

Wixom Lake Improvement Board (WLIB)  
Meeting Minutes  
July 13, 2023

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: Carol Ayers, Joe Sova, Jeanette Snyder, Larry Woodard, Ray Drumright, Robert Kelley, Don Zakett, Terry Walters, Tami O'Donnell

Board Members Absent: None

Others in Attendance: Norma Stuart from Midland County Drain Commission, Lucy Zeestraten from Gladwin County Drain Commission, Paul Hausler from Progressive AE, Casey Shoaff from PLM Lake & Land Management Corp., Dave Rothman representing the Four Lakes Task Force (FLTF), and approximately 30 members of the public.

Approval of agenda. Agenda was presented with an opportunity to add items. Don Zakett asked to add Dave Rothman (FLTF) to the agenda to discuss mowing of lake bottom and related lake refill topics. Robert Kelley made a motion to accept the amended agenda and the motion was seconded by Carol Ayers. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of minutes from 6/6/23 WLIB meeting. Larry Woodard made a motion to approve the minutes with amendment showing his attendance instead of absence. The motion was seconded by Carol Ayers. Voice vote. Motion carried with Sova and Snyder abstaining due to absence from previous meeting.

Financial Matters. Joe Sova presented the financial statement showing a balance of \$281,320.96 with the caveat of several outstanding invoices to be addressed later in the meeting. Carol Ayers made a motion to receive and file the financial report, seconded by Jeanette Snyder. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

Three invoices were presented for payment: Invoice #6000167 dated 6/30/23 from PLM in the amount of \$6000 for consultation/administration; Invoice #6000152 dated 6/26/23 from PLM in the amount of \$14,490 for herbicide purchase; and Invoice #G200106 dated 6/26/23 from PLM but payable to Hamilton Helicopters Inc. in the amount of \$78,750 for aerial application of herbicide. Paul Hausler indicated that the herbicide treatment was successful. Willow trees are dead. Cottonwoods dead on top with some green leaves at bottom but expects complete kill with time as pesticide translocates to roots. A motion to pay the three invoices was made by Carol Ayers and it was seconded by Larry Woodard. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

Dave Rothman, FLTF representative, spoke about mowing dead vegetation. Mowing should not restart in treated areas until pesticide has fully translocated to roots. This is expected to be in a few weeks (mid- August). Of the different potential ways for dead vegetation removal, the FLTF recommends forestry mulcher to shred vegetation to very small pieces that will not foul the spillways upon refill. Refill of Wixom Lake is anticipated to be in the spring of 2026. As such, work to get the lake bottom in condition to refill should be completed by the end of 2025. The FLTF stance on burning of lakebed vegetation has been NO. This practice is being reconsidered and is likely to be changed to acceptable IF 1) permission is asked and 2) the burn is professionally managed. There was also discussion about rate of lake refill and restrictions related to minimum flows through the dam that need to be maintained. There is still uncertainty on this topic. It is expected that there will be a minimum water flow through

dam required and historically that minimum flow changes depending on the season. Once lake is refilled it is expected that lake level restrictions will trump minimum flow requirements. However, these comments were couched as speculation. Details will firm in the future as the process to obtain fill permits gets underway. FLTF is currently focused on obtaining construction permits for Sanford and Wixom dams.

There were also comments about the importance of clear communication and understanding of responsibilities between FLTF and WLIB with respect to conditions required by the future fill permit and actions taken to ensure that the lake bottoms are ready for refill.

Paul Hausler spoke about the work done so far this year to permit and execute herbicide treatments. He provided a handout titled Project Work Journal Wixom Lake that included maps of the areas treated by helicopter applicator. He estimates that there are 700-800 acres that could be mowed on the main lake and about 200 acres in canals. Some canals have woody vegetation and others are largely cattails and weeds. Don Zakett indicated that debris removal needs to be assessed in canals as well. Don has been talking with vegetation removal experts about strategies to address canals with steep banks. Discussion ensued on mapping canal vegetation using drones. Tami O'Donnell made a motion to have PLM map the canals with drones and then present the board with options for treatment. Larry Woodard seconded. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

Don Zakett brought up the topic of forestry mulching. He would like to aggressively tackle mulching this fall and asked for preauthorization of up to \$100K for clearing an estimated 200-300 acres on the main lake. Paul Hausler shared that he thought mowing some trial plots is a good idea. Much discussion of pros / cons / budget constraints / priorities ensued. In the end, the board requested that Don firm up a proposal for consideration at a future meeting alongside the recommendations from PLM about what to do in the canals. That way the board can decide holistically on prioritization of activities for use of remaining funds this year.

The next topic discussed was reinstatement of assessment for vegetation management in the WLIB district. In order to get an assessment on winter taxes, the process must be complete by mid-October. There is a requirement of public notice at least 20 days in advance of the hearing and then a 30 day appeal period after the hearing. There was much discussion of dates for meetings necessary to meet this timeline. During this discussion there was a motion by Terry Walters, seconded by Robert Kelley to set the date of August 10<sup>th</sup> for the next WLIB meeting to finalize a budget for future years which is a necessary to include in the hearing notice. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously. However on further discussion it was realized that accelerating this date would be preferential. Therefore, a motion to rescind the motion securing August 10<sup>th</sup> date was made by Larry Woodard and seconded by Don Zakett. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously. A new motion was made by Robert Kelley, seconded by Carol Ayers, to set the date of August 3<sup>rd</sup> for the next WLIB meeting in order to finalize a budget for future years. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

Next, dates for a public hearing on assessment reinstatement were discussed. A motion was made by Carol Ayers to hold the hearing on September 9<sup>th</sup> (back up Aug 31 or potentially other dates based on practical considerations) with time and venue pending based on availability. This was seconded by Robert Kelley. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously. Chairman Sova commented on the desirability of having legal representation present at the hearing for the benefit of taxpayers as well as the WLIB to minimize the likelihood of mistakes resulting in future legal actions.

**Public Comment:**

Dee Batista, Lakeview Drive: Fire department has equipment – side by side with tracks – that could be used to access canal areas for treatment.

Monty Wiseman, Venice Subdivision: Disappointed that action has not been taken on his proposal to modestly expand test treatment in areas near Pary Drain and Pleasure Island with mowing by volunteers and WLA this upcoming winter.

Scott Able, David's Drain. Canal is 23-24 feet deep. Understands that trees now growing at bottom of canal are shorter than dead trees from original fill whose tops are 7-8 feet below normal water level. However, if left unchecked, these trees will soon be taller than those previously cut off. This could be a big problem if not addressed soon. Bottom is like quicksand. Will the drone study of canals and subsequent plan address this issue?

Robert Loose. Impressed by the process of helicopter spray and the ensuing kill. However, there is still a lot of live vegetation in areas not treated. How will this be addressed?

Don Zakett complimented the WLA on fund raising and efforts to help people with mowing and debris removal. Don will communicate with people representing WLA to make sure that there is open communication about lakebed mowing and clean up between WLIB and WLA to maximize each organizations impact.

**End Public Comment**

**Adjournment:**

Motion to adjourn by Jeanette Snyder, seconded by Larry Woodard. Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously. 8:34 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ray Drumright