

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE
COMFORT LAKE–FOREST LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT
AND CITY OF FOREST LAKE
Monday, September 21, 2020**

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bain called the September 21, 2020 workshop to order at 6:30 p.m. via online video conference.

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District Board: President Jon Spence, Vice President Jackie Anderson, Treasurer Steve Schmaltz, Assistant Treasurer Jim Dibble.

Absent: Secretary Jen Oknich.

Forest Lake City Council: Mayor Mara Bain, Councilmember Sam Husnik, Councilmember Kathy Bystrom, Councilmember Kelly Monson, Councilmember Paul Girard.

Others: Mike Kinney (CLFLWD Administrator); Patrick Casey (Forest Lake City Administrator); Emily Heinz (CLFLWD staff); Dan Udem, Dave Adams, Karin Derauf, Rick Peterson (Forest Lake staff); Ryan Goodman (Forest Lake engineer); Meghan Funke (CLFLWD engineer).

2. Roll Call

[6:30]

3. Pledge of Allegiance

[6:31]

4. Public Open Forum

[6:32 pm] There were no comments.

5. Joint Meeting

a) Introductions

Attendees introduced themselves. Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District Board and Staff included President Jon Spence, Vice President Jackie Anderson, Treasurer Steve Schmaltz, Assistant Treasurer Jim Dibble, Administrator Mike Kinney, Watershed Technician Emily Heinz and District Engineer Meghan Funke. City Council and Staff included Mayor Mara Bain, Councilmember Sam Husnik, Councilmember Paul Girard, Councilmember Kathy Bystrom, Councilmember Kelly Monson, City

Administrator Patrick Casey, Public Works Director Dave Adams, Deputy City Clerk Karin Derauf, Chief Rick Peterson and Assistant City Administrator Dan Udem.

Ms. Heinz went over meeting objectives including voicing desired inputs to Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District (CLFLWD) 10-year plan, understanding common goals and objectives, and identifying opportunities for collaboration/partnership.

b) CLFLWD Watershed Management Plan Update

Ms. Heinz provided an overview of CLFLWD's progress on its 10-year watershed management plan update. In 2019 the District focused on public outreach and gathering input from partners and stakeholders. In spring/summer 2020 the District is discussing issues and goals prioritization and communicating with partners regarding shared priorities in overlapping boundaries. Summer/fall 2020 will involve drafting the plan, with a target of publishing the draft plan for 60-day review and comment period in winter. The District aims to go through the final review with the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) next spring and finalize the plan by summer 2021.

c) Issue Areas in the Context of Coordination between CLFLWD and Forest Lake

Ms. Heinz presented an overview of the District boundaries overlapping with city boundaries, with City of Forest Lake comprising the southwest quadrant of the District.

i. Lakes: water quality/quantity projects and programs

Ms. Heinz provided an overview of lake issues and the District's progress toward in-lake water quality goals. As of 2020, five District lakes are meeting their 2030 goals (i.e. ten years ahead of the original schedule): Comfort Lake, Bone Lake, Forest Lake, Heims Lake, and Lake Keewahtin. The City's enhanced street sweeping program has been a success, with pollutant load reductions roughly twice as high as estimated. Ms. Heinz noted that part of City flows into Comfort Lake through the Sunrise River. Manager Anderson added part of the City also flows to Little Comfort Lake as well. Mayor Bain asked if the District would like to see the street sweeping program increased or maintained at current levels. Administrator Kinney explained 2019 was the first year the City and District implemented the enhanced street sweeping program and collected samples of the swept material. He noted University of MN is performing a study to evaluate the benefits of street sweeping, especially as it relates to Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) communities. He explained that the program has even more benefits when considering the reduced cost for other MS4 infrastructure; for example, preventing sediment buildup in sumps, ponds, channels etc. Mr. Kinney suggested staffs continue to work together and see how the sweeping plan may be adjusted to maximize benefits. He noted the District recently worked with the City of Wyoming to apply for a grant to purchase a vacuum sweeper, like City of Forest Lake did.

Mayor Bain indicated she has had conversations with Forest Lake Lake Association (FLLA) about increased City funding for aquatic invasive species (AIS) prevention and management activities, which has spurred conversation around the clarification of roles. She asked how AIS fits into the District's mission and programming, and how the City can support those efforts. Manager Schmaltz indicated grants are very important in funding AIS projects, and that if it is important that the City, FLLA, and District can all work together to apply for grants. He indicated a high percentage of the City's tax base comes from lakeshore landowners and the lake is a big part of the community. Curly-leaf pondweed is a major AIS that the District manages because of its effect on water quality (curly-leaf pondweed dies off mid-summer and releases phosphorus which promotes algae blooms). Manager Schmaltz explained the District does not manage Eurasian watermilfoil and FLLA needs support from the City to manage it. He explained how the MN Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) regulates aquatic plant management and limits the amount that can be managed chemically and mechanically.

