

OKAUCHEE LAKE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
Annual Meeting & Budget Hearing

Monday, August 31, 2020 7:00 p.m.
To be held at the **Lord of Life Lutheran Church**
N60W35980 Lake Drive | Oconomowoc | Wisconsin | 53066

Minutes

Call to Order

Chairperson Carol Wilson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Notice Announcement

The Meeting Notice Announcement was emailed to the newspapers and municipalities; sent via U.S. Mail to all riparian owners within the Okauchee Lake Management District (OLMD); posted on the two public notice bulletin boards; posted on the board outside of the Town Hall; and posted on the OLMD website.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Chairperson will open the meeting:

Introduction of Commissioners

Chairperson and County Representative Carol Wilson introduced herself and the OLMD commissioners: Dee Schriver, Treasurer; Tom Godar, Secretary, Dennis Johnson, Liaison - Lake Operations; and Bruce Mueller, Town Representative. All were present.

Approval of Minutes of the Previous Annual Meeting

B. Mueller moved to approve the minutes of the 2019 Annual Meeting as presented. Ronald Johns, N60W35048 Lake Drive, seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Without objection, C. Wilson moved to the Aquatic Plant Management Report on the agenda.

Treasurer's Report, Discuss and Act

Treasurer D. Schriver reviewed the Treasurer's Report as of July 30, 2020 and reported the following:

| | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Revenues | \$366,324.00 |
| Expenditures | <u>\$132,772.00</u> |
| Balance | \$219,131.00 |

T. Godar moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. B. Mueller seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

C. Wilson moved to the Update on the Muskrat Control Program at this time.

Police Department Reports

Lake Patrol

Town of Oconomowoc Police Officer Andrew Williams was present and reported the following:

Officer Williams and Lieutenant Wraalstad patrolled Okauchee Lake and Lac La Belle for the Village of Lac La Belle this summer. Statistics provided below were from Okauchee Lake in the past year:

YTD Statistics from 2020 were:

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Patrol hours to date | 420 |
| Accidents | 0 |
| Citations issued | 125 |
| Boating OWI's | 6 |
| Warnings issued | 75 (a ratio of 4 citation/5.6 lake patrol hours) |

Officer Williams reported the following, noting the statistics for number of OWIs for the Town of Merton and Waukesha County were unknown:

2020 Okauchee Lake Boat Tie-Up-number of boats provided:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| DNR | 3 (3) |
| Town of Oconomowoc Police | 2 (1) |
| Town of Merton Police | 2 (?) |
| Waukesha Co. Sheriff's Dept. | 1 (?) |
| Total number of arrests | 4 (Operating while intoxicated arrests noted in ()'s above) |

D. Terry questioned whether there was any limited hours of use or enforcement action that could be taken for wake boats on the lake. The wake boats caused shoreline erosion. He had noticed several people on Upper Oconomowoc Lake driving boats that caused large waves and disrupting the other boaters in that bay. Officer Williams explained the DNR and Town of Oconomowoc had no restrictions on that type of activity on the lake. There was little to be done until an ordinance was adopted. He explained the process to bring an ordinance forward for approval with the Town. He also suggested the DNR should be contacted for correct verbiage. Officer Williams suggested families might want to enjoy Icehouse Bay, Stumpy Bay, Little Okauchee or Upper Oconomowoc Lake for a quieter experience on weekends. B. Mueller suggested D. Terry could work with neighbors to establish a "Slow No Wake" area on Upper Oconomowoc Lake by working with the Town Board. There were issues all over the lake and a police presence helped to keep the lake calm. Boat sales had increased due to COVID-19. Officer Williams noted he witnessed several new boat owners assuming knowledge of rules that were inaccurate this summer. Residents and boat owners should never put themselves in harm's way to deal with an issue on the lake. Complaints could be registered and investigated by the Police Department using any identifying characteristics of the boat, its driver, or license numbers on the side of the boat. Sometimes an educational conversation about the rules with boaters, even off the lake after the fact, were helpful in bringing positive change.

