

Witches Woods Tax District
Annual Meeting May 18, 2018

President Mike Moran called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

President Moran called on Sandy Pandolfi, Clerk, to read the Call of the Meeting. Sandy stated that the Notice and Call was mailed to every property owner, posted on the signposts at the entrances to the lake roads, posted on our tax district website, posted in the Woodstock Town Hall and listed in the Woodstock Villager newspaper as a Legal Ad.

Mike asked for the Approval of the 2017 Tax District Annual Meeting Minutes which were made available at the meeting. Mike called for a waiver of reading the minutes.

A Motion was Made, Seconded and Approved to waive the reading of the 2017 Annual Meeting Minutes.

A Motion was Made, Seconded and Approved to Approve the 2017 Annual Meeting Minutes.

Annual Report of the President:

President Mike Moran welcomed the group, especially new homeowners and new attendees. He talked about how wonderful it is to live on Witches Woods Lake where we can enjoy the summer and using the lake for swimming, fishing, paddle boarding, kayaking, skiing, hiking and the beauty of birds like the resident eagles. He spoke of the wonderful neighbors and community life we enjoy.

Our roads projects are completed and was paid for in cash. We did not have to raise taxes or have a special assessment or borrow money to complete necessary projects. It came from our reserves. Our water quality testing was outstanding. We heard some safety concerns from some of you and there were homeowner projects that may not have agreed with our Covenants and Restrictions.

The Board is here to serve the homeowners, listen to and follow up on homeowner concerns. Mike, as Board President, apologized for any frustration and inconveniences some homeowners may have experienced. Some of the Boards recommendations are clearly a work in progress.

Some good news for our fiscal budget as the ten-year loan we took out for the valve project will be paid off this year, so we have a good opportunity to rebuild our reserves.

President Moran introduced the Board and Committee Chairs and our attorney Kate Cerrone. He reminded that Board and Committee Chairs are all non-paid volunteers and homeowners and thanked them for their willingness to accept the responsibility, thanking them as president and as well as a homeowner.

Presentation of Reports of Committee Chairs:

Roads and Right of Way – Reporting for Tom Pandolfi was Sandy Pandolfi Our

major road project that began several years ago has been completed.

Adding gravel to the boat launch area allowing easier access for boats has also been completed.

John Albrecht is beginning his spring road maintenance. Two new concerns were recently brought to Tom's attention and he will be reviewing them with John. The first concern is an area where the speed bumps were installed on Crooked Trail Extension. The speed bumps may be diverting the water to a homeowner's property and the second concern is a drainage concern also on Crooked Trail Extension.

Sandy spoke about the icing we experienced on the roads this winter. Dirt roads simply freeze, melt and refreeze...that is their nature. They do not hold the heat like asphalt roads making them dangerous when icing occurs. Homeowners should use discretion and caution. We can sand and salt every few hours, but the roads will still be icy until Mother Nature helps to melt the ice.

A homeowner asked for better communication with the fall leaf pickup schedule especially for homeowners who live on Crooked Trail Extension. Several homes failed to have their leaves picked up due to weather conditions but no new pick up was rescheduled. Sandy explained that some of the delays that prevented our contractor, Full Myle Grounds, from completing the leaf pickup were generated by the homeowners. Our contract was for leaves only, but some owners put in twigs and branches as well as small appliances. His team had to sift through the leaves removing everything but leaves. We had asked homeowners not to rake leaves in to the drainage ditches, but some did. Myles' crew took it upon themselves to wade in icy waters removing the leaves, so they would not cause water to back up and freeze on the roads. The extra time they had to spend, along with ice storms prevented them from finishing the leaf pick up on Crooked Trail Extension. It was agreed that better communications were needed, and we would speak to Myles about starting the leaf pickup earlier, so we may not run the risk of winter storms. Last year we waited as long as possible for all of the oak tree leaves to fall. The cost of our leaf pick up service is around \$10 per household which is very reasonable. A suggestion was made to increase our leaf budget pickup which would give more flexibility to have Full Miles make a second sweep if necessary for leaf pickup.

Lake, Dam and Beach – Jim Hutten

Our big project this year was the completion of the new toe drains. The engineer who was on site and inspected the contractor's work stated that the work was done meticulously even though we went with the lowest bid. The engineer has now submitted the "As Is" completed plans to the Connecticut DEEP and we have met all their requirements in advance of their deadline. Our next mandatory inspection will be in 2020 and once again we will receive a registered letter from the DEEP and we will likely use the same engineer again.

Our last water analysis last year took place at the end of August and it was 237.9 colonies per 100 millimeters of water. The redline of concern for a bacteria count is 235 so we are nowhere close to having a problem with bacteria. We will begin this year's annual treatment which is treated with liquid copper the first or second week in July will be conducted by Solitude lake

Management. There will be an inspection done a week or two before the treatment which includes pulling up aquatic plants and checking on the density of weeds to ensure there are no invasive species.

