

# DRAFT MINUTES

## BUFFALO LAKE PROTECTION & REHABILITATION DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 28, 2024 | 9:00 A.M.

Marquette County Service Center  
480 Underwood Ave Montello, WI 53949

### Agenda

#### 1. Call to Order

Called to order by Judi Nigbor at 9:03am. She explained that Dustin Esselman, district chair, asked her to facilitate the meeting because he was not going to be there.

#### 2. Roll Call

Present: Karyn Niin Kitigade - Dwight Fenderson - Judi Nigbor - Chuck Bornhoeft

Absent : Dustin Esselman - Bernie Sosinsky

#### 3. Adoption of Agenda

Additions to agenda

under #7 - e. Lake Level update - submitted by Dwight

under #8 - iii - Approval of partnering with Marquette County on the DNR Surface Water Grant for development of a 9 Key Element Plan for the Buffalo Lake Watershed - submitted by Karyn

Motion made for additions and accepted.

#### 4. Approval of the October 14th, 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

Approved with the exemption of changing the spelling of Dwight Fenderson's last name.

#### 5. Treasurer's Report

Jim Murre, the new treasurer, introduced himself and read the treasurer's report. \$15, 185.34 checking + \$147,912.88 operating fund + \$33,761.06 equipment fund = \$196,859.28

Report approved

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A member said that at last year's annual meeting he suggested that the lake district money be moved into a high yield account. He was told that the district would look into that but the money wasn't moved. He felt that the district could have earned \$10,000 in interest. Jim said that he will look into this.

### 6. Presentation of Audit

Carol Deer submitted a document stating that she reviewed the financial records and found no errors. Carol reminded members that she did a review, not an audit.

### 7. Committee Reports

#### a. Harvest Committee (Bernie/Bob)

Bob Fohey, harvesting crew supervisor, gave a report on the 2024 harvesting season. He felt things went well. All the crew members stayed on from the beginning to the end.

After the fish kill there were very few weeds so that time was used to work on the equipment to get it ready for winter.

Bob stated that we should be good for the next 10 years in regards to the equipment.

He reported that he was contacted by Ted Joihnsen, DNR, and told that the back flushing they did at the end of the season is not allowed. They will not do it again.

Members asked if we would be doing chemical weed treatment next year. The board members who were present were not able to answer that question as they are not involved with that project.

A discussion followed regarding the treatment around the piers. Some felt it was better in 2024 and some felt that it was more effective in 2023.

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Some members were concerned because the flag showing that they wanted the treatment had gotten destroyed in the storm during the time the lake was being treated.

Members suggested that the buoys be left out longer than they currently are. The problem is that the lake district harvest equipment that puts the buoys in and out are not in the water after harvesting season. Dwight said that he would check with Pier's Plus to see what they would charge to remove the buoys.

### b. Ecology/Water Quality Committee (Karyn)

Karyn reported that the Water Quality Committee has done three months of testing of phosphorous levels at 7 locations within the Buffalo Lake watershed. The testing shows how much phosphorus is being offloaded into Buffalo Lake through these tributaries.

The committee recently purchased a Dissolved Oxygen meter and they have begun testing the Dissolved Oxygen levels at various places on the lake. This information will be helpful when we do a fish restocking.

A member asked if they could use aqua thrusters on piers. Another member said that the DNR does allow them but they cannot be pointed down at the lake bottom. They are only for moving surface water and weeds.

### c. Fish Committee (Paul R)

Paul Ratzburg, chair of the fish committee, reported on the devastation caused by the fish kill. Three fishing competitions that were scheduled for 2025 have been canceled.

Donations to the fish restocking fund are down. He asked members to donate by sending checks to Buffalo Lake District Fish Fund - PO Box 82 - Montello, WI 53949. Paul said that we have lost some of the business sponsors because of the lake level issue. He asked that members support our local business, especially those that are sponsors.

Paul would like there to be \$8,000 for fish restocking in the 2025 budget.

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Paul said that the DNR would be doing a fish study of Buffalo Lake in October.

A member stated that he has talked with the EPA, the Health Department and the DNR regarding the fish kill and the crystals that he saw floating on the water. He wants to know if it is safe to be in the water and eat the fish. No one had an answer for him.

