

Wixom Lake Improvement Board (WLIB)
Meeting Minutes
May 22, 2024

Meeting called to order at Billings Township Hall by Chairman Sova at 6:00 pm

Pledge of allegiance recited.

Roll call of board members. Board members present: Ray Drumright, Robert Kelley, Tami O'Donnell, Jeanette Snyder, Joe Sova, Terry Walters, Larry Woodard, Don Zakett

Board Members Absent: Carol Ayers

Others in Attendance: Norma Stuart from Midland County Drain Commission, Lucy Zeestraten from Gladwin County Drain Commission, Paul Hausler from Progressive Companies, and approximately 10 members of the public.

Approval of agenda. Agenda was presented with an opportunity to add items. Jeanette Snyder made a motion to accept the agenda. The motion was seconded by Tami O'Donnell. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of minutes from 4/17/24 WLIB meeting. Larry Woodard made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Robert Kelley. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Matters. A financial statement showing a balance of \$240,355.61 was presented. Tami O'Donnell made a motion to receive and file the financial report which was seconded by Terry Walters. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

A request for a refund of \$69.53 for a misclassified back lot (030-222-000-115-00) owned by Glenn and Vicki Turskey was presented and discussed. This property should not have been included on the new assessment roll because it is associated with a lake front lot. Tami O'Donnell made a motion to refund the \$69.53 which was seconded by Terry Walters. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

The mowing subcommittee (O'Donnell, Zakett, Kelley) reported on discussions that they have had since the last board meeting. Tami O'Donnell presented a proposal for collaborating with the Wixom Lake Association (WLA) and the contractors working with them for mowing. There was significant discussion about the pros/cons of WLIB subcontracting mowing activities to WLA. The points of contention primarily revolved around 3 areas: 1) legal implications with respect to bidding and liability, 2) vegetation mapping and engineering oversight, and 3) overall prioritization of areas for mowing. There was consensus around the need for WLIB to maintain control of the work and not abdicate that responsibility to another party. Paul Hausler shared that there is no permit needed for mowing but that there are restrictions on mowing by EGLE/DNR in some ill defined areas associated with the need to maintain areas for fish habitat. Mowing in these areas could negatively impact the ability of the Four Lakes Task Force (FLTF) to obtain a fill permit once the dam is repaired. The FLTF has proposed areas of fish habitat to the regulatory agencies but no decision/ruling has been made by the regulators. John Marsh (mowing contractor) made some comments on status of vegetation in different areas of the WLIB jurisdiction based on his first hand experience on the lake bed. Paul Hausler indicated that the helicopter herbicide treatment on the main lake was very effective at killing trees (~90% kill or better) whereas results in canals with a different herbicide mixture applied with 4 wheelers and backpack sprayers was not as effective at killing trees (60-70% kill) but was effective on cattails.

Joe Sova made a motion to schedule a virtual meeting with attorneys in the law firm Fahey and Shultz to address questions about the potential relationship between WLIB and WLA for mowing and determine viability of this potential pathway. Further, the meeting will have up to four board members (Sova, O'Donnell, Zakett, and Walters expressed interest in joining) plus Paul Hausler. The motion was seconded by Jeanette Snyder. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

After the aforementioned meeting with attorneys, the mowing subcommittee will reconvene. Larry Woodard will replace Robert Kelley on the mowing subcommittee. Don Zakett made a motion for the mowing subcommittee to factor in the expected legal advice and meet to develop a complete proposal to present to the board addressing the details (who, what, where) and prioritization of mowing activities. The motion was seconded by Larry Woodard. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

Paul Hausler shared that the permits for herbicide treatment for 2024 have been issued. There is some uncertainty about whether the buffer to the river remains 40' or if it has been reduced to 25'. He reiterated the high effectiveness of tree kill on the main lake (combination of herbicide mixture and application method) and modest effectiveness in the canals (different herbicides and application methods). The two windows for herbicide treatment this year will be June-July and early fall. Paul will develop recommendations.

