

**MEETING NOTES OF THE
COMFORT LAKE-FOREST LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, December 7th, 2021**

Present: Curt Sparks, Tom Furey, Randy Schumacher, Jerry Grundtner

Others: Jackie Anderson, Aidan Read, Barbara Heitkamp

The agenda was amended by the committee. The first item, Watershed Update, was moved after the second item, Lower Saint Croix Education Initiatives.

1.) Lower Saint Croix Education Initiatives

Barbara Heitkamp, Water Resources Education Specialist at Washington Conservation District (WCD), gave a presentation to the committee on her role with the Lower Saint Croix Watershed Partnership (LSC). The presentation described Ms. Heitkamp's background and qualifications, the work of the LSC and the East Metro Water Resource Education Program (EMWREP), and future programs being developed with the LSC focusing on agriculture. Ms. Heitkamp provided details on future programs and events that are being developed, and described her observations on the existing needs of the LSC area. The committee expressed their support of this work. One question from Randy Schumacher was on how long it would take for discussion on conservation agriculture to take hold and develop throughout the community. Ms. Heitkamp remarked that it was her observation that interest in the topic was increasing amongst the farming community, and that continuing efforts could bring about significant change in the coming years.

2.) Watershed Activities Update

a. Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) Awards

Aidan Read, Land Management Specialist shared an update on activities throughout the watershed. At the annual MAWD conference, CLFLWD received a Program of the Year award for the Citizen Assisted Tributary Monitoring (CAT) program. CLFLWD was also recognized as a finalist for the project of the year (Shields Lake Reuse and Alum Treatment), and Michael Kinney was nominated as Administrator of the Year.

b. Clean Water Fund Grants

The District was notified that two of their grant applications were chosen to receive funding through the Clean Water Fund. These projects are the JD 6 Wetland Restoration, and the Moody Lake Capstone projects.

c. Cranberry Lake Channel

The acquisition of the property to the south of Cranberry Lake is still developing. The results of the grant application to provide reimbursement funds for the purchase of the property will be announced in January. Jerry Grundtner asked whether the District would pursue the acquisition if grant money was not available. Manager Jackie Anderson responded that the District would explore acquisition of the property regardless of grant money due to the high priority of the property.

d. CAC updates

Mr. Read reported that he has forwarded the committee's request to have a member of the Board of Managers present, and that he will continue to coordinate with the Board on this subject. For recruitment, Mr. Read continues to work with Forest Lake Highschool to explore the possibility of a student committee member.

3.) Office Space Update and Discussion

Manager Jackie Anderson was available to provide an update to the committee regarding the search for new office space for the watershed district. Manager Anderson provided an overview of the process that was developed in coordination with EOR. The committee was also given a description of the history of the Willow Point property, and why it is being considered as the site of a potential watershed district office. The committee was then briefed on push back the Board of Managers has received to exploring the purchase of the Willow Point property; a special meeting is being scheduled to provide a public forum for discussing the issue. Mr. Schumacher asked how the City of Forest Lake had been approached about this, and how the process compared renovating existing buildings as opposed to new construction. Manager Anderson responded that Administrator Michael Kinney had engaged with staff from the City of Forest Lake, and had been discussing the shared use of space with several agencies. The cost-benefit process developed for exploring a new office location attempts to compare the cost of renovations with the cost of a newly built property. One comment from Mr. Grundtner was that the public frustration with this potential property acquisition has had a negative impact on the Forest Lake Association, which works closely with the District. Mr. Schumacher commented that this is a very high-profile project, and for many members of the public it will be their first-time hearing about CLFLWD. Manager Anderson agreed with the concerns expressed by the committee, and commented that while the negative response was frustrating, it was encouraging to see the public engaged with the watershed. Manager Anderson reported that an appraisal for the property has been received, and the next steps in this process involve discussing the appraisal with the Board of Managers, as well as having an open forum on the topic in general.

4.) 2022 Committee Meeting Calendar

Mr. Read presented a proposed meeting calendar for 2022 based on the discussion of the committee at previous meetings. Meetings for 2022 will continue to be on Tuesdays at 5:00pm, but they will be held the week prior to the second board meeting of the month. Meetings will continue to be held virtually for the foreseeable future, but this topic will be reopened for discussing potential outdoor meetings in the warmer months. The meeting schedule was approved by acclamation and is attached.

5.) Election of a January Chair

The committee decided to continue having the position of Chair rotate monthly. Tom Furey was nominated as Chair for the month of January and was elected by acclamation.