

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
COMFORT LAKE–FOREST LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT
Thursday, December 18, 2025**

1. Call to Order

President Anderson called the December 18, 2025, regular board meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. at the CLFLWD office, 44 Lake Street South, and via online video conference.

Managers Present:

Jackie Anderson, President

Dave Bakke, Secretary (virtual attendance)

Steve Schmaltz, Treasurer (virtual attendance)

Jim Schottmuller, Manager (virtual attendance)

Douglas Toavs, Assistant Treasurer (virtual attendance)

Staff Present:

Mike Kinney, District Administrator

Brad Jernberg, Business & Operations Manager

Tori Philippi, Office Manager

Emily Heinz, Planning Coordinator

Mike Sandager, Program Coordinator

Aidan Read, Land Management Specialist

Adam Hjelm, Education & Outreach Coordinator

Matthew Hendrickson, Technician

Others Present:

Anne Wilkinson, Emmons & Olivier Resources

Chuck Holtman, Smith Partners

Randy Schumacher, Community Advisory Committee

2. Setting of Meeting Agenda

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

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller	X			
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			

Jackie Anderson	X			
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3. Consent Agenda

- a) Special Board Meeting Minutes – November 6, 2025
- b) Regular Board Meeting Minutes – November 20, 2025

Manager Schmaltz moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Seconded by Manager Schottmuller. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller	X			
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			

4. Public Comment Opportunity on 2026 Budget & Levy

Manager Schmaltz shared comments he had received from Community Advisory Committee member Randy Schumacher. Mr. Schumacher is concerned that the board did not vote to lower the proposed levy increase from 23.7 percent.

Legal Counsel Chuck Holtman requested that Mr. Schumacher's comments be included in the official meeting record. Manager Schmaltz suggested any board responses to these comments be given during the Item 8b budget discussion.

5. Public Open Forum

No comments were given.

6. Advisory Committee Updates

Land Management Specialist Aidan Read reported the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) discussed the annual budget, upcoming calendar of events, and the aquatic invasive species (AIS) end-of-year report at its last meeting. Randy Schumacher was elected chair for the January 2026 CAC meeting. Mr. Read invited board members to attend the next meeting if available.

7. New Business

- a) 2025 Blue Water Science Yearend Reports

Blue Water Science was contracted to complete surveys on several District lakes in 2025. These included Moody Lake pre- and post-curl-leaf pondweed (CLP) treatment point-intercept macrophyte surveys; Bone Lake CLP and Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) delineation and assessment surveys; a Shields Lake CLP delineation and assessment survey; Forest Lake flowering rush, EWM, and CLP delineations and assessment surveys; Comfort Lake CLP and EWM delineations and assessment surveys; and a Lake Keewahtin point-intercept macrophyte survey.

Permitting and AIS Coordinator Mike Sandager added that AIS treatments were performed on Forest Lake and Bone Lake in 2025. He said additional treatments may be necessary on Comfort, Moody, Shields, and Forest Lakes in the future. Full yearend reports will be available at the January 8th board meeting, and a representative from Blue Water Science will attend to answer questions. Final reports for the AIS and watercraft inspector programs were made available for the board and members of the public to watch on YouTube.

Manager Bakke commented that the Blue Water Science report is very complete with detailed information to show the impact of the AIS treatments and identify potential actions that may be needed in the future.

Mr. Sandager noted that comments given by members of the Community Advisory Committee would be included with the final report in January. The committee requested visual graphics showing all areas of invasive species as well as treatment areas on District lakes to demonstrate post-treatment effects.

b) Aquatic Invasive Species Yearend Report

Permitting and AIS Coordinator Mike Sandager and Technician Matthew Hendrickson presented a draft yearend report summarizing the 2025 activity of the aquatic invasive species (AIS) program. The board will consider approving the report at the January 22nd meeting.

Manager Bakke asked if the Bone Lake funding graph shows a combined total of AIS treatment and watercraft inspection (WCI) costs. Mr. Sandager responded that the WCI hours are included in the Bone Lake funding total, and that those costs could be displayed separately from the other AIS expenses. Manager Bakke prefers that the two categories be displayed separately for clarity.