There was some discussion whether we should move up the treatment dates as this is one of the years in recent memory where the ice melted so early. This may give the rise to earlier weed growth. Jim explained that the treatment is based on the actual weed findings, so you need some growth to determine where and what type of treatment should be used. The treatment will not prevent weed growth but reacts on the growth it finds. If it appears that there were more weeds in the lake last year it is due to the cleanliness of the water. Weeds grow more readily in clean water.

We have renewed our landscape contract with Full Myles Ground for the same price as last year. He continues to do a good job and we have been satisfied with his work.

A concern came from a homeowner about boats coming too close to shore creating a safety concern for swimmers and kids on kayaks. It is recommended that people who swim the length of the lake wear some type of device that would allow boaters to see them in the water. Boaters must ensure that they are at least 100 feet away from the shore line at all times.

A question arose about Jim opening and closing the valve during the winter thus making it impossible for skaters to use the lake. Jim stated and at the 2016 Annual Meeting the homeowners voted to open the valve in October, so homeowners can work on their beaches, docks and stone walls. Approximately three weeks later the valve is closed, and the water level is raised but lower than the normal high-water level. Natural weather conditions and Bungay Lake opening and closing their valve may impact our lake levels, but Jim does not open and close the valve during the winter months.

A suggestion was made on the feasibility of installing a pipe that would give us a target level when we raise the lake back up again in November. It was agreed that the board would investigate this and try to get some pricing.

Building and Zoning – Keith Pezzetti

Every month Keith reports to the Board any permits that are taken out at the town hall by homeowners. Now all permit information is public information and available at the Woodstock Town Hall website via the Building Department Permit link. In April 2018 Keith, Mike Moran and

Steve Heath met with our first selectman Mike Alberts to discuss the issuance for permits to Witches Woods Lake homeowners. The concern was that unknowingly the town was issuing permits that were perhaps not in accordance with our Governances and Regulations. Because of the meeting, a new form was developed and put in place that requires anyone taking out a permit for major work also complete a form for the Witches Woods Tax District Board. Our covenants and Restrictions state that homeowners must get permission from the Tax District Board before any work is done. This will ensure that homeowners don't spend money on something and then must undo the work because it is not in compliance with our Covenants.

This past few years we had some major activity with properties that did not receive permission from the Board. Adherence and enforcement has been somewhat lax in the past and consequently issues have risen, and we have started to be more proactive. There had never been a process in place to ensure that town issued permits were also in compliance with our Covenants and Restrictions. The Building Department has agreed to provide homeowners with the form when they apply for a town permit and it will also be available on our lake website. A discussion ensued about liability of delaying permits and making sure there is a timely turnaround.

We still must work out the detail of the administrative process as well as defining exactly what “major work” entails and thus maintaining the beauty of our lake for its residents.

Communications – Reporting for Dick Rupinski was Mike Moran

Mike reported that the district email list is about the same as it was last year, currently 50 homes. The website is being used by new people and has just been updated.

The Next-Door app is a social media app and Tax District will not use it as a forum or means of communications except in emergency conditions or situations if applicable.

Safety, Rules and Regulations – Steve Heath

A review of our Rules and Ordinances took place because of some issues brought to the attention of the Board. Steve and his committee have drawn up some talking points to address these issues and enforcement of existing Rules and Ordinances and opened them up for discussion. Most Ordinances were written in 1995 and are still the rules today. Any changes in Ordinances would require meeting and are not something within the jurisdiction of the Board.

Rules, however, are.

There is a balance between how we use the recreation of the lake. We have young paddle boarders and kayakers, swimmers and people fishing. We need to respect each other’s use and expectations of how to use our lake.

One of our existing Ordinances is a maximum engine horsepower allowed on motorized boats at 70 mph. In 1995 Witches Woods homeowners went to the Town Hall and asked that an ordinance be put in place increasing the horsepower from 40 mph to 70 mph and that ordinance became a jurisdiction and has remained in place since then. This ordinance applies to Witches Woods Lake only. Because it is a town ordinance, any change would have to be presented at the town level and be introduced at a town meeting. The Board took a straw vote to see how many owners were interested in revisiting this ordinance and increasing the maximum horsepower. Based on the straw vote the Board agreed to put a committee together to gather information and present it to the Board for review and to present to the homeowners for possible change.

Everyone who operates a motorized boat MUST by Connecticut State law have received training and have a Safe Boating Certificate. All motorized boats must also follow state law and have a current Boat Registration. We now ask all homeowners to provide both to a Board member before they can be allowed to put their boat in the lake and get the combination to

the lock. Homeowners should not give the combination to others including renters. Renters must also show the required paperwork.

