

1 **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE**
2 **COMFORT LAKE–FOREST LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT**
3 **Tuesday, October 29, 2024**
4

5 **1. Call to Order**
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7 President Schmaltz called the October 29, 2024, special board meeting to order at 5:30
8 p.m. at the Comfort Lake–Forest Lake Watershed District offices, 44 Lake Street South,
9 Suite A, Forest Lake, MN.
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11 **Managers Present:**

12 Steve Schmaltz, President

13 Christopher Loth, Vice President (virtual attendance)

14 Douglas Toavs, Assistant Treasurer

15 Dave Bakke, Secretary

16 Jackie Anderson, Treasurer (virtual attendance)
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18 **Staff Present:**

19 Mike Kinney, Administrator

20 Emily Heinz, Planning Coordinator

21 Mike Sandager, Permitting Coordinator
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23 **Others Present:**

24 Yianni Arhontoulis, Cultivate Advisors
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26 **2. Strategic Planning Workshop**
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28 **Vision Statement**
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30 Yianni Arhontoulis noted that he received feedback from managers and staff regarding
31 the vision statement and mission statement since the last meeting. He recommended
32 that the Board review the mission statement once it has reached agreement on the
33 vision statement. President Schmaltz indicated he was interested in hearing staff's
34 feedback on the vision statement.
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36 Mr. Arhontoulis reiterated the current draft vision statement:
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38 *We see a future where our community is informed and engaged in improving our*
39 *ecosystems and natural water resources for generations to come.*
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41 Manager Anderson indicated the vision statement needs to capture the purposes for
42 which the District was originally founded, such as flood mitigation and local government

43 partnerships. She noted that local government partnerships should result in consistency
44 across political boundaries in terms of rules and regulations. She noted the vision
45 statement should be repeatable and memorable. She thanked Manager Toavs for
46 compiling example vision statements.

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48 Mr. Arhontoulis clarified that the vision statement should focus on where the District is
49 going. He recapped staff feedback on the draft vision statement:

- 50 • There was general agreement with the message being conveyed
- 51 • There were some suggested wording changes, but overall, don't let perfect get
52 in the way of good.
- 53 • Staff recommended removing the word "natural", emphasizing the shared
54 responsibility between the District and community, and using a passive voice to
55 keep it aspirational and neutral.

56 The resulting revised vision statement would read as follows:

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58 *A future where our community is informed and engaged with the District in*
59 *improving our ecosystems and water resources for generations to come.*

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61 President Schmaltz indicated he was concerned the original statement took away the
62 District's responsibility, and he indicated he liked the revised statement. Manager
63 Anderson said she had something very similar written down. She noted that there are
64 numerous unnatural, man-made features that affect the natural resources in the
65 watershed, and those need to be addressed too. Manager Anderson stated she would
66 like to see "clean water" conveyed in the statement. She indicated that Minnesota voters
67 are aware of the Clean Water Legacy amendment, so the idea of "clean" water is familiar
68 to Minnesotans. Manager Anderson noted that "community" is broader than the citizens,
69 and it includes the local government units as well.

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71 Manager Loth asked for clarification on why staff recommends removing "natural" from
72 the statement. Ms. Heinz replied that she understood staff's reasoning to be similar to
73 what Manager Anderson said earlier – the natural features are the ultimate priority to
74 protect, but there are unnatural, man-made features in the watershed that have an
75 impact on the natural resources. Removing "natural" makes the statement more concise
76 and more encompassing of the various issues in the watershed.

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78 President Schmaltz indicated that the term "water resources" implies drinking water
79 treatment, in his mind, which is outside the District's scope of work. He recommended
80 keeping the word "natural" in front of water resources.

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82 Manager Loth said that the "water" element is implied because the CLFLWD is a
83 *watershed* district. He explained that this element is already known to the public, and
84 now the District is trying to shift its focus toward systems that may be less obvious to the
85 public. He recommended that leading with ecosystems reminds the public that

86 protecting water resources is much more involved than merely focusing on the water
87 itself; it is critical to address the interconnected ecosystems. Manager Loth
88 recommended that statement should invoke the idea that someone who doesn't live on
89 the lake still has an impact on the lake because of the interconnectedness of the
90 watershed.

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92 Manager Bakke said he likes beginning with "we see a future," because he felt that it
93 projects a vision and is inspiring. Manager Anderson and Manager Loth agreed.

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95 Managers discussed the importance of getting buy-in from community members in
96 order to make the vision a reality. Manager Bakke said the word "collaborate" implies
97 being both informed and being engaged. He elaborated that collaboration goes a step
98 further than informed because it implies that the community can inform the District on
99 decision-making.

100
101 Mr. Arhontoulis presented two potential draft vision statements:

102 *We see a future where our communities are connected, informed, and engaged with*
103 *us in improving and sustaining our clean water resources and ecosystems for future*
104 *generations to enjoy*

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106 Or

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108 *We see a future where our communities collaborate with us in improving and*
109 *sustaining our clean water resources and ecosystems for future generations to*
110 *enjoy.*

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112 Manager Anderson indicated that the vision statement should also be a commitment; it
113 should convey what the District's job is. She noted that community members also have
114 a responsibility, and engagement is a two-way street. She indicated she sees the vision
115 as a statement from the District and an invitation to the public to get involved.

