounce of protection is worth a pound of the cure. For certain properties along lakeshores, unabated erosion into lake would have significant negative impacts. He noted native buffers have other benefits as well, such as aesthetics, wildlife habitat, and reducing geese congregation. Manager Dibble suggested the District should make sure it considers floodplains and protects flood storage for the future.

Ms. Heinz noted that simply reformatting the existing rules language (i.e. not revising the language, but merely reformatting) could be done relatively quickly and cheaply. She explained the District revised its rules in 2018, and going through that process again would be more costly and time-consuming. She explained an MOU would formalize the District's relationship with the cities with respect to regulatory responsibility, for example performance of site inspections. It may not necessarily result in the District taking over implementation of city ordinances, but it could if cities are interested. Managers agreed that additional follow-up with cities in the form of inter-staff meetings and joint board-council workshops is warranted and can be done in 2021. Ms. Heinz noted the Board scaled back its cost-share program in recent years to a \$500 plant grant program. She asked if the Board foresees scaling up the program in coming years. There was general consensus that managers wanted to encourage more stewardship of the shoreland area and to adjust the cost-share program however needed to achieve that.

Manager Dibble indicated interest in adding focus to the Forest Lake dead end street retrofits and cooperating with the City to do so. Mr. Kinney noted this year's Workload Analysis Study recommended hiring a landscape architect to facilitate this work going forward. He explained he plans to first hire an Officer Manager in early 2021, then look at hiring a landscape architect. Hiring an Office Manager will free up more time for Operations & Outreach Specialist Lindemyer to work on outreach campaigns. He noted that, historically, the District's cost-share program has only been for projects exceeding minimum regulatory requirements. Mr. Kinney explained he will discuss with City of Forest Lake how the City can tap into cost-share funds to go above and beyond the required stormwater treatment for roadway projects such as the 2022 Hayward Avenue reconstruction project.

There was discussion about the layout of the draft WMP text and managers provided direction to staff regarding several adjustments. Dr. Funke explained the data provided is simply the raw text, and Ms. Lindemyer is working on entering the text into the final layout which will be more reader-friendly.

5. Summary and Approval of Board Direction

Administrator Kinney was directed to further research Burnette County's shoreline buffer easement incentive program.

6. Adjourn

a) Next regular board meeting – October 8, 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 9:09 p.m.

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

Jen Oknich, Secretary _____