Mayor Bain asked how the District decides whether to treat curly-leaf pondweed versus Eurasian watermilfoil. Manager Anderson explained the District operates according to Minnesota statutes 103D and 103B and that science is foundational to the operation of any watershed district. She explained the District's priority for the last 10-15 years was reducing phosphorus entry to lakes and delisting impaired waters. However, lake recreational value is also important to watershed districts and Eurasian watermilfoil falls into that category. Manager Anderson explained Eurasian watermilfoil is not a phosphorus contributor like curly-leaf pondweed. She indicated research from University of Minnesota has found that Eurasian watermilfoil adapts itself to each lake it invades, and treatments need to be tailored to each lake. Manager Anderson explained the District has the discretion to focus on Eurasian watermilfoil, but it will be done in a more targeted way than in the past, in order to stay consistent with the latest science. She added public education is the key to behavior change and AIS are spread primarily through boats entering the lake.

Councilmember Bystrom asked how the District would characterize an effective partnership with a municipality like the City. Manager Schmaltz suggested information sharing and close collaboration. For example, it would be faster and less costly to implement water quality improvement projects on City land and/or in coordination with City projects compared to working with private landowners. Manager Schmaltz added that it would be helpful if the City notified the District when it is planning to implement a project, such as a roadway improvement, so that the District can provide environmental expertise and factor the project into its own planning. He noted the District can provide technical information and modeling, but it needs data from the City such as the City capital improvement plan and culvert sizes/elevations. Mayor Bain indicated coordinating on projects is high on the City's list as well. Manager Schmaltz noted the City and District

are working together on the downtown district study, and that working together will result in a more economical solution for the taxpayer. Manager Anderson indicated interagency partnership has been present throughout the history of the District and continues to be important. She encouraged the City to look to the District as a technical expert when it comes to stormwater management and development.

Mayor Bain asked to hear more about the District's vision for dead-end streets and public accesses around Forest Lake. Manager Dibble indicated the District's vision is to treat stormwater runoff from the streets before entering the lake and improve aesthetics with native vegetation such as wildflowers. He indicated 4th Street, near downtown, would be an ideal location for some improvements including a public fishing pier. FLLA recently held a fundraiser and received matching funds from Hallberg Marine. Manager Dibble explained FLLA surveyed its members regarding what to do with the funding, and installation of a public fishing pier was a top choice. Mayor Bain noted that the Council and FLLA discussed a fishing pier and the timing expectations would be too aggressive to achieve by 2021. However, researching and applying for grants and permitting could be explored in 2021, and a project could potentially be implemented in 2022. She also noted that consideration needs to be given to the Parks, Lakes and Trails Commission when having these collaboration discussions.

Mayor Bain commented on dead-end streets and asked how the Watershed would prioritize these areas above just a list of the City owned zones. Mike Kinney noted that the District is in a good position to assist with further inventory and prioritization of dead-end street areas and determine which ones could include walking access, and overall improvements. City Engineer, Ryan Goodman, noted that there are 11 areas of dead-end streets that have received significant work since 2016 in terms of studying and moving toward grant resource funding. He commented that if this can be packaged as a regional project, some of the smaller projects could be added. He noted that there is valuable data within the current study material and that smaller projects are generally not be able to compete in bigger grants. He commented on the grant that is offered by the MnDNR every year in relation to a pier and a link to the MnDNR web page for the grant was provided in the Zoom chat function. Mayor Bain suggested prioritizing dead-end streets with active neighborhood support.

President Spence explained how the District sets lake water quality goals. The District's long-term lake goals go beyond state standards. He explained how the District collected paleolimnological deep sediment core samples to understand the pre-settlement condition of the lakes. This helps the District confirm its goals are reasonably achievable.

ii. Stormwater Management: culvert inventory, city capital improvement plan, modeling and studies, regulatory coordination

Ms. Heinz explained regulatory programs are a key component to stormwater management, and it is important to partner on data sharing such as culvert sizes/elevations and the City capital improvement plan. Mayor Bain indicated the City has been interested in regional stormwater treatment, and this should come out of the downtown study. Regional stormwater treatment may offer a more cost-effective alternative to treating stormwater onsite for each new development or re-development project. Manager Anderson agreed and explained from the beginning of the District it was understood that Forest Lake is the biggest municipality and will continue to grow the most. She suggested it is important that the City and District stay in sync with planning.

Mayor Bain indicated the City recently completed its 2040 comprehensive plan. Ryan Goodman explained the City went through a thorough review process with all watershed districts. The capital improvement plan is generalized and does not identify specific projects. Mr. Goodman indicated the plan is kept broad so the City can be flexible. He noted the City added a chapter on resiliency during the last update.

iii. Wetlands and Open Spaces: greenway corridors, parks

There was discussion about proactively preserving wetland and natural spaces. Ms. Heinz noted that the Watershed is looking into a greenway corridor to protect these valuable areas while incorporating recreation into the wetlands and open spaces. Manager Anderson noted preservation of wetlands and natural spaces also helps with flood prevention. She explained the idea is to bring key areas back to their natural state and educate the public on their importance. There was discussion about development projections. Dr. Funke explained there is a lot of opportunity for protection and restoration around Washington Judicial Ditch 6 (WJD-6) in the southern part of the City. A natural corridor could extend through Forest Lake and down the Sunrise River into Comfort Lake. Manager Anderson noted all the water in this area ultimately flows to the St. Croix River. She suggested the District can help identify how to balance development with conservation. Mr. Goodman indicated the City does not allow high density residential development to occur in the WJD-6 area, and the City is working with Pheasants Forever to preserve land for hunting.

