

1 **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE**
2 **COMFORT LAKE–FOREST LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT**
3 **Thursday, May 9, 2024**

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5 **1. Call to Order**

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7 President Schmaltz called the May 9, 2024, regular board meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
8 at the CLFLWD office, 44 Lake Street South, and via online video conference.

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10 **Managers Present:**

11 Steve Schmaltz, President
12 Christopher Loth, Vice President (virtual attendance)
13 Dave Bakke, Secretary (virtual attendance)
14 Jackie Anderson, Treasurer
15 Douglas Toavs, Assistant Treasurer (virtual attendance)

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17 **Staff Present:**

18 Mike Kinney, District Administrator
19 Emily Heinz, Planning Coordinator
20 Tori Philippi, Office Manager
21 Garrett Miller, AIS Coordinator
22 Jackie Bussjaeger, Temporary Technician
23 Matthew Hendrickson, Temporary Technician

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25 **Others Present:**

26 Anne Wilkinson, Emmons & Olivier Resources
27 Greg Graske, Emmons & Olivier Resources
28 Chuck Holtman, Smith Partners

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30 **2. Setting of Meeting Agenda**

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32 Manager Anderson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Manager
33 Bakke. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

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

36 **3. New Business**

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38 **a) AIS Prevention & Management Comprehensive Plan**

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40 Garrett Miller explained the purpose of the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention
41 & Management Plan is to provide further detail on the goals and priorities articulated
42 in the Watershed Management Plan, to provide transparency to the public about the
43 District’s AIS operations, and to aid in coordination with partners.

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45 Manager Anderson indicated the description of the Chisago County grant program
46 doesn’t fully represent the program’s history and could benefit from filling out. She
47 offered that Comfort Lake and Little Comfort Lake have received less attention in the
48 AIS program compared to other lakes in the District. President Schmaltz noted that
49 he sent written comments to staff prior to the meeting. He explained that his main
50 comment is for staff to expand upon the AIS rapid response planning component.

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52 President Schmaltz moved to approve the Aquatic Invasive Species Comprehensive
53 Prevention and Management Plan with the revisions discussed. Seconded by
54 Manager Bakke. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

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

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57 **b) Lower St. Croix WBIF Grant Work Plan Revision**

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59 Manager Anderson indicated she attended the metro convene meeting recently,
60 and the group decided to pool the majority of FY25 grant funds with the Lower St.
61 Croix Partnership. Administrator Kinney noted that the current proposed motion
62 relates to the FY23 grant, and staff will bring more information on the FY25 grant
63 forward in the future.

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65 Manager Bakke moved to approve the proposed LSC FY23 WBIF Work Plan Revision
66 and Budget Amendment. Seconded by Manager Anderson. Upon a roll call vote, the
67 motion carried 5-0.

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Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Dave Bakke	X			
Christopher Loth	X			

Doug Toavs	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			

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c) Lessard-Sams OHF Grant Application

Administrator Kinney explained the District has been pursuing a land acquisition south of Bone Lake, which constitutes “phase 1” of the overall project. The present agenda item pertains to a potential grant application which would fund “phase 2” including site restoration. Mr. Kinney indicated that the situation with the land acquisition is still developing. He explained that the landowner is interested in selling the property to a developer, and the developer would like to work with the District to ensure the wetland portion of the site is protected. Administrator Kinney recommended the board approve the proposed motion allowing staff to submit the grant application, but staff will not submit the grant application until there is more certainty with the acquisition phase.

Manager Anderson indicated she thinks submitting a grant application for phase 2 at this time would be putting the cart before the horse. She expressed concern that the District’s standing with the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council might suffer if the District is awarded a grant but isn’t able to deliver on the project. She recommended against submitting the grant application at this time. President Schmaltz countered that having a phase 2 grant in hand would help assure the property owner that the District has the funds for restoration. Administrator Kinney clarified that staff would not submit the grant application if there isn’t certainty about the land acquisition by the May 24 grant application deadline.

President Schmaltz moved to authorize the District Administrator to submit an application to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant Program, provided the District obtains a signed purchase agreement by May 24, and to execute the grant agreement, if awarded. Seconded by Manager Toavs.

Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 4-1.

