

1 **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE**
2 **COMFORT LAKE–FOREST LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT**
3 **Monday, July 14, 2025**
4

5 **1. Call to Order**

6 President Anderson called the July 14, 2025, special board meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
7 at the Comfort Lake–Forest Lake Watershed District offices, 44 Lake Street South, Suite A,
8 Forest Lake, MN.
9

10 **Managers Present:**

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

18 Mike Kinney, Administrator
19 Tori Philippi, Office Manager
20 Emily Heinz, Planning Coordinator
21

22 **Others Present:**

23 Anne Wilkinson, Emmons & Olivier Resources
24

25 **2. Budget Workshop**
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27 Manager Schmaltz and Planning Coordinator Emily Heinz presented a summary of
28 potential budget options. The proposed plan included levy adjustments accounting for
29 the average levy increase, lost funds due to delinquent taxes, and loan repayment.
30

31 In the past, the District's levy increase has typically been between 4 and 7 percent.
32 Manager Schmaltz recommended the Board consider a levy increase of 20.8 percent for
33 2026, with smaller percentage increases planned for 2027 and 2028.
34

35 President Anderson questioned why feasibility costs are not completely covered by
36 grants. Ms. Heinz explained that grants will not retroactively pay for costs that occurred
37 before the grant funds were awarded. President Anderson requested a breakdown of
38 awarded grants from 2024 and an estimation of how much of each project was covered
39 by grant funding.
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41 The Board discussed current expenses and projections, as well as other ideas to reduce
42 spending. Manager Schmaltz asked to see comparisons to levies enacted by other

43 watershed districts. Ms. Heinz presented a table comparing the District's 2024 tax impact
44 compared to other watershed districts in Washington County.

45
46 Manager Bakke said he calculated the 20 percent increase for his own property taxes,
47 and found it represented about \$70. He also spoke to neighbors in the Bone Lake area
48 about how they'd feel about a levy increase and heard that several neighbors were in
49 favor of their money going towards local conservation causes. Ms. Heinz noted that the
50 ad valorem levy will affect taxpayers differently depending on their property values. That
51 is, if the District approves a 20 percent increase to the levy overall, it may not necessarily
52 be a 20 percent increase for every resident. Some residents will see more than a 20
53 percent increase, while others may see less than a 20 percent increase.

54
55 President Anderson added that while a 20 percent increase may sound significant to
56 taxpayers, the watershed levy represents a much smaller cost to property owners than
57 city or school district taxes.

58
59 The Board discussed potential changes to the permitting fee structure to apply more
60 permitting-related costs to permit holders rather than the District's general fund. The
61 Board briefly questioned how the current budget would affect the District's plan to hire a
62 business manager. Manager Bakke noted that the District is scheduling interviews for the
63 position.

64
65 The Board has not yet set the date for the 2026 budget public hearing.

66 67 **3. Adjourn**

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69 **a) Next regular board meeting – July 24, 2025, 6:30 pm**

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71 The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:04 pm.

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73
74 Dave Bakke, Secretary _____