

March 31, 2025 Hidden Lake Association monthly meeting Minutes.

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM HLA board of Governor members in attendance were: Jay Cassella, Bob Kiehm by Zoom, Cynthia Porriello, Frank Nunes, Heather Edelson by Zoom, Sheri Berger and Brian Polak.

Attendance in person: Joe Spinelli, Linda Lamitola, Alan Stokke, Patricia Donahue, James Nicholson, Karin Bullock, Jean Cassella.

Attendance by Zoom was Anthony Grandazzo, Sandy Kiehm, Eleanor Porriello, Mary Arnold, Dennis Pellegrino, Victoria Nicholson, Marybeth Russo.

The floor was open to general discussion, there were no issues brought up by the membership.

Approval of the Minutes from last monthly meeting: The minutes from the October 2024 monthly meeting were read in full by HLA secretary Frank Nunes, it was noted that on the first paragraph of said Minutes, there should be a change from Shore to West Shore, where it discusses a lot which was cleared out, also under Lake and Dam report there should be a correction in the discussion about Hydrilla to remove "in the lake" and replace it with "in lakes", as it does not apply to our particular lake. A motion to accept the Minutes as read with corrections as noted was made by Sheri Berger, and it was seconded by Brian Polak. The motion passed unanimously.

The Treasurer's reports were read by Bob Kiehm, he reviewed each of the monthly reports for the months of November '24, December '24, January '25, February '25 and March '25.

Bob read the November report and provided the figures as follows, Income for the month \$941.44; Expenditures \$6,228.57; bank accounts combined balance \$164,097.45. A motion was made by Frank Nunes to accept the treasurer's report and said motion was seconded by Cynthia Porriello, the motion passed unanimously.

Bob read the December report, and provided the figures as follows, Income for the month \$496.49; Expenditures \$6,132.85; Bank accounts combined balance \$162,310.84. A motion was made by Cynthia Porriello to accept the report, the motion was seconded by Heather Edelson and passed unanimously.

Bob read the January report, it was noted that a correction needs to be made in regards to the dates of the snow removal. The following figures were provided: Income for the month \$200.04; Expenditures \$1,242.85; Bank accounts combined balance \$153,118.03. A motion to accept the report was made by Frank Nunes and seconded by Brian Polak, the motion passed unanimously.

Bob read the February report, it was noted that one of the invoices had to be resubmitted as it was improperly written up to include taxes. The figures are as follows: Income \$533.16; Expenditures \$4,069.98; Combined bank balances \$153,881.21. A motion was made to approve the report by Cynthia Porriello and seconded by Heather Edelson, the motion passed unanimously.

It was noted that there is one more remaining bill coming for spring cleanup that will need to be paid out of these funds for the fiscal year even though we are already overdrawn on the budget line item by about \$250.

Bob read the March report, he noted that that report had already been corrected regarding an error, which Sheri had noticed previously. The figures are: Income \$1,139.57; Expenditures \$763.85 and Combined bank balances of \$155,181.93. A motion to accept the report was made by Seri Berger and seconded by Frank Nunes, the motion passed unanimously.

The tax collectors report was read by Sheri Berger, she broke it down by category and noted that delinquent tax statements have gone out and that notices to place liens on unpaid properties will be going out tomorrow, this covers seven delinquent properties. The figures are: 2024 Current Tax of \$61,895.92. Total Tax collected \$59,240.75; Back taxes/interest/fees collected of \$1,085.75 for a total collected of \$60,326.50.

The septic report was provided by Anthony Grandazzo, there is nothing to report at this time, septic pumping will begin again in July 2025.

Road report, it was noted that there are still no members on the road committee, volunteers continue to be sought. Jay Cassella indicated that chip sealing and repairs are necessary this year, the roads were last layered with chips approximately seven years ago. There has been no progress on securing a contractor to provide catch basin clean outs. None of the contacted providers want to take the job as it is too small. Jay will ask the Town if it is possible for them to do it and we cover their costs.

Lake and Dam report, Marybeth Russo has resigned from the committee, we are currently seeking a new chairperson. We are currently under contract with Pond and Lake Connection for treatments and are awaiting the state to issue permits for them to begin treatment.

Aquatic Wildlife Committee: Keha Esposito provided the report and indicated that Marybeth Russo has left this committee as well. They have been meeting and thinking up their desired goals for this year. They are looking to provide support for people interested in establishing pollinator gardens and can also help secure seedlings and provide education. This is still in the planning stages. There will be further discussion on the topic under new business.

Bylaw committee, Brian Polak spoke, indicated that there are currently eight new bylaws and/or revisions ready to go. They are trying to get everything on track for the April monthly meeting. Things have not moved as quickly as hoped due to illness and the winter break.

Audit committee report, it was noted that the members of the Board have been having difficulty reaching the committee chairperson, Alan Howell by phone and email, no one is sure why he is not reaching back to messages sent. He has both of the association

ledgers. Board members have been finding it difficult to retrieve these documents. Jay Cassella will continue and try to connect with him.

Web & Facebook committee report provided by Jay Cassella: The website now has revised bylaws posted with the help of Heather Edelson, all new amendments are now listed on the website, Brian Polak was also of great help in this process.

Fundraising report, there was no report

Old business: Discussion of the culvert at East Shore, as well as the catch basins on West Shore, both projects seem to have had the intended outcome and are performing nicely. The catch basins appear to be able to benefit from a little bit more of fill-in, the culvert is still pending resolution of the status of the easement. Jay Cassella has been reviewing and examining all of the easements that the association is believed to have, the dispute in question appears to be the only one that is not well documented and problematic.