Brian Sichi, N63W33895 Lakeview Drive, questioned who to call if issues were observed on the lake. Officer Williams noted if the resident lived in the Town of Oconomowoc and it occurred Monday through Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. they could call the Town police and they could follow up that day. If it occurred after that, a resident could call the Town Police number and leave a message and the issue would be researched the next week. If the resident lived on the east side of the lake and noticed issues, then the Town of Merton Police Department should be called.

Mike Eppler, N51W35369 River Road, questioned whether signage would be appropriate directing boaters to keep right going through the bridge area into Little Okauchee. When there was more than one boat going through at a time the tunnel area often turned into a funnel area and it was slow moving with people stacking up to get under the bridge and people having to maneuver in tight spaces. Officer Williams explained this could also be brought to the Town Board for consideration. He expressed concern about new boaters navigating the channel in two lanes of traffic in large pontoon boats. No accidents had been reported in this area without the signage.

Aquatic Plant Management Report

D. Johnson introduced Gary Steinmueller, Lake Operations Supervisor. G. Steinmueller had worked for the OLMD for the past 15 years and planned to retire at the end of this year. G. Steinmueller was good at his job. He answered problems, tackled issues, and responded to all lake issues. OLMD operations had improved dramatically during G. Steinmueller's tenure and he was instrumental in providing cost savings and operational improvements for the District over the past 15 years. D. Johnson then introduced Brady Mullikin who would be the next OLMD Lake Operations Supervisor beginning in 2021. B. Mullikin was in his third year of working with G. Steinmueller and the weed harvesting crew. B. Mullikin was energetic, accomplished, enthusiastic and wanted to be involved long-term with the OLMD. He had been training with G. Steinmueller through the years and was more than capable of handling the position beginning next spring.

G. Steinmueller reported many weeds had been removed from the lake this year with 192 truck loads removed to date. Cutting would end at the end of September and the last weed pick-up would be approximately October 14, 2020. Then the equipment would be cleaned up and put away for the winter. The weather had been good this year and allowed weed cutting to take place through two rotations of the lake. The good weather had also allowed heavy weed growth and that made it difficult in cutting. There was a good crew this year and they were busy without requiring overtime. D. Johnson noted there were only two rain days this year; otherwise the crew worked through rain events. This year brought a mostly new crew that had been trained well with most returning next year to work with B. Mullikin.

Dan Terry, W358N5088 Lakeshore Drive, questioned the cutting schedule this year. It seemed Upper Oconomowoc Lake only got cut twice each year, usually right after July 4 and then again in August. The weed growth was heavy before the July cutting and he wondered if there was more that could be done in this area. G. Steinmueller explained the first time the cutters were in that area there was little weed growth and then when they returned in August there were five truckloads removed in two days. Typically, the cutters were not able to get around the entire lake area twice. This year the cutting crew was beginning its third time around the lake this week. The crew tried to cut in a rotational pattern that repeated around the lake and to cut "hot spot" areas of heavy weed growth noted by the crew in cutting on some Fridays when possible. If an area was started and then stopped and the crew did not return the next

day, it was due to some other issue. Areas of the lake were not skipped in favor of cutting another random area; however, efforts were made to work with the changes in the wind to catch floating weeds. D. Terry explained it seemed like there were more cut weeds floating in near his pier than several years ago. G. Steinmueller explained this was an issue all over the lake. The cut weeds, called “floaters,” went where the wind blew them. Many people were unaware that the eelgrass resembled cut weeds and often were in the lake this time of year. The cutters could only cut six feet deep. The crew was aware of the floaters and often chased them around the lake trying to retrieve them. T. Godar noted there had never been so much boat traffic on the lake before this year. This type of activity created pressure on the lake and made cut weeds more prevalent as motors traversed areas of the lake and then the wind blew them into pier areas. D. Terry complimented the weed crew on their efforts for the year and questioned whether any thought had been given to having the crew retrieve floaters from in between the piers. D. Johnson noted many people chose to rake them out and then put them on their piers for pick-up. The weed cutting crew had done a great job this year. B. Mullikin could check D. Terry’s area in the spring if something had been missed. When G. Steinmueller began leading lake operations, many complaints had been heard regarding areas not being cut as they should be, and he changed how the lake was cut for the better. D. Schriver explained that cutters could not always get under the bridge to cut certain areas of the lake, such as Upper Oconomowoc and Lower Okauchee Lake, depending on water levels.

