

1 **MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE**
2 **COMFORT LAKE–FOREST LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT**
3 **Tuesday, April 29, 2025**
4

5 **1. Call to Order**
6

7 President Anderson called the April 29, 2025, special board meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.
8 at the Comfort Lake–Forest Lake Watershed District offices, 44 Lake Street South, Suite A,
9 Forest Lake, MN.
10

11 **Managers Present:**

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

17 **Managers Absent:**

18 Douglas Toavs, Assistant Treasurer
19

20 **Staff Present:**

21 Mike Kinney, Administrator
22 Emily Heinz, Planning Coordinator
23

24 **Others Present:**

25 Yianni Arhontoulis, Cultivate Advisors
26

27 **2. Strategic Planning Workshop**
28

29 Mr. Arhontoulis presented an overview of the draft strategic plan including the following
30 sections: Vision/Mission/Values, Top Initiative List, Greenbelt & Open Space, Building,
31 Human Resources & Leadership, Public Engagement, Education & Outreach, and
32 Workshop/Meeting Topics for the Board. He noted that the plan is intended to be living
33 document that can be reviewed quarterly or semi-annually and updated over time.
34

35 Manager Bakke indicated that completing the mission, vision, and values during this
36 process was what he had hoped for. He indicated that the proposed plan goes above
37 and beyond his original expectations.
38

39 President Anderson suggested the addition of “to improve municipal stormwater
40 mapping and details” to line 9 under Water Quality Improvement on the Top Initiatives
41 List.
42

43 Mr. Arhontoulis explained that the District has many ongoing tasks and initiatives it works
44 on every day, from the multiple goals in the 10-year plan to staff SMART goals. He
45 recommended that the purpose of the strategic plan is not to be all encompassing, but
46 to identify priorities and strategies to implement new initiatives. Mr. Arhontoulis
47 highlighted the additional detail provided in the plan with respect to Greenbelt & Open
48 Space, Building, HR & Leadership, Public Engagement, and Education & Outreach. He
49 stressed the importance of agreeing upon initiatives, actions, and desired outcomes for
50 each. He explained the "Building" plan detail has a slightly different format which reflects
51 the sequential steps necessary to attain a new office space.

52
53 President Anderson indicated recreation is not an element of the Greenbelt and Open
54 Space initiative. She asked that the mention of community access be removed from the
55 associated initiative.

56
57 Manager Schmaltz asked Mr. Arhontoulis to reiterate the purpose of the strategic plan.
58 Mr. Arhontoulis said the purpose is to provide guidance for the organization. He explained
59 that if the District wishes to get public buy-in on the plan, it could reformat the plan for
60 use in public communications; this would convey District's top priorities. Mr. Arhontoulis
61 noted the plan is intended as an internal document in its current format. Manager
62 Schmaltz said the District should communicate the District's priorities to the public and
63 get public buy-in. The District could create an outreach document which is a simplified
64 version of the plan.

65
66 Mr. Arhontoulis presented the "Workshop/Meeting Topics for the Board" page in the plan.
67 He explained that several topics have come up over the course of the strategic planning
68 process, and there are additional workshops the Board may need to hold in order to
69 discuss these topics. Manager Bakke indicated the District may have a new board
70 member joining the District this fall, and the strategic plan will be helpful in onboarding.

71
72 Mr. Arhontoulis indicated this is the final meeting in the strategic planning process, and
73 the District will submit the strategic plan to the State on May 1st as part of a grant that the
74 District received.

75
76 President Anderson indicated she would like to see some minor tweaks to the Public
77 Engagement and Education & Outreach pages, but these can be handled internally.

78
79 President Anderson recommended the strategic plan doesn't need to be further
80 prioritized because the District will continually review the plan, at least annually, moving
81 forward. Manager Bakke indicated that Flood Mitigation should be a priority in one way
82 or another.

83
84 Mr. Arhontoulis asked how frequently the Board would like to revisit the strategic plan.
85 Manager Schmaltz indicated the District's flood mitigation work is driving a lot of the

86 strategies in the plan. Manager Schmaltz indicated everything else is secondary to flood
87 mitigation work. Mr. Arhontoulis demonstrated how the Top Initiatives Table can be used
88 as a pivot table to highlight initiatives with certain timelines. Manager Schmaltz
89 indicated the District's annual budgeting and annual progress reporting processes will
90 dovetail with the strategic plan and serve as check-in points for the strategic plan. He
91 indicated that the Board will look to the District Engineer, Emmons & Olivier Resources, to
92 drive the technical aspects of flood mitigation and greenbelt planning.
93

94 President Anderson indicated the District has been discussing the Greenbelt topic for 5
95 years. She explained EOR had to do substantial data gathering and analysis, for example,
96 wetland inventory and flood modeling. She indicated these data now need to be
97 coalesced and cross referenced with local government partners' plans. President
98 Anderson indicated it has been a very methodical, scientific process for creating the
99 action plan. She indicated the District needs to present the resulting action plan to
100 government partners and ask how it aligns with their plans for the future. She indicated
101 the District needs buy-in from government partners and the community. President
102 Anderson indicated the strategic plan is acceptable in its current form, and the District
103 will work with EOR from here on out.
104

105 Mr. Arhontoulis indicated he will prepare some high-level guidelines for administrator
106 succession planning. He summarized other HR-related initiatives including
107 performance-based culture, incentive frameworks, clear job expectations, onboarding
108 process, HR support, and new staff recruiting.
109

110 Mr. Arhontoulis suggested the strategic plan will be helpful in onboarding new board
111 members and staff, and it will ease transitions. Mr. Arhontoulis indicated he will prepare
112 additional supporting documents pertaining to human resources, and he will make final
113 cleanup edits in order to finalize the plan for submittal to the State. Managers thanked
114 Mr. Arhontoulis for his assistance and commended him on its work.
115

116 **3. Adjourn**

117 118 **a) Next regular board meeting – May 8, 2025, 6:30 pm**

119
120 The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:48 pm.
121

122
123 Dave Bakke, Secretary _____