Administrator Kinney noted that the WCI program falls within the larger AIS program, and that the graph is already broken out by category. Manager Bakke insisted that the labeling be clarified further. He pointed out that the Bone Lake Association

contributes to the WCI program, but not directly toward AIS treatment, so it is important to make this distinction clear.

President Anderson agreed that further detail could be helpful, adding that it is important for people to understand that a good AIS program requires both treatment and the education and monitoring provided by the WCI program.

c) 2025 Watercraft Inspection Program Year-end Report

Mr. Sandager, Mr. Hendrickson, and Office Manager Tori Philippi presented a draft report detailing the 2025 watercraft inspection program.

In 2025, CLFLWD, Chisago County, and Minnesota DNR inspectors conducted 6,053 inspections and spent a total of 3,562.75 hours inspecting watercraft and educating boaters at the 5 public launches within the District. The average inspection rate was 1.70 inspections per hour.

d) 2025 Year-end Accounting & Reimbursement Requests

Planning Coordinator Emily Heinz explained that this item is a reminder for managers to submit reimbursement requests before the end of the fiscal year, and as an opportunity to look at year-end expenditures more closely and identify line items that could be amended to balance the budget.

The Total Staff Wages and Benefits item is projected to come in under budget, which gives the board the option to direct the surplus into the over budget line items recommended by staff. President Anderson stated she is hopeful that having Business and Operations Manager Brad Jernberg on staff will allow the District to do this type of budget balancing with more frequency.

Manager Schmaltz suggested the District not amend the budget too frequently and take the time to understand why items are over budget and what might need to change. He also expressed concern that this might contribute to an excessive amount of time spent on accounting, and that the uneven nature of expenses from month to month might even out in ways that can't be anticipated within a smaller timescale.

President Anderson suggested that the board try monthly or quarterly budget adjustments, with the option to change its decision later.

President Anderson moved to amend the 2025 budget for Total Staff Wages and Benefits to \$1,036,000 and to transfer the following amounts from Total Staff Wages and Benefits to the following accounts:

- \$30,000 to 1-001-4000 Managers Per Diem & Payroll Tax
 - \$2,100 to 1-002-4203 Computer Supplies/Software/IT
 - \$13,000 to 1-004-4330 CPA/Bookkeeping
 - \$15,000 to 1-004-4337 Consultant/Professional Services
 - \$8,000 to 1-004-4500 Consulting Engineer (Admin)
 - \$55,000 to 5-000-A General Project Development/Pre-Project Investigation
- Seconded by Manager Toavs. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller	X			
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			

8. Old Business

a) Revision to Rule 9.0

Mr. Sandager explained that the permitting program currently operates under a fee and deposit system with a reimbursable sum contributed by the permit applicant. This rule revision would change the system to a flat rate, nonrefundable payment. During the public comment period, the District received comments from the City of Forest Lake and Washington County. The City requested a clarification that has been incorporated into the rule revision. The Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Health each responded to state that its organization had no comments.

President Anderson asked why there is such a high threshold to secure a supplemental fee for overage. Under this rule change, any permit that exceeds engineering and legal review costs by \$4,500 or more would have the amount incurred above \$4,500 added to the permit fee.

Mr. Sandager explained that is the "break even" amount meant to handle extreme outliers. Dr. Wilkinson added that the District's permit history was analyzed to inform this change, and that it is very similar to the rule used by Rice Creek Watershed District. This measure will protect the District from undue engineering and legal fees incurred that should be covered by the permittee. She also recommended that adaptive management will be the best approach going forward, with possible adjustments over time.

President Anderson said she feels more comfortable with the change with the understanding that the District will monitor how the specified threshold operates in practice.

President Anderson moved to adopt the attached proposed revised rule. Seconded by Manager Schmaltz. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller	X			
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			

Manager Schmaltz moved to adopt the proposed fee schedule, titled "Schedule A – Permit Fee Schedule," replacing existing Schedules A and B. Seconded by Manager Toavs. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller	X			
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			

b) 2026 Budget & Levy

Ms. Heinz explained that the twofold purpose of this item is to give the board an opportunity to discuss comments that the District has received regarding the 2026 budget and levy comment opportunity, and to present two recommended motions to adjust the expense budget.