New Business: Looking to approve expenditures for the Bat House project in the amount of \$381.51, an approval is needed for materials purchased by Tiger Carlson, this needs a vote to disburse as the money has already been allocated. It appeared that the bill was submitted with a date of purchase after the date of the event. Upon further examination, it was discovered that the Bat House construction event was held on October 26 although the Minutes had indicated it was held on September 26, the September 26 date is an error and as such the dates of the event and the dates of the invoice do match now. The minutes will need to be corrected to show the correct date for the build a bat house event. Jay Cassella asked that the board of governors make a motion to approve the expenditure of \$381.51 to reimburse Tiger. The motion was made by Frank Nunes and seconded by Cynthia Porriello, it passed unanimously.

Jay Cassella asked for a motion to approve expenditures of \$30 per meeting for all future upcoming meetings as they are now being held at the United Congregational Church UCCHH. Per an agreement with the church, the association will pay \$30 per use of the facility. A motion was made by Brian Polak and seconded by Frank Nunes for the approval of said payments. The United Congregational Church of Haddam and Higganum is contracted for the full year. There is still some need to clarify with the church if they wish to be paid monthly or annually, the Board of Governors will need to go through the calendar for the entire year in order to ascertain exactly what dates are needed. Bob Kiehm said that said expenditures should come out of line item "miscellaneous expenses". Brian Polak amended the motion to approve \$30 per meeting from the line item "miscellaneous expenses". The motion passed unanimously.

Jay Cassella advised the membership and the Board of Governors that he received an email from the Haddam Fire Marshal asking that information be shared with all members about the fire risks of open burns and outdoor fires. The fire department will be very aggressive and collaborating with state police and will be issuing fines for up to \$250 per violation of fire risk guidelines. It was reported that they've responded to

several fires in the last few months including two responses on the lake. Jay Cassella will email this notice to our membership. We are currently under D0 fire risk status, which is not a fire restriction level. Jay will send out links to the website showing members how to check the levels on a live basis. Sheri Berger said that she spoke with the Fire Marshal today and that he said that no one should ever be burning anything outside of a fire pit without permission from the Fire Marshal. Once the fire risk level reaches D3, even Fire Pit usage is not allowed. Jay Cassella asked for the Board of Governors to OK him sending out this information as requested by the Fire Marshal. He also noted that the Fire Marshal offered to come and talk with a membership about these risks.

General discussion was open to the floor: Keha Esposito wants to correct the record regarding the payment needed for reimbursement to Tiger Carlson. She indicated the delay occurred because the committee had been under prior guidance that the funds were to be coming from the entertainment committee budget, but this allocation appears to have changed recently and they were not informed. Jay Cassella said that it did not change, but rather because there is now increased scrutiny on the Board of Governors, and as such, the Board can no longer be bending any rules, such as spending any monies before they are approved.

Alan Stokke spoke regarding the East Shore culvert project and ongoing concerns regarding the inland wetlands process, as well as the situation with the easement on a members property and the importance of obtaining owners permissions for these projects in order to CYA. He mentioned how he had brought this up in October and the Board of Governors admitted that the town had not been consulted. Then it turns out that there was no easement as thought and so Mr. Burr could potentially have a criminal complaint against the Association. He is wondering, what is the liability to the Association? And wondered if it wouldn't be smart to seek a meeting with Mr. Burr about working out the whole thing. Alan Stokke indicated that he has a transcript of prior meetings where this was discussed. He is concerned of a possible lawsuit or costs associated if Mr. Burr blocks access to his property. He wondered out loud if maybe we should address this? He provided the Board a copy of his transcript notes from the October 16 Special Meeting as well as the October 28 monthly meeting for the record.

Karin Bullock indicated that in Jay Cassella's email about his resignation and the discussion regarding this easement and the culvert project. Jay says that he had not been aware of the need for inland wetlands review/approval and the topic had not been brought to his attention but she takes the position that member Alan Stokke's statement from today and his transcripts show otherwise. She questions if Jay's email to the membership shouldn't be corrected to show this documented narrative.

Mary Arnold suggested that maybe the membership not go out and look for problems. Maybe the membership shouldn't be trying to get Mr. Burr stirred up as he is a nice guy and it might be better to just leave things alone and let him decide what action he wishes to take if any. Some of the discussion had was that maybe it is best to wait and

see what Mr. Burr wants to do and or what he actually does about the situation. The town has already mentioned to Jay that what has been done previously appears to have been done properly and undoing it and redoing it in some other location/way would only be more disruptive and problematic for The lake as it pertains to disturbances and the possibility of contamination and runoff.

Karin Bullock feels that it should be expected that things change with time and that from the prior feedback Jay Cassella had received from the town six years ago he should have known better to check again and gotten the OK from inland wetlands and the town. She feels that the Board of Governors should be checking with all proper channels as we move forward in our projects on the lake. Member discussion was entertained as to what are the risks to the association / BOG as it pertains to potential claims of trespassing on the Burr property due to the work done while under the false understanding that there was an easement in place.

A Motion to adjourn was made by Heather Edelson and seconded by Brian Pollock. Bob Kiehm said that as a retired law-enforcement officer, the events surrounding the culvert repair do not meet the legal definition of trespassing and also that Mr. Burr himself had told Mr. Kiehm that he was under the impression that there was indeed an easement on his property. It appears to have come as a surprise to all parties that the easement is not actually recorded or that the records of the easement cannot be found. The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 PM.