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117 Manager Bakke said the District should be willing to listen to the public and get their
118 feedback and wisdom, as opposed to framing it solely as the District being a one-way
119 communicator.

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121 Manager Toavs indicated he liked the version with "connected, informed, and engaged"
122 because the interconnectivity is key to the District's work. He noted examples of
123 agricultural impacts on downstream waterbodies and the District's watershed
124 ultimately draining to the St. Croix River.

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126 Manager Loth indicated he liked the idea of "collaboration" conveying the idea of a two-
127 way street of communication. He liked the idea of simplifying the statement and having
128 fewer words in general.

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President Schmaltz noted that landowner cooperation is key to the District's ability to achieve its vision and goals. He explained that it is important to educate landowners about why stewardship is necessary in order to get buy-in. He noted natural lakeshore buffers as an example of needed stewardship.

All five managers indicated they have their own preference for one draft or the other, but could support either vision statement.

Mission Statement

Mr. Arhontoulis presented the mission statement comments that were submitted by managers prior to the meeting. He clarified the difference between the vision statement, the mission statement, and values:

- Vision statement: Describes the future we are striving to achieve. It is aspirational, forward-looking, and represents the ultimate goal of the organization.
- Mission statement: Defines the organization's current purpose and what it does on a day-to-day basis to serve its stakeholders. It focuses on the present actions that drive us toward our vision.
- Values: List of single words or brief phrases that convey what is important to the organization and what the organization stands behind.

The current mission statement reads as follows:

The mission of the Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District is to protect and improve its water resources through adaptive management and education of local stakeholders.

Mr. Arhontoulis presented re-drafted mission statements from each manager:

- President Schmaltz: Protect and improve water resources, manage flooding, preserve special natural resource areas/ecosystems, and educate local stakeholders for supportive action; all for the benefit of the community for generations to come.
- Manager Toavs: We will use science, technology, and observation in the implementation of different diagnosis to identify threats to our ecosystems and determine the most cost-effective ways to remediate those threats.
- Manager Bakke: The mission of the Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District is to protect and improve its water resources, improve preparedness and emergency response to flooding, and implement a greenway corridor to improve landscape resiliency.

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- Manager Loth: Our mission is to protect and enhance our ecosystems and natural water resources by being leaders in watershed work, leveraging innovation, adaptive management, and education/outreach, empowering our community to be informed and active stewards.
 - Manager Anderson: Through establishment of programs, projects and processes, to accomplish our clean water goals by using solid scientific research methods, adaptive management protocols, and sound economic principles, as foundation for prioritized, targeted and measurable public works through creation of 10-year action plans.

182 President Schmaltz indicated that the mission, vision, and values from Washington
183 County's strategic plan are good examples.

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185 Manager Bakke indicated the first part of the mission statement is essential and should
186 stay as-is: "to protect and improve its water resources."

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188 Mr. Arhontoulis presented three new draft mission statements based on the feedback
189 managers provided.

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- Our mission is to protect and enhance our water resources and ecosystems through science-based management, proactive flood prevention, and community education, ensuring a resilient environment for future generations.
 - To safeguard water quality, manage flooding risks, and preserve natural ecosystems by engaging and educating the community, fostering partnerships, and using sustainable practices that benefit all residents of the watershed.
 - The mission of CLFLWD is to promote clean water and healthy ecosystems by managing resources responsibly, building community awareness, and collaborating with local partners to adapt to environmental challenges.

200 President Schmaltz indicated the District could utilize a list of "values" to articulate some
201 of the points that were made.

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203 Managers discussed some of the District's values including:

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- Scientific, adaptive management
 - Economical, cost-benefit, financial efficiency, cost-conscious, results-oriented, Pareto Principle
 - Collaborative with partners
 - Educate and inform local stakeholders
 - Leader in our field, thought leaders, innovation, cutting edge, creative
 - Preparedness, sustainability, return to pre-development conditions
 - Interconnectivity of watershed systems and ecosystems

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215 Mr. Arhontoulis redrafted the mission statement based on the values discussed:
216 *Our mission is to protect and enhance our ecosystems and natural water*
217 *resources by being leaders in watershed work, leveraging innovation, adaptive*
218 *management, sound economic principles, education/outreach, and empowering*
219 *our community to be informed and active stewards.*

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221 Manager Bakke noted the importance of climate change, flood mitigation, community
222 preparedness, and the greenway corridor. He noted these concepts are not identified in
223 the mission statement, as drafted.

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225 Mr. Arhontoulis recommended that the mission statement shouldn't be too granular so
226 that it needs to be updated every few years. He indicated he would like to get input from
227 the staff and circle back with the Board. He requested managers take some time
228 between now and the next meeting to draft up 5-10 values.

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230 **3. Adjourn**

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232 **a) Next special board meeting – November 12, 2024, 5:30 pm**
233 **b) Next regular board meeting – November 21, 2024, 6:30 pm**

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235 The meeting was adjourned by general consensus at 7:30 p.m.

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238 Dave Bakke, Secretary -----