Ms. Heinz noted that if the board does not wish to change the previously adopted levy, no action is needed. However, a few expense line items have changed since the board's adoption of the budget in September, and these two recommended action items would adjust for those changes.

The first proposed budget adjustment regards office space rent, which would increase to account for property taxes. The second is the loan repayment schedule that has been adjusted by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency at the District's request. This has resulted in cost savings for the District over the next few years.

President Anderson moved to amend the 2026 budget for account 1-002-4210 Office Space (Rent) to \$59,915 and to transfer \$13,368 from account 000-2900 Fund Balance to account 1-002-4210. Seconded by Manager Schmaltz. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller	X			
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			

Manager Schmaltz moved to amend the 2026 budget for account 2-000 Debt Services to \$449,760 and to transfer \$82,331 from account 2-000 to 000-2900 Fund Balance. Seconded by President Anderson. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller	X			
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			

Following the vote, Mr. Schumacher joined the meeting virtually. He further offered comments about the 2026 budget. He pointed out that one of the reasons the 23.7 percent increase was necessary was for loan repayment. Since the repayment schedule has been renegotiated to a 10-year plan, allowing the District to save \$82,331. Mr. Schumacher asked for the board's justification to keep the levy increase at 23.7 percent.

Manager Schmaltz responded that the net gain would only be about \$68,000, given the \$13,368 increase in rent expenses. He explained that each 1 percent levy increase is equivalent to about \$22,000. The \$68,000 surplus could allow the District to remove 3 percentage points and lower the levy increase to roughly 20 percent.

President Anderson stated that previous years' levies had not been set high enough, and that the incremental increase to the tax statements of individual property owners would not be substantial. However, it would make a difference to the District in supporting a proper reserve fund. She stated any of the unused reserve could later be used to pay toward the debt reduction.

Administrator Kinney noted that the budget scenario currently calls for an additional loan in 2026. He added that the low percentage interest on the loans is a good value for the taxpayer. The District has also received grants for its large projects. He anticipated that some future grant dollars can be used to offset program and staff expenses.

President Anderson mentioned that the District's informal policy is not to go forward with a project unless it is 100 percent covered by grant funding. Administrator Kinney added that the Rule 9.0 change would help by shifting some of the costs from levy funding to permit applicants.

Manager Schmaltz added that part of the intent behind the three-year levy increase plan is to make up for past projects that unexpectedly exceeded budget.

c) Forest Lake Alum Treatment – Project Closeout

The District completed the first application of a split-dose alum treatment on Forest Lake in 2023, then monitored treatment effectiveness in 2024. The District adjusted the alum dosage and completed the second split-dose treatment in October 2025, and the project is now ready to be closed out.

District Engineer Dr. Anne Wilkinson recommended that the District continue to take measurements of hypolimnetic phosphorus in the middle basin of Forest Lake to monitor the effectiveness of the alum treatment over time.

Manager Bakke asked what kind of follow-up will be necessary. Dr. Wilkinson responded that the District's monitoring program continue to take bottom water samples to analyze phosphorus concentrations.

Manager Schmaltz moved to accept the District Engineer's certificate of completion and to close out the Forest Lake Alum Treatment Project. Seconded by Manager Bakke. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller	X			
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			

d) Governance Manual Update

The purpose of this agenda item is to consider updates to the District's Governance Manual and Bylaws. This topic was last discussed during the Report of Staff at the November 20th regular board meeting. Staff distributed legal counsel's text amending the bylaws to allow a manager to hold two officer positions under certain circumstances via email on November 21st. In addition to the revision of the bylaws, staff recommended the board make a minor bylaws change altering the name of the Citizen Advisory Committee, and document its review of two other sections of the Governance Manual:

- Data Practices Act Policy, page 27
- Conflict of Interest Policy, page 3

Manager Schmaltz moved to waive the manager notice requirement for a bylaws change and approve the Governance Manual as revised. Seconded by President Anderson. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller				X
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			

e) 2026 Staff Work Plan

At the last board meeting, managers were interested in additional details with respect to individual staff members' work. Managers have had more time to review the details provided in the work plan narrative and Appendix A since the November 20th meeting. Staff invited board members to further discuss work plan details.