Monty Wiseman gave an update on the state of vegetation in the Venice Canal area (Pary drain). He advocates for aggressive treatment and mowing. He highlighted a high priority area on the canal between Grouse and Mallard Courts with a significant number of large and growing trees.

Public Comment:

Mike Flatt, Oakwood Dr. Remains interested in dredging and/or tile installation and continues to explore options. General questions about timing of lake restoration.

Quentin Groce, Regional Director from Senator Gary Peters office. Attended to listen and report back to Senator Peters. Continues to explore potential options for additional funding for dam restoration. Understands that many people in the FLTF special assessment district are feeling financial stress and abandoned.

Amy Bentley, Wixom Lake Association Vice President. Representing Doug Hill and read statement from him. The statement was in support of collaboration between WLA and WLIB on mowing activities and the mutual benefits of doing so.

End Public Comment

A doodle poll will be sent to establish date for the next board meeting targeting mid to late June.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by Robert Kelley was seconded by Terry Walters. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously. 8:08 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ray Drumright

Observations

- Just cutting cattails does not work. They come back and multiply. If it were not for trees mixed in mowing on shoreline banks would be a total waste of time. They must be eradicated, then mowed.
- Early on it was thought best to remove trapped water in various places in the three canals. I am glad we did not pursue this because:
 - trees do not grow in water (compared to other like areas this has been a blessing).
 - if we get a “normal” winter, water freezes thick enough, it makes cutting cattails much easier.
 - it would have taken a lot of funds and effort to keep water (rain, and snow melt) moving through the east and west canals of Pary Drain. In the end, it would have turned those areas into mud bogs making certain remediation efforts tough to conduct and dependent on very cold winters.
- However, the trapped water has brought a problem that I addressed in public comments at Beaverton High School when the focus switched from Aquatic to Terrestrial. Eurasian Milfoil has now multiplied to the point where it has overtaken habitat and outcompeted native aquatic plants, lowering diversity. The Eurasian milfoil provides unsuitable shelter, no food value, and unusable nesting habitat for native animals and birds. It is hard to watch baby ducks trying to maneuver and often get stuck in this mess.
- While waiting for winter for the canals to “harden up” for mowing seemed a great idea; however, the last two winters never came. Nothing much was done in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 only about eight hundred feet was mowed. Areas not since the 2022 winter’s total remediation in the three canals trees in areas are very thick (and tall) with 2.5 years of growth (see map on page 1).
- Bottom Line on mowing, we cannot put all our eggs in one basket like the last two winters. Not mowing at all while waiting for winter, which has not happened the last two years and might not happen, is a bad idea.
- The two (2022 Five-Acre and 2023 Ten-Acre) Demonstration Sprays were of great benefit the first year after. However, the area where the 2022 Spray was done is starting to look like before remediation; I honestly believe the area sprayed in 2023 will look like the 2022 spray area does now in 2025.

Recommendations

- Two mowings along the banks in late spring and fall; if we get a normal winter, a winter mow for the Cattails.
 - Continued mowing will be less expensive and much easier to conduct.
 - Will keep trees manageable, a couple of areas already look like chipping will need to be done.
- Rotate Cattail Spraying areas every other year until the lake comes back. The 2022 area in 2024 and so on; 2023 area in 2025 and so on.
- We really need some kind of Aquatic Nuisance Weed Management in areas with Eurasian Milfoil. If we do not take care of this issue soon, we will be behind the 8-Ball when the water comes back in these areas.

Funding

- Every year the WLIB Special Assessment District (SAD) is in play parcel owners in the SAD pay into the WLIB fund. According to the SP588 SAD VSA and NT parcel owners pay well over \$20,000 a year.
- Based on the Demonstration Spray cost per acre, contractors coming in and talking at WLIB and WLA meetings what they charge per unit of measure, and past nuisance weed remediations the total cost of the recommendations per year would be less than what’s paid in; of course, the excess would be used elsewhere to help.

Report respectfully sent on June 19, 2024. Monty Wiseman (VSA and WLA Member), 989-435-4993