

# WIXOM LAKE ASSOCIATION

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

July 10, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 10 AM.

Board members present were: Larry Woodard-President, Dirk Meister-Vice President, Mark Mudge-Treasurer, Susi Najmowicz-Secretary and Directors Bob Beltz, Bill Faust, Tammi O'Donnell, Gary Oliver, Len Pytlak, Dave Rothman and Don Zakett. Director Doug Hill was excused. There were also eight members in attendance.

Everyone rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Larry distributed an updated agenda. A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the updated agenda.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes of the June 12<sup>th</sup> Board of Directors meeting as presented. There were no corrections/additions suggested for the minutes of the General Membership Meeting from August 8, 2020.

Susi reported we currently have 605 memberships and 884 members. Sixty-five of our members do not have email.

Mark presented the Treasurer's Report. Our beginning balance was \$69,066.90. We had income from dues, donations, interest, T-shirts and the Poker Run totaling \$8,669.66 and expenses of \$4,011.96; leaving a balance of \$73,724.60. The report was accepted as presented.

Larry introduced Tammi O'Donnell. She is filling the vacancy from Dick McGibbon's resignation.

Larry announced the WLIB will be holding a Public Hearing next Saturday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, at 4 PM at the Beaverton High School. They will be discussing the use of the money currently held in their account to treat the "stuff" growing on the lake bottom. The Gladwin County Drain Commission office mailed out the notices. Most people indicated they hadn't received them. Gary received the letter and said it talked about erosion control and didn't mention foliage on the lakebed. The growth in the lakebed, besides the cottonwood and willow trees, includes various other forms of vegetation. If left alone for 5 years, we'll have a forest. The lakebed is drying out, but after a rain some areas become muddy/mucky again. EGLE is worried if the trees are gone—the erosion might get worse. The optimal time to do a treatment is when the leaves are on the plants/trees. Tobacco Township has appointed Don as their representative on the WLIB. The WLIB has a large balance in their treasury because the 8' drawdown killed off more weeds in the winter than anticipated. Sanford Lake property owners received erosion control money and got in excess of \$500 from the lake association. We are against using our money for erosion control. There is also concern about the vegetation growing in the water. EGLE now says 2 permits will be needed. The FLTF is looking to get a 5-year permit with definition stating what can be done in the water—one for foot-based crews and another for lands next to the river. Renevate-3 is licensed for use in Michigan. Growth in the canals can be cut in dry areas, but the WLIB is not treating aquatic growth. The problem of water remaining in the canals needs to be looked into. The entrance areas appear high and don't allow water to drain out. The channel exits need to be dredged deeper into the lake. The Water Resource Division in Bay City would have to issue permits. The WLIB will still exist but won't be collecting any money. Karen Moore, Gladwin County Commissioner, agreed with Don that money

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assessed for weeds should not be used for erosion control. She was concerned that people have not received notification of the upcoming meeting. The event held to cut down the “toothpick” trees started with 6 people, but had 21 working by the end of the event.

Tobacco Township runs their own weed control program. They have a couple hundred acres of brush that needs treatment and want to look at methods to use mechanical treatments to cut down and grind up the brush. People who cut down growth this spring have found some plants have re-sprouted with 2 shoots instead of 1.

Based on information from the manufacturer, chemical treatment is most effective within the first 3 seasons. It would have been preferable to do it this year. The trees can be killed when 3 years old, but you need to use a stronger dose. We need a letter campaign to EGLE stressing the trees in your front yards are a big problem that needs to be dealt with now. Someone posted a picture of the helicopter spraying on social media claiming it kills eagles.

Dave began the FLTF report talking about government funding. The Michigan Legislature continues work on funding reconstruction of the four dams. FLTF website has a banner at the top of the home page with a link to an article about the legislation, along with a home page article on the FLTF’s position on the legislation. We encourage people who want the lakes restored to send emails to their state representatives and senators supporting passage of the bills, which would budget \$500 million to Michigan Dam Safety, of which \$225 million would go to rebuilding our four lakes. If passed and signed into law, this would be a HUGE help to rebuilding the dams and restoring the lakes. It would also remove a large financial burden from the people in the Four Lakes Special Assessment District, making it far more affordable to own property on or near the restored lakes. Don stressed how important it is for EGLE to hear from property owners around the lake and said the FLTF home page has a link listing who your letters should be sent to.

FLTF received a letter from EGLE Dam Safety outlining the required activities to make the four dams safe and acknowledging that FLTF is already addressing these requirement. Liesl Clark, Director of this state agency, also wrote a letter to FLTF regarding our published plan to restore the dams and lakes. A link to the FLTF plan may be found in an article on the FLTF website home page. Director Clark’s letter recognized the cooperative effort underway with EGLE and other state and federal agencies and was supportive of FLTF’s plans. FLTF has replied to both letters, acknowledging the requirements for continues progress on restoring the dams and lakes and thanking the writers for their continuing support.

