

Hidden Lake Association, Board of Governors meeting 6/26/23.  
Old Town Hall Building, 21 Field Park Dr, Haddam CT 06438

Meeting called to order at 6:38 PM.

BOG members in attendance: Chair, Jay Cassella; Vice President, Brian Polak; Treasurer, Robert Kiehm; Recording Secretary, Frank Nunes; Tax Collector, Sheri Berger, 3yr BOG Members Heather Edelson; Cindy Porriello.

BOG members absent: Past President, Lloyd Pearson; 3 year BOG Member Laurel Hoynoski.

Association members in attendance: Keha Esposito, Mary-Beth Russo, Karin Bullock, Alan Howell, Alan Stokke, Jean Cassella, Betty Barsevich, Jill Carey, BJ Chotiner, Celeste Benoit, Ted Endriss, Noreen Endriss, Mary Arnold.

BY ZOOM: Victoria Nicholson, James Nicholson, Linda Lamitola, Jeremy Payne, David Chalifoux, Teresa Resnick.

Reading of minutes from last meeting was waived as proposed by Cindy Porriello and 2nd by Heather Edelson. Some typographical corrections were necessary and made, motioned for approval w/ corrections by Bob Kiehm and 2nd by Brian Polak.

The floor was opened for general discussion, BJ Chotiner asked about the pile of rocks @ E. Shore beach and when will it be used? Keha Esposito took the opportunity to thank the BOG for the improved voting system implemented at this year's Annual Meeting.

followed by reports from the Treasurer Robert Kiehm and Tax Collector, Sheri Berger. For the Treasurer report, see attached income/expense report. Motion to accept Treasurer's report by Brian Polak, 2nd by Cindy Porriello. Approved unanimously. Tax Collector Sheri Berger reported that the 2023 tax bills will be mailed out in the next couple of days with a payment due date with post mark no later than 8/1/23.

Chair Jay Cassella called for reports from the standing committees, provided as follows:

- By Law Committee, report by chair Robert Kiehm. Recording provided by Secretary Nunes was amended by Mr. Kiehm and submitted for the record. (see Attached)

- Septic Report submitted by Anthony Grandazzo and read by Jay Cassella, to indicate that all septic pumping notices were mailed out to property owners who are scheduled for septic pumping on Thursday, 6/22/23. Pump outs will begin sometime this summer.

- Lake & Dam Committee, by David Chalifoux reported that the lake health survey has been completed, scoring still a bit up in the air as to how to calculate but with a tentative score of 7.5 currently. Will be working out a revised method to calculate averages of scores. Notice was given that volunteers are being sought to take over the water sampling duties, training will be provided.

- Aquatic / Wildlife Committee, by Keha Esposito reporting a flower garden has been completed by volunteers and a 2nd is underway. Thanks for donations of table and chairs

for one of the beaches' sitting areas as well as planters. The affixing of the previously approved turtle crossing signs is pending.

-Jay Cassella reported that he received a call from the Knickerbocker family asking for the status regarding their yearly family camping event on and around the 4th of July. Chair Cassella stated he informed them that he would honor the verbal agreement between the BOG and the family from 2009. The family is expected to have a Port-O-Potty on site for the event. They will also open their home up to family members to use the bathroom. Mr. Cassella, in response to a question from the membership indicated the agreement is not clear on whether this agreement is perpetual or if it has a time limit. Suggestions were made that just as the board entered into this agreement in an admittedly unorthodox, unilateral way it can also revoke said agreement.

-Audit Committee, by Alan Howell reported to be fully staffed by Alan Stokke and Karin Bullock who volunteered and were accepted. One of the questions that has arisen and will be worked on is how to process electronic payments while still complying with the 2 signature requirement and documenting these transactions as properly authorized in the case of an audit. Currently the process is for an email paper trail to be created and saved for such transactions. There should be a BOG approved written policy for this process. Having an approved policy may not require an amendment to the by-law. The Audit Committee will meet again in September 2023.

-Website / Facebook, Jay Cassella indicated that the website is updated up to the 2023 Annual Meeting entries. Reports from the various committees are still missing and will be uploaded to each committee's individual page. Jay Cassella and Heather Edelson will be working on that. Sheri Berger has also asked Mary to update the tax information on the website.

-Beautification Committee, Sandy Kiehm not present, Robert Kiehm presented the report indicating that the Tag Sale fundraiser will be held at their home, a flyer was provided and entered into the record, see attached.

#### Unfinished Business:

-Teresa Resnick easement. Ms. Resnick was on ZOOM, she indicated that the property survey is still pending and since her buyer backed out of their offer, time is no longer of the essence. A motion was made by Robert Kiehm and 2nd by Brian Polak that the matter be tabled until September 2023, approved unanimously.

-Fines for continuing ByLaw violations. 4 letters mailed to violators on 4/21/23, two have been resolved/corrected and two remain in violation of Section 52. The Charter allows for \$25 fine for such violations. By-Laws further indicate additional fines may compound. The matter was opened for discussion. Robert Kiehm suggested a final written notice that fines will be forthcoming if not resolved within 10 days of 6/27/23 notice letter to be mailed. A motion was made by Robert Kiehm and 2nd Heather Edelson to send out notice of the decision to administer \$25/Day fines for continued noncompliance with Section 52. Cindy Porriello, Brian Polak and Robert Kiehm voted yes, Sheri Berger abstained and Frank Nunes voted no. The motion was passed.