James Flannery, N50W35168 Wisconsin Avenue, had recently purchased his property. He noticed cutters backing up a good bit of the time. While he understood they were trying to avoid getting too close to piers, it seemed like a better way to cut could be achieved. G. Steinmueller explained that in the past the cutters would cut in a location three cutter widths from a pier and would not go in between the piers. The cutters now tried to get in between piers to accommodate residents. To back up a cutter required six cutter widths distance to maneuver safely. The cutters also had a paddlewheel that was 4 feet wide. The lake was cut like a lawn and sometimes it required backing up and maneuvering to the next cutting “lane.” D. Johnson explained it was difficult to strike a balance for everyone. Cutting in between the piers left some people with problems when the wind blew. Many different cutting efforts had been tried through the years.

Tom Modl, N 64W35035 Road J, thought the barge operators were great. He went out in the morning to rake floaters near his pier, so they did not sit on his pier overnight and stain it. He called the OLMD office last week to report weed growth in his area because the weeds were two feet higher in the last week and were over the water surface. G. Steinmueller explained people called all season long to report weed growth in their area. Sometimes the crew would be sent to these areas and there was little weed growth. B. Mullikin explained that weeds not retrieved with machinery were often retrieved by the crew with pitchforks. Floaters were not passed over. Sometimes the cut weeds took a while to surface and form a clump so they could be retrieved.

Approval to Borrow \$30,000 to Repair Cutters

D. Johnson explained that preventive maintenance of the weed cutters had been ongoing for many years. Of the four cutters owned by the OLMD, three had been purchased in the 1980’s and one purchased in the 1990’s. Purchase of a new cutter would cost approximately \$190,000-\$200,000. The OLMD was currently in the position of having two cutters with issues in the diesel engines and wiring harnesses. A contractor had been helping to manage the wear and maintenance over the past years. In addition, the current diesel engines were so old that they could no longer get older parts to use to retrofit the engines. Replacement of the diesel engines and wiring harnesses was advised at a cost of \$30,000. The cutters had a stainless-steel hull and super structure that were able to be repaired. An action to replace the engines and wiring harnesses would help for many years to avoid purchase of new cutters. Blades on the cutters

were similar to sickles on farm equipment. They were rugged and the maintenance crew had learned over the years that if they were set sloppy so that no wear occurred, then no real cutting occurred also. Efforts were made to catch the weeds that slipped down between the cutter and the conveyor if the blades were running looser.

D. Schriver explained that the OLMD could borrow money for these engines by using a loan through the Bureau of Land Management at an attractive interest rate below 2%. While the engine repair process would be ongoing over time, it would be better to stretch the expenditures over the course of the loan rather than taking a large expense all at once.

B. Sichi questioned the use of a loan versus building up a reserve prior to expenditure. D. Johnson explained that was something that could potentially be reviewed going forward; however, the District needed the engine repair at this time. B. Mullikin had some good operational ideas and ways to change the way equipment was used to cut and how the District cut weeds on the lake so that this type of planning could possibly be used in the future.

D. Terry moved to approve borrowing \$30,000 to repair cutters. B. Sichi seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Update on Muskrat Control Program

Arnold Groehler, Animal Damage Control Trapper, reported there were less muskrats in Okauchee Lake then three years ago. With the reduction in numbers, it was time to transition to the maintenance phase of the Muskrat Control program. The maintenance phase would include trapping the entire lake one time in spring and fall. After those periods of time, he would switch to working with property owners on an individual basis with individual landowner responsibility for payment. He noted as muskrat numbers declined, he had received additional calls about trapping woodchucks, skunks, possum, and raccoons around the lake.

D. Terry questioned whether the increased nuisance animal calls were related to new development. A. Groehler explained animal species were very adept at acclimating themselves to people and learned how to enter uninhabited houses easily during the winter months when people were away. With access to food, water and shelter, animals would multiply quickly. To avoid this, he suggested that people have someone check on their house and property when they depart for the winter months and if animals are noticed, then A. Groehler should be contacted prior to the property owner arriving home.

