



## MEMORANDUM

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

**Date:** April 16, 2026  
**To:** CLFLWD Board of Managers  
**From:** Mike Kinney, District Administrator  
**Subject:** 2027 Budget Schedule & Outreach Plan



**District Wide**

### **Background/Discussion:**

As the first step in the District's budgeting process, staff have prepared the enclosed proposed budget schedule and outreach plan for the Board's consideration.

On April 6<sup>th</sup> staff sent an email to managers requesting workshop scheduling preferences. Staff recommend scheduling the budget workshops in advance as much as possible in order to stay on track with the schedule and proposed milestones.

### **Recommended Actions:**

1. Proposed Motion: Manager \_\_\_\_\_ moves to approve the 2027 Budget Schedule & Outreach Plan. Seconded by Manager \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Discuss managers' availability and set the date and time for Workshop #1. Set dates and times for subsequent workshops if possible.

**Attached:** Proposed 2027 Budget Schedule & Outreach Plan



## 2027 BUDGET SCHEDULE & OUTREACH PLAN

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

# 2027 BUDGET SCHEDULE & OUTREACH PLAN

April 17, 2026 Draft

The proposed schedule timetable provides a recommended framework for the development of the Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District (CLFLWD) 2027 Budget. The proposed outreach plan aims to take a proactive approach to budget-related communications and be inclusive of interested stakeholders.

### Budget Process Schedule Timetable

CLFLWD Board of Managers Regular Meetings: 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month

CLFLWD Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meetings: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month

Wednesday, April 22	<b>Requested Response Date:</b> Managers reply to staff email with general workshop scheduling preferences and anticipated unavailable dates May–September.
Thursday, April 23	<b>Regular Board Meeting:</b> Managers review and approve budget schedule & outreach plan. Discuss workshop scheduling, set dates for workshops as far in advance as possible, and discuss managers’ attendance at CAC meetings.
Early May  Need to set date	<b>Workshop #1 – Prioritization:</b> Managers hold budget prioritization workshop. Similar to last year, begin the budget process with general visioning and priorities.  <b>Workshop #1 Ending Objective/Checkpoint:</b> Direct staff to prepare a budget consistent with the directives given at Workshop #1. Consider directing staff to prepare a presentation of the proposed budget to kick off discussion at Workshop #2.
Late May/early June  Need to set date	<b>Workshop #2 – First Review:</b> Staff post proposed draft budget in workshop board packet 1 week in advance of meeting date. Managers review materials in advance. Staff may present proposed budget, then managers discuss draft budget at workshop.  <b>Workshop #2 Ending Objective/Checkpoint:</b> Assess board consensus on draft budget, identify areas where we need to work toward consensus. End workshop by recapping directives for staff and objectives for Workshop #3.
June  Need to set date	<b>Workshop #3 – Clarifications &amp; Communications:</b> Staff post revised budget and/or other follow-up materials from Workshop #2 in board packet 1 week in advance of meeting date. Managers review materials in advance. Managers discuss any items needing clarification or consensus. Check in on outreach plan.  <b>Workshop #3 Ending Objective/Checkpoint:</b> Assess board consensus on draft budget, identify areas where we still need to work toward consensus, and evaluate readiness for proactive public outreach. If ready, give staff direction regarding outreach materials/messaging. If not ready, discuss necessary steps to achieve consensus on outreach materials/messaging.

<p>Late June/ early July</p> <p>Need to set date</p>	<p><b>Workshop #4 – Clarifications &amp; Communications:</b> Staff post revised budget and/or other follow-up materials from Workshop #3 in board packet 1 week in advance of meeting date. Managers review materials in advance. Managers discuss any items still needing clarification or consensus. Check in on outreach plan.</p> <p><b>Workshop #4 Ending Objective/Checkpoint:</b> Assess board consensus on draft budget, identify areas where we still need to work toward consensus, and evaluate readiness for proactive public outreach. Goal is to be ready to give staff direction regarding outreach materials/messaging.</p>
<p>Tuesday, July 14</p> <p>Attending managers: TBD</p>	<p><b>Monthly CAC Meeting:</b> Present draft budget, keeping in mind that the budget is still draft at this point and subject to change. CAC may provide written comments for the CLFLWD Board’s consideration.</p>
<p>Early August</p> <p>Need to set date</p>	<p><b>Workshop #5 – Comment Responses &amp; Newspapers:</b> Managers review CAC comments in advance of workshop, if applicable. Managers discuss CAC comments and responses, incorporate changes to budget as desired. Achieve consensus on total expense budget and total levy to publish in the public hearing legal notice and talking points for newspaper interview(s).</p> <p><b>Workshop #5 Ending Objective/Checkpoint:</b> Direct staff to provide responses to CAC comments (if applicable), and achieve consensus on public hearing legal notice and interview details.</p>
<p>Mid/late August</p> <p>Need to set date</p>	<p><b>Workshop #6 – Cleanup &amp; Prep for Hearing:</b> Staff will prepare the final budget packet consistent with the discussion at Workshop #5 and post in the board packet. Managers review final clean budget packet in advance of workshop. Discuss any remaining issues/questions as necessary. Discuss timeline and expectations for public hearing.</p> <p><b>Workshop #6 Ending Objective/Checkpoint:</b> Ensure shared understanding of budget and establish expectations for September 10<sup>th</sup> public hearing.</p>
<p>August</p>	<p><b>Newspaper Interview(s):</b> Set up interview(s) with one or more local newspapers to provide key facts/talking points about the proposed budget. This will allow the newspaper(s) to run additional stories and provide added context for the budget beyond what is provided in the brief legal notice. Opportunity to share the District’s accomplishments and successes, and explain why the District has budgetary needs.</p>
<p>August</p>	<p><b>Online Outreach:</b> Share budget public hearing information on the District’s website, social media, and email marketing. Opportunity to share the District’s accomplishments and successes, and explain why the District has budgetary needs.</p>
<p>Friday, August 21</p>	<p><b>Public Notice Deadline:</b> Deadline to send public hearing legal notice to official newspapers – Forest Lake Times, Chisago County Press.</p>
<p>Thursday, August 27</p>	<p><b>Public Notice Published:</b> Public hearing legal notice runs in official newspapers.</p>