-Jay Cassella has received 2 proposals for removal and stump grinding of approximately 12 trees on left side of the dam. One for \$1200 another for \$2200. Robert Kiehm moved for the

approval of \$2200 maximum expenditure from the general reserve for said project. Heather Edelson 2nd, the motion passed unanimous. It was noted that the state requires our engineer to be present during the stump grinding. We will need to approve additional funds to pay our engineer for this time. Jay Cassella will seek more details from the HLA engineer for this. Robert Kiehm moved to approve and additional \$2000 MAX from the same line in the budget, the motion did not receive a 2nd.

-Road Drainage pipe @ 25 Shore Dr. 8-year-old work on site is giving way and needs remediation by installing metal plates at each end. Estimate obtained for \$501. Funds to come from Road Drainage line in budget. Motion was made by Brian Polak for approval of expenditure of \$502 for the installation of 2 road plates. Frank Nunes 2nd, Motion passed unanimously.

#### New Business:

-By Khea Esposito, interested in creating a volunteer ad hoc committee to explore the pros/cons of "Home Rule" status for the HLA. The purpose to engage with membership and disseminate important information. Will seek volunteers in the meantime. Jay Cassella and Robert Kiehm indicated they have a lot of information on the potential transition already, legislation is required and it is a multi-year process requiring public hearings as well as a charter revision, culminating in member ratification by vote. Ms. Esposito suggests 4-5 members ideally and indicated she will write up a formal proposal to submit to the BOG.

-How to improve engagement and buy-in for various by law revisions proposed or underway. Seeking to obtain membership comments as the proposals are developed. Possibly hold a special meeting to Q&A ahead of any vote on them. Also possibility of incorporating such discussion into the 2nd period of General discussion at monthly BOG meetings and / or send out a summary of progress along with each monthly agenda notice.

-BJ Chotiner asked about BOG revoking the prior camping agreement from 2009 with the Knickerbocker family, particularly as its been alluded to the fact that the prior BOG entered into this agreement without following proper procedures. It should be possible for the BOG in the same fashion to amend or discard such agreement going forward.

-Mary Arnold raised concerns over unequal enforcement as it pertains to violating the camping rules in the charter and bylaws and the disparate assessment of \$25 fines. Suggested our Atty. be consulted as unequal enforcement undermines the standing of the BOG and opens up the association to legal action.

-Karin Bullock asked to be provided with details of the 2009 agreement with the Knickerbocker family regarding camping. Jay Cassella indicated he would research the documentation on the issue from the archives and would have it published.

-Teresa Resnick asked for clarification on a camper being allowed for up to 2 weeks on one's property. Was told per Charter, absolutely not. She will seek guidance from the town. Was advised that the association is allowed to have rules more restrictive than the municipality or state, just not allowed to have less restrictive rules.

-Victoria Nicholson indicated she and likely other members appreciate the ability to attend monthly BOG meeting by ZOOM, and questioned why end them as stated by Jay Cassella? Jay Cassella indicated he didn't feel it worth the effort due to low utilization (5

member on today). He indicated he would reconsider continuing, but it may not be possible after 1/1/24 as we will move to a location without Wi-Fi.

-Jeremy Payne indicated he also appreciates participating by Zoom as he resides out of town. Suggested the HLA secure a Wi-Fi Hotspot to have internet at new location after 1/1/24. Jay Cassella will explore that option with Brian Polak.

-Alan Howell indicated that increasing Bylaw Committee participation and communication would also benefit from Zoom broadcast as well.

-Karin Bullock asked for clarification regarding Board Member stipends. Was advised all except Tax collector are yearly stipends. Tax collector is quarterly stipend. (See Treasurer report)

-Mary-Beth Russo noted that request for volunteers for committees was not made at the annual meeting as is usual. Jay Cassella indicated it was a lapse due to miscommunication, but there are no openings in play at this time. It was noted it would be good to having a standing list of backups as people occasionally step down before the end of their term. Mary-Beth Russo requested a more formalized process be considered.

-Karin Bullock asked for further clarification on reasons for proposed By Law change on building permits. Was advised goal was simply for moving the onus from the BOG to seek the permits instead onto the member to provide the permits, they agreed that aspect is currently ambiguous.

-Ted Endriss indicated that he has current permits from municipality which he will provide to the BOG.

-Noreen Endriss asked about member yards in disarray and blighted, what can be done about it. Was advised by Jay Cassella that only recourse is letters being sent unless it is deemed a health hazard in which case the town Health Department can be engaged.

-Jill Carey questioned why the BOG can't simply look up public record building permits from the municipal website rather than this whole By-law proposal. Was advised by Jay Cassella that it is already stipulated in our By-laws. Robert Kiehm further explained that not all projects are documented in the municipal records. He indicated his own records with the town are not accurate. He further stated that prior to installing his "Seawall" he was informed by the town that a permit was not required because it was a repair to his driveway, that a permit from the Inland Wetlands Commission was also not required for the same reason.

-Mary Arnold suggested that the HLA Attorney be consulted with final By-Law change proposals before they are put out to a vote.

-Karin Bullock indicated that regarding need for permits, particularly as it pertains to waterfront seawall rebuilding, she has contacted the Inland Wetlands Commission and was informed that absolutely an application for any work in a wetland area, a permit is always required. She also asked who is tasked with identifying work being done throughout the association as it pertains to permits. Jay Cassella indicated and Brian Polak concurred and elaborated that like in the municipal system, it is all dependent on the pertinent authorities receiving notification / a complaint of such and there is no one that goes out looking for violators.

The meeting was adjourned with a motion by Robert Kiehm and 2nd by Cindy Porriello at 8:40pm