Efforts to clear the lake bottom debris are underway on two fronts. FLTF engineers, administrators and Fisher Contracting are preparing to remove flood debris in the first 3.2 mile stretch of Wixom Lake bottomland downstream of the Smallwood Dam. This will be a learning experience, preparing us for the larger debris removal efforts as we work our way downstream toward Sanford Dam. NRCS is funding this work by paying 75% of the “construction costs”.

There is also a volunteer effort underway on the Wixom Lake bottomland. Doug Hill has organized two volunteer debris removal projects on the Tobacco Side of Wixom Lake, with plans to run more events over the summer. The debris is being collected and stored on the lake bottom, with FLTF planning to send in equipment to pick up and haul away the debris. Doug has worked with FLTF to get permission for this continuing activity. With this permission, the volunteers can enter the lake bottom and use equipment, including ORV’s, to accomplish the debris removal work. Recreational use of ORV’s on the

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lake bottom is not allowed, but is OK when doing productive work with FLTF permission. People on Sanford Lake are working to start a similar program on that lake.

Midland County parks Department will perform a flood debris removal project on River Trails Heritage Park, which is on the north shore of the Tittabawassee River on both sides of the M-30 bridge at Edenville. This project is being funded by a grant from NRCS and sponsored by FLTF. Midland County will pay any costs not paid by NRCS.

Work is underway to finish stabilizing the Tobacco side of the dam and will begin later this month to stabilize the Tittabawassee side. The Tittabawassee side work includes removing a large volume of sediment from the original river channel; demolishing the concrete spillways and part of the powerhouse; returning the river to its original channel; closing the breach in the dam; and restoring the private property where the river currently flows. Sadly, that will be the end of Tittabawassee Falls, perhaps the largest waterfall in the Lower Peninsula, created by the dam breach in 2020. All this work has been planned to complement FLTF's long-range plans to rebuild the Edenville Dam.

FLTF understands that environmental recovery will be essential to getting the permits necessary to rebuild Edenville and Sanford dams. Environmental recovery involves a broad range of topics, including fish population studies, studies of other native species, wetlands restoration, nutrient loading, aquatic habitat restoration/creation, monitoring/controlling invasive species, sediment control (erosion), studying threatened and endangered species in and around the lakes and much more. Across the four lake, this effort will cost in the \$15-\$50 million range and cannot be ignored if we want the lakes back. FLTF is working on state and federal funding for this effort.

Environmental recovery is primarily a Wixom/Sanford lakes issue, because the State permitting process will view rebuilding the dams in much the same way as building new dams and will require the same attention to the environment. FLTF is starting this effort now so it will not become a roadblock to restoring the dams and lakes on our published schedule.

There will probably be opportunities for volunteer projects, for example, constructing fish habitat. These projects will need to be coordinated with FLTF and aligned with the studies that establish the need for such habitat and the locations where it will promote the repopulation of fish in the refilled lakes.

Pardon me if I conclude with a little sermon, but beyond being a permitting requirement, environmental recovery involves things we really need to care about. Wixom and Sanford Lakes used to be the best fishing lakes in southeast Michigan. Most anglers knew there were good fish in the lakes, but probably few thought much about why the fish were there. To get that good fishing back, we do need to think about what it takes to have good fishing. Water quality is critical, including dissolved oxygen and water temperature, so FLTF will monitor those. There need to be game and pan fish in the lake (fish stocking), the fish need food (insects, algae, frogs, crawfish, little fish, water fleas, etc. Having little fish involves creating healthy populations of fish that anglers usually do not target), the fish need a place to live that provides protective cover and concealment (rocks, logs, standing trees, stumps, aquatic plants, even low spots in the flooded lake bottom), the fish need to reproduce (which requires spawning areas and nursery areas as the hatched gamefish grow to a size where they can survive in other areas of the lakes) and fish benefit from clean water that is improved by reducing erosion and sediment plus having a thriving mussel population.

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Freshwater mussels are an often-ignored part of having a healthy lake. Mussels are nature's very efficient water filters. They suck in water and feed on the suspended sediment, clearing the water in the process. Many mussels require a certain type of small fish in order for the mussel to reproduce, because the mussel plants its newly hatched larvae on the fish's gills. The fish isn't harmed and carries the larvae to other parts of the lake, where the larvae drop off and create new mussel colonies. No small fish, no mussels. No mussels, dirty water.