A conversation about the liability of the Witches Woods Tax District and Board members ensued. Several scenarios were presented, and it became apparent that the Board, even as volunteers, maintained some personal liability and needed some additional protection. It also became apparent that if an unregistered boat or uncertified boat owner was allowed on the lake with the knowledge of the Board, there may be some proven negligence and *personal liability* in addition to the Tax district insurance putting Board members at personal risk.

The use of high speed, loud, gasoline remote control boats was brought up for discussion. Several complaints from homeowners about the noise level and safety of these boats which travel at a high rate of speed can cause a safety issue. It was agreed that a subcommittee will be put together to review the use of remote boats, drones and maximum horsepower of engines. The Board hopes that homeowners of varied opinions and views will volunteer for this important committee.

A new rule has been introduced which prohibits dogs on the beaches from Memorial Day to Labor Day when the beaches are full use. The Board agreed to have signage put up on the beaches reminding people that no dogs are allowed.

Boat racks have become a depository. They were put out as a convenience for the homeowners and their kayaks and canoes, but they are filled up all year long. Homeowners are asked to clear the racks no later than November 1st. The Board has already acted to discard some kayaks from people who have moved and left them behind.

Bigger and better signage was put up on Crooked Trail Extension in the speed bumps area. There are no plans for additional speed bumps to be added. It's great to live on dirt roads where people can walk, and kids can ride their bikes. If you see someone speeding, tell them to slow down.

Treasurer's Report – Rande Chmura

Our financial condition is in excellent condition and our finances that closed on June 30, 2017 left a balance of \$5170.50 which was transferred to Unassigned. Our tax collection for last year was 99.12%. Our tax district has only three delinquent properties so far this year and our current collection rate is at 98%. We are projected to have a surplus of \$1200 due in large part to the multiyear snowplowing contract. Last year at the annual meeting homeowners voted to more \$33,500 to complete the earth and dam project which is now completed.

Our fund balance assets are \$68,361.02 but we still must pay off the valve loan which will be paid in full this year.

Our income is a little higher than projected due to higher tax rate. The proposed budget should include a reduction. We are proposing to transfer \$15,000 to the Capital Improvement Fund in the coming fiscal year which will increase our reserves. Our goal is to have 100% of our expenses in reserves so we would not have to issue special assessments or taxes or take out a loan should an emergency arise.

The Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan was not included with the handouts. There was nothing proposed for the fiscal year end 2019 but we are proposing \$15,000 be included in 2020 for tree trimming. Nothing is proposed for 2021, 2022 or 2023. **President Mike Moran proposed the following Motions:**

A Motion Was Made, Seconded and Approved to approve the Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

A Motion was made to purchase liability insurance for the Board. The Motion was Seconded and Approved. The homeowners voted to add \$3000 to the Insurance line in the budget to provide liability insurance for the Board. Fred Chmura will contact our insurance carrier.

A Motion was Made, Seconded and Approved for the first tax due date of July 1, 2018 and the second on January 1, 2019 unless the bill is less than \$100 in which case the entire amount is due July 1, 2018.

A Motion was Made, Seconded and Approved to increase the leaf removal line budget by \$500 to allow more coverage.

A Motion was Made, Seconded and Approved to increase the total operating budget by \$3500 for a total 2018-2019 Fiscal Year Budget of \$83,628.95.

A Motion was Made, Seconded and Approved for a new mill rate of 3.81.

Election of Officers – Bill Bresleau

Bill Presented the Nominating Committee slate for fiscal year 2018-2019. **Motion**

Made to Nominate Mike Moran as President was Seconded and Approved

Motion Made to Nominate Glen Humes as Vice President was Seconded and Approved

Motion Made to Nominate Margaret Houlihan as Treasurer was Seconded and Approved

Motion Made to Nominate Sandy Pandolfi as Clerk was Seconded and Approved

Slate of Officers

Motion was Made to Nominate Phyllis Bonneau as Communication Chair was Seconded and Approved for a one-year term.

Motion was Made to Nominate Steve Donnell as Building and Zoning Chair was Seconded and Approved.

A Motion was Made to Nominate Chris Latour as Health, Fire and Safety Chair was Seconded and Approved for a three-year term.

A Motion was Made to Nominate Jim Hutten to Lake, Dam and Beaches was Seconded and Approved for a three-year term.

New Business

A Motion was Made to Approved the planting of a tree in the memory of Evan O'Shaunessey who passed away last year was Seconded and Approved.

A Motion was made for the Board to investigate a new Connecticut Tax Law that may affect municipalities was Seconded and Approved. Steve Liebowitz will part of a committee along with our Attorney's office to see if it's feasible for Witches Woods Lake.

President Mike Moran thanked the homeowners for attending the meeting and for their input and support. Mike also thanked retiring Board Members Keith Pezzetti, Steve Heath and Rande Chmura for their invaluable service to the Witches Woods Community. They will be missed.

A Motion was Made to adjourn this year's Witches Woods Tax District 2018 Annual Meeting was Seconded and Approved.

Witches Woods Tax District Clerk

Sandy Pandolfi