T. Godar thanked A. Groehler for his services and additional efforts for the OLMD residents. A. Groehler was recognized nationally for his skill and expertise and had gone beyond the OLMD scope of service to accommodate and work with residents in the past three years. He had literally been "on call" for little to no compensation for doing so. Anyone with muskrats or other nuisance animals should contact Arnold Groehler directly by phone at 262-490-9363.

C. Wilson moved to the Treasurer's Report at this time.

Proposed 2021 Budget, Discuss & Act

D. Schriver reviewed the proposed 2021 budget, noting proposed revenues of \$379,850 and proposed expenditures in the same amount. As discussed previously, the predominant issue associated with the

budget was borrowing the money to repair the diesel engines and wire harnesses for the cutters. Of note was the expense related to the required Aquatic Plant Management (APM) Plan. The OLMD APM plan expired and a Point Intercept Study in the amount of \$20,000 was required by the DNR prior to permitting the District to cut, harvest or chemical treat weeds in Okauchee Lake. T. Godar noted this was important because a loan had been paid in full for the weed operations facility property, operational costs continued to rise and the cost to taxpayers decreased this year. The proposed riparian property owner special charge for aquatic plant control special charges had decreased from \$273.69 to \$268.13 this year.

D. Terry questioned the outcome of Starry Stonewort treatment areas in the lake. D. Johnson explained that the chemical treatment plan for Starry Stonewort had been implemented in conjunction with the DNR. From January, to April, the Army Corps of Engineers set up approximately 10 tanks with Okauchee Lake Starry Stonewort in them. As a trial experiment chemical “cocktails” were created for each tank to see which treatment would be most effective in treating Starry Stonewort in the lake. The lake was treated for eight days near the Golden Mast during June and into early July. Last week four divers manually pulled the remaining Starry Stonewort from the lakebed and placed them in sealed bags. D. Johnson and D. Schriver kayaked the sealed bags to barges waiting nearby to take them for disposal. A report on the outcome of the treatment activity was not yet complete. Starry Stonewort was an aquatic invasive that would only be managed, not ever eradicated. Control was difficult. It was more invasive than Eurasian Water Milfoil. It was also able to reseed itself and boat traffic stirred it through the lake. It had likely been brought to Okauchee Lake via the boat launch since it was originally discovered in that location. It was incumbent upon all boat owners to be vigilant about what comes into and goes out of the lake at all times.

Mike Welsh, 5000 Road T, questioned why the loan amount was no longer showing on the budget for this year. Clarification was provided that the loan amount was paid in full.

D. Johnson noted there were a few farmers that took weeds from the harvesting crew to use as fertilizer on their farm fields, but more farmers were needed to receive the weeds. If anyone was interested in receiving lake weeds, they should contact the OLMD office at 262-966-0286.

D. Terry moved to approve the Proposed 2021 Budget as presented. T. Modl seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Nomination of Candidate to the OLMD Board

C. Wilson explained that Commissioner Dennis Johnson’s three-year term was complete, and his Board position was up for re-election. C. Wilson explained the nomination process, the responsibilities of the OLMD Commissioners and then asked three times whether anyone in the audience would like to run for this Commission seat.

Self-introduction and Questions to Candidate from the Board and Floor

D. Johnson introduced himself, noting he was willing to serve another three-year term on the Board.

Election of Commissioner

T. Godar nominated Dennis Johnson to the OLMD Board. The nomination was seconded by T. Modl. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Sichi questioned the number of Board members allowed. C. Wilson explained the number of Board members was determined by State Statute.

Other Lake Management Issues or New Business, Discuss & Act within Open Meeting Law Limits

T. Modl noted it seemed like there were less zebra mussels in the lake recently. D. Johnson noted that while they seemed to be less visible, they were still under rocks and plentiful in the lake.

Report on Results of Election

Dennis Johnson was re-elected and would be reinstated as Commissioner for a three-year term from 2020-2023 for the Okauchee Lake Management District with 15 of 15 votes.

Adjournment of Annual Meeting & Budget Hearing

T. Godar moved to adjourn from the 2020 Okauchee Lake Management District Annual Meeting. D. Terry seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.