

1 **MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE**
2 **COMFORT LAKE–FOREST LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT**
3 **Tuesday, February 11, 2025**
4

5 **1. Call to Order**
6

7 President Anderson called the February 11, 2025, 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.
10

11 **Managers Present:**

12 Jackie Anderson, President
13 Christopher Loth, Vice President (virtual attendance)
14 Steve Schmaltz, Treasurer (virtual attendance)
15 Douglas Toavs, Assistant Treasurer (virtual attendance)
16 Dave Bakke, Secretary (virtual attendance)
17

18 **Staff Present:**

19 Mike Kinney, Administrator
20 Emily Heinz, Planning Coordinator
21 Jackie Bussjaeger, Water Resources Technician
22 Adam Hjelm, Education & Outreach Coordinator
23

24 **Others Present:**

25 Yianni Arhontoulis, Cultivate Advisors
26 Cecilio Olivier, Emmons & Olivier Resources
27 Anne Wilkinson, Emmons & Olivier Resources
28 Greg Grasko, Emmons & Olivier Resources
29 Camilla Correll, Emmons & Olivier Resources
30 Bill Yu, Emmons & Olivier Resources
31 Dan Pfeiffer, Zan Associates
32

33 **2. Strategic Planning Workshop**
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35 Mr. Arhontoulis displayed the webpage and PDF illustrating the District’s newly adopted
36 values. Manager Bakke recommended removing the icons from the center of the PDF
37 graphic. Manager Loth agreed with removing the icons or perhaps making them smaller.
38 He recommended emphasizing the value titles more strongly by making the text
39 significantly larger than the description. President Anderson recommended making the
40 logo larger. Manager Schmaltz recommended revising the webpage so that the values
41 titles are all visible to begin with. For example, replacing the icons with word boxes. Adam

42 Hjelm indicated he would work with Pinnacle Marking to make revised drafts, per the
43 discussion.

44

45 Mr. Arhontoulis solicited feedback from the managers regarding prioritizing the goals
46 and objectives from the 10-year Watershed Management Plan. He recommended a
47 process of refining goals and priorities in order to create specific, actionable steps in the
48 strategic plan. Manager Schmaltz referred to the District's 2025 budget, which outlines
49 the initiatives the District will undertake this year. Manager Schmaltz recommended the
50 District focus on creating a succinct written description (2-3 pages) of the main
51 objectives the District will undertake over the next 3-5 years. President Anderson
52 indicated that the District has a science-based approach which is supported by the
53 District Engineer, Emmons & Olivier Resources. She described how the District divided its
54 boundaries by subwatersheds or "lake management districts." She indicated the District
55 should follow the projects that are identified through the District's scientific based
56 process. She indicated the District must pursue projects while also maintaining all of the
57 programs outlined in the Watershed Management Plan. President Anderson mentioned
58 additional initiatives including flood resiliency and a new office space.

59

60 Mr. Arhontoulis asked Administrator Kinney what the staff needs as far as direction. Mr.
61 Kinney indicated that the strategic plan would ideally provide guidance and identify the
62 specific needs for a new office space. He explained that the greenway corridor, flood
63 resiliency, and shoreline buffers are high priority topics that have floated to the top of
64 the District's planning efforts. He indicated that, in addition to these objectives, there are
65 many unexpected issues that arise every year which may demand the District's
66 attention. Mr. Kinney indicated that the District is always seeking to improve the way it
67 does business and to maximize staff's efficiency. Mr. Kinney indicated that the strategic
68 plan, i.e., putting these priorities in writing, is important for directing staff's efforts as well
69 as informing the community.

70

71 Manager Loth left the meeting.

72

73 Mr. Arhontoulis recommended that this exercise be used to establish priorities so the
74 District can allocate its limited resources (e.g., time and money) to the top priority goals
75 and objectives. He asked for a summary of the District's office space seeking efforts. Mr.
76 Kinney noted the District has been working on seeking new office space for the last 10
77 years. President Anderson indicated the District needs to hire a consultant to help with
78 the process because Mr. Kinney doesn't have the bandwidth to shepherd this process
79 forward. President Anderson noted that the building owner of the District's current office
80 space had offered to partner with the District to search for a new building. In this case,
81 the building owner would fund the purchase of a new building, and the District would
82 enter into a long-term rental agreement.