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

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d) Lake Delisting Schedule

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Administrator Kinney noted that this topic was brought up at the last meeting, and staff were asked to bring forward a recommendation.

Manager Anderson noted that Comfort Lake has a similar water quality history as Bone Lake. She asked why Bone Lake would be petitioned for delisting, but not Comfort Lake. Dr. Wilkinson noted that Comfort Lake may qualify for delisting, but the impaired lake classification makes it more competitive for receiving grant funds.

Manager Bakke asked if there are restrictions on who can submit a delisting request. Administrator Kinney responded that anyone can request a lake be delisted, but the District is particularly well positioned to prepare the information packet with supporting data to accompany the request.

Administrator Kinney noted the impaired waters list is published every 2 years, so the next list won't be posted until spring 2026. President Schmaltz recommended the District move ahead as quickly as possible with requesting Comfort Lake be delisted and evaluate the other impaired lakes after the 2024 water monitoring season.

e) 2025 Budget Presentation & Overview

Emily Heinz presented an overview of the proposed 2025 budget including expense-revenue summary chart, expense-revenue recap, budget overview, loan repayment projections, 20-year budget history, 10-year budget projection, and earned grant revenue projections. The proposed 2025 budget is \$2,676,888, and estimated revenues are equal to expenses. The proposed budget includes no levy increase from 2024 to 2025.

Manager Anderson recommended the District reformat the budget to move program 3012 Land Acquisition & Management out of programs and into its own category with the account code 6000. Ms. Heinz asked if the Board would like to amend its Watershed Management Plan to align with this budget change. Legal Counsel Holtman noted that this would constitute a change not requiring a formal plan amendment process.

Manager Anderson moved to create a new 6000 category for Land Acquisition & Management in the budget. Seconded by Manager Bakke.

President Schmaltz asked staff to evaluate the cost involved in making the plan change to the budget format.

Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

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

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Manager Bakke noted the staff conferences/training budget line item and asked if the budget is sufficient for staff's needs. He stated that he believes staff should have the resources necessary to further their professional development. He asked if staff members prepare an annual training plan for themselves. Administrator Kinney replied that each staff person prepares an outline of training/conferences for the year. Each full-time permanent staff person has a budget of \$1,000/year and is expected to spend approximately 40 hours/year on professional development. This budget has historically been sufficient because many training opportunities are offered online at a low cost or for free. Responding to a question from Manager Bakke, Legal Counsel Holtman advised that District funds may be applied to employee educational expenses toward a degree, if the Board has determined that the reimbursement program is designed to advance District water resource purposes.

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President Schmaltz noted that the District always receives less than the full levy amounts each year due to delinquent taxes. He suggested the Board consider levying a higher amount, knowing it will receive a little bit less. He asked staff to see if they can quantify the delinquent taxes over the years.

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President Schmaltz noted that project expenditures have dropped from 2024 to 2025. He noted the District is looking into focusing on a new project area, which is flood mitigation. He asked staff to estimate flood storage project costs and attempt to quantify the average cost per acre-foot of flood storage created. He noted the MN Watersheds Summer Tour will be highlighting a flood storage project. President Schmaltz also noted that the Operations & Maintenance Program budget seems to have dropped as well.

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Manager Anderson said she is concerned about budget decreases in a lot of areas. She asked staff to prepare a breakout of projects that are dependent on pending grant applications. She asked staff to also distribute the chart showing the District's tax impact history for each county.

Ms. Heinz invited manager comments by May 31. Manager Anderson expressed concern that August 8 may be too early for the public hearing on the proposed budget and levy.

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4. Old Business

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5. Project Update

Administrator Kinney noted that the District recently received positive feedback from the landowner of the potential project site for the Heath Ave Iron Enhanced Sand Filter, and he will bring further updates to a future board meeting.

6. Summary and Approval of Board Direction

The following board directive was noted:

- There were several budget follow-up items for staff.

7. Adjourn

a) Next regular board meeting – May 23, 2024, 6:30 pm

Manager Anderson indicated that she is unable to attend the May 23rd regular meeting. There was discussion about rescheduling that meeting so that all 5 managers can attend. Staff were directed to send out a scheduling poll via email.

Manager Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Manager Toavs. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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

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Dave Bakke, Secretary -----