President Anderson requested that the second phase of carp removal in Comfort Lake be added as a priority in the 2026 work plan. She said the quote for that work was around \$65,000 and she would like to see the District work with EOR and seek grant funding for this project.

Administrator Kinney stated that the current work plan does allocate time for carp related management, but the budgetary component is separate from the work plan. The work plan is intended to reflect the amount of money the staff has put into the budget for staff activities, not for contract work. He also noted that carp management would involve working with upstream organizations outside the District.

The current wording in the work plan describes that carp surveys and management efforts will be undertaken when appropriate and funded.

Manager Bakke moved to approve the 2026 staff work plan. Seconded by Manager Schmaltz. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller	X			
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			

f) 5-Year Program & Project Plan

Administrator Kinney invited the board to further discuss the 5-Year Program and Project Plan.

Manager Schmaltz commented that the plan outlines in detail the priority projects and represents an improvement in planning efforts. He would like to see the District use more of the strategic plan vision, mission, and value statement document so the public and District board and staff can reference it easily. Manager Bakke agreed with this.

Administrator Kinney stated that the plan is a framework for the partners, board, and the public and he appreciates the suggestions from the board.

g) 2025 Education and Outreach Year-end Report

Education and Outreach Coordinator Adam Hjelm presented an overview of education and outreach activities in 2025.

Manager Bakke shared that he enjoyed the details presented in the YouTube summary created by Mr. Hjelm. He is pleased to hear there were 492 participants in workshops and classes—more than double from 2024. Manager Bakke asked for clarification on what was sent out in the more than 11,000 social marketing emails. Mr. Hjelm explained that those emails primarily consisted of board packet materials, but that around 30 percent were event notices.

Manager Schmaltz asked if in the future Mr. Hjelm could share more about which communications platforms he uses and which age demographics are being

reached. President Anderson also asked for comparisons over multiple years of demographic data in the future.

h) 2026 Education & Outreach Implementation Plan

Mr. Hjelm presented a draft Education and Outreach Implementation Plan for 2026 for the board to view.

President Anderson suggested that board members reach out to Mr. Hjelm with further suggestions and feedback, and that Mr. Hjelm report back to the board with revisions.

9. Report of Staff

a) Administrator

Administrator Kinney noted that the Community Education Partnership Program was selected as a finalist for the Minnesota Watersheds Program of the Year Award, and the County Rd 50 Iron Enhanced Sand Filter Project was selected as a finalist for the Project of the Year Award.

He added that many attendees at education events do not live within CLFLWD boundaries, but the goal of the program is to serve the public in general. He expressed a desire for the District to be more involved with the East Metro Water Resources Education Program (EMWREP). He suggested approaching representatives of Washington County to discuss the District's relationship with EMWREP and how it could be improved.

Manager Schmaltz said he had seen coverage in the newspapers provided by EMWREP on a wide range of watershed topics, which he believes is, overall, beneficial to the public. He asked if there has been any comparison of engagement reach since the District chose not to renew its membership with EMWREP.

Mr. Hjelm believes that looking back at the time when the District was a member of EMWREP, the District is exceeding the amount of education outreach that it was provided under EMWREP. He added that not being a member of the partnership also comes with drawbacks, such as not having the opportunity to work in partnership with neighboring districts on outreach initiatives.

President Anderson questioned what Administrator Kinney feels to be missing without EMWREP involvement. He pointed out that the EMWREP program that won the Minnesota Watersheds award is a homeowner association (HOA) outreach program, but none of the HOAs in the District are included in that program. He believes that

since watershed districts are all funded by taxpayers, this isn't fair to the residents who pay for watershed district services. He would like to see CLFLWD included in the list of area watershed districts served by EMWREP.