Thursday, September 3	<b>Public Notice Published:</b> Public hearing legal notice runs in official newspapers.
Thursday, September 10	<b>Regular Board Meeting – Public Hearing:</b> Budget public hearing held at start of regular board meeting. Location: CLFLWD Office and Zoom
Tuesday, September 29	<b>Annual State of the Watershed Event:</b> Among other topics, briefly present final proposed budget and levy, noting that the Board will hold an additional public comment opportunity on December 17.
Wednesday, September 30	<b>Levy Certification Deadline:</b> Deadline to certify levy with counties. The District will have the opportunity to certify a revised levy, in a lower amount, in December, if desired. Otherwise, no further action needed to let the September levy certification stand as final.
October/ November	<b>Washington County Meetings:</b> Annual budget meeting with Washington County commissioner and Washington County CLFLWD board members; date to be set in coordination with county. Provide annual Washington County WMO budget presentation materials to county staff and attend county-wide meeting.
Thursday, December 18	<b>Regular Board Meeting – Public Comment Opportunity:</b> Budget public comment opportunity at December regular board meeting. This is a required annual occurrence.
Tuesday, December 29	<b>Deadline to Revise Levy:</b> Deadline to <i>reduce</i> certified levy, if desired. Otherwise, no action is necessary. Must occur within five working days after December 20.

## Budget Outreach Plan

The proposed outreach plan aligns with the outreach checkpoints noted in the timetable above. Activities are categorized by outreach method/audience. Specific outreach materials are listed below.

### Community Advisory Committee (CAC):

- **CAC Meetings:** The CAC meets the third Tuesday of each month. Managers are encouraged to attend one or more of these meetings. Staff requests that managers notify staff in advance of attendance plans, because we must publish a public meeting notice if three or more managers attend. Staff/managers may provide updates at CAC meetings throughout the summer in order to keep the CAC apprised of the process. CAC members interested in the budget are encouraged to attend budget workshops which are open to the public.

### Local Newspapers:

- **Legal Notice:** At a minimum, the District must provide legal notice of the budget public hearing for at least two consecutive weeks prior to the budget public hearing. The second notice must be published at least two days before the hearing date. The District pays for legal notices according to character count, so these legal notices are typically brief.
- **Interviews/Articles:** The District can provide additional context for the budget and share its accomplishments in greater detail through interviews and newspaper articles (i.e., aside from the brief public hearing notice). Staff recommends the District take a proactive approach to news media communications. Setting up interview(s) with local newspaper staff allows for added explanation.

### Online Outreach:

- **Website:** The District website homepage has a section for News & Events. The District can publish its own “news article” (i.e., blog post) on the website with added context for the budget and to share its accomplishments.
- **Social Media:** Social media allows the District to reach a different, potentially larger audience compared to the website and newspapers. Shorter than a news article/blog post, social media posts are succinct and easy to read quickly. These posts can direct readers to the District website for more information. Managers are encouraged to follow the District’s Facebook page and cross-promote posts, especially with managers’ local lake associations.
- **Email Marketing:** All regular board meetings and special board meetings (e.g., workshops) are shared via the District’s email listserv. This goes above and beyond the minimum legal notice requirements. The District can share additional information on the budget and District accomplishments via email listserv. Additionally, the District sends monthly emails to local lake associations with updates on District activities.

### **Meetings & Events:**

- **Budget Public Hearing:** Required by statute. Staff typically presents an overview of the budget at the public hearing. This is an opportunity for members of the public to learn more about the budget and provide comments.
- **State of the Watershed Annual Meeting:** Although the budget isn't the primary topic at this event, the District may use this as another opportunity to share its successes and reasoning for its budgetary needs.
- **December Public Comment Opportunity:** Required by statute. Note this is not a public hearing and is not noticed as such. It is merely an opportunity for the public to comment on the budget. The Board may adjust its budget or levy (only lowering the levy) in response to comments received during this opportunity.

### **Outreach materials to be utilized in the methods described above:**

- A. **Public Hearing Legal Notice** – short paragraph noticing the public hearing, as required, and indicating total expense budget and proposed levy range; submitted to the District's official newspapers, posted on website/social media, and shared in monthly lake association update
- B. **Newspaper Interview/Article** – summarizes the District's accomplishments and budgetary context
- C. **Accomplishments Summary** – 2-page infographic summary of the District's accomplishments over the years; to be shared through online outreach and printed copies made available at events
- D. **Budget Explanation Sheet** – 2-page summary of pertinent budget information including proposed budget and levy range, budget implementation highlights, estimated tax impacts; to be posted on District website and printed copies made available at events
- E. **Internal Talking Points** – multi-page bullet point list, plus supplementals, compiling information from various sources; for internal reference by Board and staff; the Board has last year's version of this document, and it may be updated as necessary this year.
- F. **Public Hearing PowerPoint** – for presentation at the September 25<sup>th</sup> public hearing and posting on the associated board packet webpage.