Manager Anderson suggested being mindful of the 100-year floodplain as well. As larger precipitation events become more common, the City and District should plan how to protect residents from flooding. She indicated it would not be a good idea to build a new development encroaching on the floodplain. Dr. Funke explained the District's approach to implementing a greenway corridor includes outreach to landowners, implementation of conservation easements, and possibly a decommission of the ditch which would involve getting landowner permission and working with the county. Mr. Kinney indicated low flood elevation requirements are important to consider with development and

flood prevention. He described how the District can run model scenarios to understand impacts of various rain events. There was discussion about incorporating stormwater treatment into upcoming City roadway projects.

Manager Schmaltz indicated wetlands are like the kidneys for the lake in that they filter pollution from surrounding development. Residential yard waste dumping into wetlands causes degradation leading to less treatment to protect the lakes. He suggested a joint outreach program between the City and the District. There was discussion about the City compost site and the option for green bins through the local waste disposal service. Councilmember Bystrom indicated the City is considering hiring a communications coordinator who may be able to assist with an outreach effort.

iv. Groundwater: pollution sensitivity, key recharge areas

Ms. Heinz displayed a map of groundwater recharge, wellhead protection, and high pollution sensitivity areas. Dr. Funke explained these are areas where water infiltrates into the soil and filters down to near-surface aquifers underground. She indicated deeper aquifers are not as much of a concern in this area. She described the groundwater interaction between Lake Keewahtin and Forest Lake. There are a lot of recharge areas around Lake Keewahtin. Mr. Goodman noted that recharge areas correlate with the City's plan of Wellhead Protection Phase 1 and Phase 2. He also noted that the aquifers are fractured in the Forest Lake area. Ms. Heinz explained groundwater recharge is tied to the protection of open spaces, and how impervious surfaces reduce groundwater recharge. Mr. Kinney explained the recently completed Shields Lake Stormwater Harvest & Irrigation Reuse Project at Forest Hills Golf Club provides up to 26 million gallons of irrigation water per year, reducing the golf club's need for groundwater withdrawals.

v. Floodplain: floodplain assessments

Ms. Heinz explained how floodplain protection relates back to the discussions about increased precipitation patterns, the District's updated H&H model, information sharing, and regulatory coordination. There was discussion about the recent upgrade in precipitation estimates to Atlas 14. Mr. Goodman indicated the City designs low floor elevations for emergency overflow (EOF).

vi. Resiliency Planning: risk assessment, climate adaptation

Ms. Heinz explained this is another key topic for the 10-year watershed management plan update. The District wants to know how it can be an effective partner during emergency events (e.g. severe weather and heavy rainfalls). Mayor Bain indicated that the key would be to look at partnership models that already exist. President Spence commented on the aftermath of the tornado near the Bone Lake area and how there might be public outreach opportunities. Mr.

Kinney noted that a way for the District to advance emergency planning and resiliency would be to partner with the City and other agencies. He suggested following changing climate trends and performing modeling scenarios to identify disaster-prone areas, such as potential road washouts. Mayor Bain agreed community education regarding flooding and including basic safety measures is important. She suggested the City and District ensure they have a plan for communicating in times of crisis so that the City can utilize the District's expertise, local knowledge, and staff.

Councilmember Husnik asked about chloride application. Dr. Funke explained there is more chloride monitoring occurring on the state level in lakes and rivers. She also noted that MnDOT is using less salt on the streets for de-icing and that the District can assist with education opportunities for business owners regarding the use of salts in the winter. Mayor Bain noted that Lakes Area Television (LATV) is a community resource for public outreach on topics like this. Dave Adams noted that the City has reduced its salting by about 50% over the past 5 years. He also noted that his staff has gone through training for salt reduction based on road conditions. He commented that his trucks have the capacity for snow and ice control in terms of salting and adopted a "no black road" policy. This means that plowing occurs after 2 inches of snow, with salting as necessary. He explained that the brining of roads reduces the amount of salt needed.

d) Closing Remarks

President Spence explained how important communication between the City and the District is. Mayor Bain agreed and welcomed check-ins for progress on projects that both agencies are accomplishing. She noted that future conversations can include the fishing pier. She thanked the District for attending the meeting.

6. Adjourn

a) Next CLFLWD regular board meeting – September 24, 2020

Councilmember Girard moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Councilmember Husnik. Upon vote, the motion carried 5-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Jen Oknich, Secretary _____