Not everyone is an angler. There are many people who enjoy pleasure boating, swimming, socializing on Pontoon Alley and bird watching. All these activities will be better if we have healthy lakes again. Imagine this—Pontoon Alley has water again and your family wants to go there on Saturday afternoon. But, you have trouble getting there by boat because of thick layers of algae in the lake (nutrient loading) and trees that were not controlled before the lakes were filled. When you do get there, the water isn't as clear as it used to be (suspended sediment and no mussels), there are invasive plants clogging up the shallow water areas, instead of a nice hard sand bottom you are walking in muck (sediment again), there is abundant aquatic plant growth rooted in the muck, the plants and muck have attracted lots of waterfowl that bring swimmers itch with them. You might think "it would be nice to have Pontoon Alley back the way it was".

Every living thing in the lakes—gamefish, panfish, frogs, turtles, crayfish, minnows, plants, etc.—needs its own environment in which it can live, grow and reproduce to contribute to the overall lake environment. Nature will take care of some of these things on its own, but with our help by doing the right things, the environmental recovery will be faster and better and we will get back the lakes in an enjoyable form sooner.

Environmental recovery is an absolute requirement to get permits to restore our dams and lakes, but is also important to recreating the lake environment we have enjoyed in the past. Expect communications from FLTF on this subject and more information about it at the General Membership Meeting.

Currently, they are working on funding bills in the State Senate, which will then go to the House for consideration. It will probably be September before we know if and when and how much money we will receive. On the Federal level, all our constituents are working to help our environmental recovery efforts. It is most helpful when people send letters/emails showing their support for the restoration of the lakes.

Don said both Sanford and Wixom Lakes suffered a complete drain. Secord and Smallwood didn't drain, so their aquatic system is still in place. Transfer occurs downstream from the lakes through the dams. When the FLTF released assessment figures early last year, they were broad, high figures (\$2500). More recent estimates, using more detailed engineering information, are \$1500 for Wixom Lake. No cost for environmental studies and work is in these estimates since no one knows those figures.

Dirk presented the Membership/Social Committee Report. So far this year, the committee has held: 3 membership events, a Poker Run with approximately 200 people that raised \$4,114 (there will be another one Labor Day Week-end), a Euchre tournament that raised \$505, a golf tournament coming up in September (already raised \$5,675 which covers the cost), lake bottom clean-ups with 2 more planned July 13<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> and an Ice Cream Social on Sunday. Yard signs are still available. They are also planning to help Wayne Dittman, the owner of Pontoon Alley, clean up on September 12<sup>th</sup>. They helped get the four trees Mueller planted on FLTF property removed that were blocking the Mini-Storage billboard. Dirk expressed his thanks to Tammi and Brian for all their help. Tammi has pictures on her

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phone from various projects and will coordinate with Laura to put some on our social page, facebook page and WLA page.

There followed a discussion about using credit cards. Len has pay pal, Gary has square and Tammi has square and pay pal available at activities. A motion was made, seconded and passed to purchase 2 square units. Gary volunteered to donate the 2 units he has to the WLA.

Dirk reminded everyone the next clean-up is Tuesday, July 13<sup>th</sup>, from 5-8 PM. People are meeting at 5299 Oakridge Drive. Bring your gloves, water, chainsaw, tools, etc. Doug Hill is in charge of safety.

We then began discussing ways to use some of our money. Some ideas suggested were: donating to some of the FLTF projects, supporting clean-up efforts, giving back to the community and putting up a billboard message.

Larry reviewed the proposed Board of Directors slate and explained the adjustments to the term years. A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the BOD slate. Bryan Gardner (Katie) introduced himself. He lives in Midland and is a Real Estate professional. He has been on the lake since 2005.

Doug and Larry have been at zoom meetings with the “Restore The Lakes” group. They are a grassroots effort to help people in the communities around the lakes communicate to various governmental bodies their support for the return of the dams and lakes. People are encouraged to use any information they need from their website—[RestoreTheLakes.org](http://RestoreTheLakes.org). A motion was made, seconded and approved to join Restore The Lakes.

A brief discussion about possible handouts at the GMM was held. Possible suggestions were Koozies, T-shirts or a drawing.

It was decided to not pursue contacting members who had not renewed for 2021.

Based on incidents that have occurred at other public meetings, Doug has suggested changes to our Constitution. Gary and Dave moved we try to do the changes now and get the information to me so we can vote on them at the GMM. Larry said he would get together the constitution changes, agenda and newspaper notice of the meeting. He also has received our incorporation papers in the mail. We will pay that bill in September.

Laura Hackett does the computer site for the WLA. Doug suggests we need to improve our website and need to have someone on the board do it.

Don suggested adding a report on current real estate transactions on Wixom and Sanford Lakes if possible.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 PM.