83

84 President Anderson indicated that hiring additional staff will help free up the
85 Administrator's time to pursue the new office space. She noted the District is currently
86 seeking to hire a Business Manager and will be posting for a Deputy Administrator by
87 third quarter of this year.

88
89 Manager Schmaltz indicated the District has a lot of initiatives currently ongoing, and
90 there is a lot of overlap between issue areas. He referred to the part of the vision
91 statement regarding "continued collaboration with our citizens" and noted that this
92 wasn't part of the District's original mission statement. He noted the need for improved
93 stewardship among local residents. He recommended the top four objectives on which
94 the District should be focusing are: water quality, flood resiliency, community education,
95 and new office space. Manager Schmaltz suggested Ms. Heinz try drafting a document
96 articulating these priorities.

97
98 Manager Bakke indicated the District is currently at a critical point in the strategic
99 planning process. He explained the District needs to understand how it is connecting the
100 annual budget, the Watershed Management Plan, and employee SMART goals and
101 performance reviews. He indicated all of these things should be tied to each other.

102
103 Mr. Arhontoulis recommended the strategic plan be as clear and concise as possible, so
104 it is simple and easy to understand the actions that need to take place.

105
106 President Anderson explained the District's past diagnostic studies. She indicated that
107 the Forest Lake Diagnostic Study was more detailed than the Comfort Lake & Little
108 Comfort Lake Diagnostic Study.

109
110 Mr. Arhontoulis presented the notes from District staff's discussion on 5-year strategic
111 planning priorities. Recurring themes included: office space, rules/permitting, shoreline
112 restoration/cost-share, education and outreach, interagency communication, climate
113 resiliency, lake water quality. Mr. Arhontoulis presented feedback from the managers. He
114 recommended the Board align on the categories or "buckets" in which to categorize
115 priorities. President Anderson recommended items be categorized as either "District-
116 wide" initiatives or "subwatershed" initiatives. For example, programs are offered district-
117 wide, whereas projects need to be targeted according to each specific subwatershed's
118 needs.

119

120 **3. Flood Resiliency Community Engagement**

121
122 Dan Pfeiffer presented an overview of the presentation slides and interactive activities
123 for the February 12th community engagement workshop.

124
125 Manager Bakke indicated this approach makes sense. He asked about the social
126 vulnerability slide and if "Non-English speakers" should be changed to "English as a

127 second language.” He indicated he wanted to recognize those who are bilingual, which
128 is an admirable skill. Camilla Correll noted that the data on the social vulnerability slide
129 comes from census data, so it strictly is concerning those who do not speak English, not
130 those who speak two languages. Manager Toavs posited that the vulnerability may be
131 derived from the fact that they do not speak English, even as a second language, so they
132 may be at a disadvantage in an emergency situation when instructions are being
133 transmitted in only English. Mr. Kinney suggested annotating the slide to indicate that
134 the source is census data.

135
136 Manager Bakke asked if there will be a virtual call-in option for the community workshop.
137 Mr. Pfeiffer indicated it will be an in-person only meeting. He explained that, in his
138 experience, a “hybrid” environment isn’t as effective for an interactive workshop.
139 President Anderson indicated she plans to attend the workshop. Manager Schmaltz
140 indicated he would stop by.

141
142 Staff was directed to:

- 143 • Share the District’s diagnostic study reports with Mr. Arhontoulis.
- 144 • Share detailed building entry information with managers for the February 12th
145 workshop.
- 146 • Send out a poll to schedule the next strategic planning meeting.

147
148 **4. Adjourn**

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150 **a) Next regular board meeting – February 13, 2025, 6:30 pm**

151
152 The meeting was adjourned by general consensus at 7:35 p.m.

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156
157 Dave Bakke, Secretary _____