### d. County / Township Reports

Judi Nigbor reported that the causeway completion date has been moved back to October 31.

She also reported that the county has decided to change their focus. For many years they tried unsuccessfully to bring in new business but now they will be focused on tourism.

### E. Lake Level update - Dwight

Bernie and Dustin are the board members who have been working with the company doing the lake level study. Bernie told Dwight that the studies should be completed in January.

## 8. Hearing of Proposed 2025 District Budget

### a. Approval of Proposed 2025 District Budget

- i. Approval of Rebuild Harvester #5 (Included in Proposed 2025 Equipment Fund)
- ii. Approval of Purchase of Shore Conveyor (Included in Proposed 2025 Equipment Fund)
- iii. Approval of partnering with Marquette County on the DNR Surface Water Grant for development of a 9 Key Element Plan for the Buffalo Lake Watershed

There were many questions (see #13 below) about the budget that could not be answered at this meeting. A member made a motion to table the annual meeting and reconvene a later date not to be 30 days from now. The motion was seconded and the members agreed. The adoption of the 2025 budget was tabled and will be

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voted on at a future meeting. Judi Nigbor said that the meeting should be held within 30 days of the September 28, 2024 annual meeting.

Dwight was asked to contact Dustin and have him set up another budget meeting. Jim Murre said that questions regarding the budget could be sent to him and he would consolidate them.

### 9. Election of New Commissioners

- a. One Position to be Elected. Incumbent Karyn Niin Kitigade is re-running.

Judi called for nominations from the floor. There were none.  
Karyn was reelected.

### 10. Closed meeting for Commissioners to discuss election outcome if necessary, per Wisconsin 19.85 (1) C (f):

This did not take place

### 11. Commissioner's elect officers for 2024-2025

This did not take place

### 12. Determine next year's annual meeting date and time.

Saturday, October 4, 2025, 9am  
Place to be determined

### 13. Public Comment (not to exceed 30 minutes total)

*There were many questions throughout the meeting. I chose to list the majority of them here so that they will be easy to review and address. Karyn Niin Kitigade*

A member reminded all of us that it is important that even though the lake is not doing well right now, it is important that we maintain our properties

Members asked why the website is not being maintained and updated. Comments said that there was incorrect information and that it is not easy to find things on the website. It was said that the Buffalo Lake facebook page is now basically ads and

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that they get more information about the lake from the Beauties of Buffalo Lake facebook page.

A member asked why there is less communication from the board than there used to be.

### Lake Level Study

Where is the \$100,000 grant money listed in the treasury report?

Cason quoted \$107,000 Is that additional \$7,000 or whatever the dollar amount that exceeds the \$100,000 grant, in the 2025 budget?

How much has been given to Cason?

How much is left?

How far is Cason with the "Studies" part of the project?

Are there still studies that need to be completed?

Will Cason continue to gather data when the DNR drops the water level next week?

Is there anything else that needs to be done and turned into the DNR to comply with their information request?

Will all the study information be available this winter to present it to the DNR so the "Projected Water Level Change Date" can take place in spring 2025?

Has the board put together a "Water Level Change Request" to present to the DNR as suggested changes to start in spring of 2025?

The Lake Management Plan is expired or expiring at the end of this year.

Who is working on it?

What will it cost to complete?

Has this expense been included in the 2025 budget?

Is it true DNR grants cannot be applied for or considered by the DNR if we do not have an approved Lake Management Plan in place?

Will this affect the \$25,000 grant from the DNR for the new shore conveyor scheduled for next year or has that grant already been applied for under our current lake management plan?

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Is it also true weed harvesting and herbicide treatment permits cost more and are more likely to be denied if we do not have an approved Lake Management Plan in place?

Is the Restoration Fund in the budget for the purpose of paying for the continuation of water testing and for payment of the lake district portion of the 9 Key Element Plan?

The 2024 budget total expenses were projected at \$21,000 The 2024 YTD total is listed at \$191,410.98. Why?

What is the \$72,246.12 listed as an expense as "Rebuilds" in the 2025 Equipment Fund?

What is the \$93,000 listed as Grant Work?

14. Adjourn -11:30

\*Agenda subject to change and approval at meeting\*

Draft minutes submitted for review by Karyn Niin Kitigade on 10/8/2024