President Anderson pointed out that the District made the choice to end its agreement with EMWREP because the District could save roughly \$30,000 a year to put into its own education and outreach program. She added that the HOA program that was mentioned was initiated by the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership. She said she hopes to connect with representatives from Lower St. Croix on how that program became specific to EMWREP.

President Anderson said she would not like to see the District re-enter the EMWREP membership if it means the District would pay \$30,000 in dues but not receive a \$30,000 value.

Administrator Kinney said he feels that the District contributes to the wider effort of watershed outreach through Mr. Hjelm's efforts and should be recognized for that.

Administrator Kinney went on to report that things are wrapping up for the end of the year, including some grant projects. He stated that Clean Water Fund competitive grants will be available in 2026.

Manager Bakke asked if Administrator Kinney could elaborate about the potential additional funding for the Bone Lake South Phase II and Green Belt Phase I projects.

Administrator Kinney explained that additional revenue became available through the State of Minnesota to supplement the two grants the District has received for these projects. \$180,000 additional dollars became available for the Bone Lake South Phase II project and \$190,000 became available for the Green Belt Phase I project. This will be presented to the state legislature in Spring 2026 for formal approval.

He added that the District has officially closed on the Bone Lake South property, and staff are preparing signage to discourage members of the public from entering the property for the time being while the District installs fencing and performs habitat restoration work.

President Anderson asked for a summary of what the agreement stipulates as far as uses of the property. She said someone in the CAC has asked whether the property will become available for hunting.

Administrator Kinney responded that habitat is the principal focus of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council efforts, with the eventual goal that the property will be available for public use. Hunting is typically regulated by local ordinance.

Administrator Kinney said that conversation about land use will come before the board during future property management discussions.

b) Emmons & Olivier Resources

Dr. Wilkinson reported that Water Resources Engineer Erik Megow has met with District staff and has been taking over the design process of the Heath Avenue Sand Filter project. Data analysis of the Sunrise River Diagnostic Study and the 2025 Monitoring Report are in progress. On behalf of EOR, Dr. Wilkinson extended a happy holidays and happy new year message to those in attendance.

c) Smith Partners

Legal Counsel Holtman also extended holiday wishes to those in attendance.

10. Report of Treasurer and Approval of Bills

Treasurer Schmaltz reported income of \$223,419.55 including interest of \$4,459.55. He reported expenses in the amount of \$173,146.59.

Manager Bakke moved to accept the Treasurer's report, pay the bills in the amount of \$173,146.59, and transfer funds in the amount of \$223,000. Seconded by Manager Toavs. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller	X			
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			

11. Report of Officers and Managers

Manager Bakke posted on the Bone Lake Facebook page about the District's acquisition of the Bone Lake South property, which received many positive reactions from members of the community.

Manager Schottmuller expressed appreciation for his experience at the recent Minnesota Watersheds conference and thanked fellow board members for suggesting he attend.

Manager Schmaltz noted that it has been a difficult budgeting year, especially with the process of setting the levy, and thanked the staff and board for their work on finding solutions. He wished everyone a great holiday season.

President Anderson echoed that it has been a tough year, but the District is headed in the right direction. She said everyone can end the year proud of the work that has been done and look forward to a good year in 2026.

12. Summary and Approval of Board Direction

The following board directives were summarized:

- Staff will add clarification about watercraft inspector costs in the graphs shown in the AIS yearend report
- Mr. Hjelm will provide more information about the audience demographic data and platforms the District is using for outreach
- Mr. Hjelm will take further suggestions for the 2026 Education & Outreach Implementation Plan from board managers, and notify the board which suggestions will or will not be included
- Staff will use the one-page strategic plan framework as a tool more frequently to present the District's work

13. Adjourn

a) Next regular board meeting January 8, 2026, 6:30 pm

Manager Schmaltz moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Manager Schottmuller. Upon a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:27 pm.

Manager	Aye	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Jim Schottmuller	X			
Dave Bakke	X			
Doug Toavs	X			
Stephen Schmaltz	X			
Jackie Anderson	X			

Dave Bakke, Secretary _____