

AMSTON LAKE DISTRICT Annual Meeting Minutes

May 20, 2023 10:00 A.M. Via Zoom
www.amstonlake.org

A. Call to Order:

President F. Hoisl called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

B. Roll Call of Officers and Directors:

Present: F. Hoisl, B. Pelegano, J. Caines, L. Bowen, A. Fichtel, J. Greenfield, T. Nixon, K. Patterson. Absent: J. Arpin.

The meeting included a slide presentation, which is available on the website.

C. Introduction of Board of Directors:

F. Hoisl introduced the current officers and directors.

D. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes:

Motion to approve the May 21, 2022 annual meeting minutes (K. Patterson/B. Pelegano) was approved without objection.

E. Review of Lake Operations and Committees:

F. Hoisl reviewed the slides, highlighting the many accomplishments of the board over the past year, including the implementation of the online lake pass registration system, the substantial repairs made to several of the Lebanon private roads, and the work done on the Main dam. He also thanked the many residents who volunteer in the community and recognized the members of the Lake Health and Beaches & ROWs Committees, calling attention to the tremendous amount of work they performed over the past year.

Bob Blackmore, 5 Rondaly Rd, Hebron:

Q: Is concerned about what he's read in the ALD board minutes regarding possible weed removal and treatment and about the verbiage that was used in the past to get residents to approve these projects and steps that past boards took. He recommended that before anything moves forward, perhaps we should ask the CT State Attorney General to look into what happened in the past to see if the residents were conned. He believes that in the past the ALD dredged the lake without the knowledge of our lake scientist. **A:** F. Hoisl responded that the current board represents all the families in the District and is taking great pains to collect data, and any recommendations will be advised by our limnologist and then brought to a District meeting, with enough information for the voters to make a decision.

Donna Ciarfella, 113 Deepwood Dr, Hebron

Believes we should take a prospective view and think about how mitigating the weed growth near a portion of the shoreline impacts the overall lake health and fish population. Recommendations should be specific, as residents use the lake in many different ways and they should all be considered.

F. Election of ALD Board of Directors:

Nominations for the board of directors 3-year terms, July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2026, and re-elected without objection:

- Teri Nixon, 7 Woodland Dr, Lebanon (nominated/seconded by K. Patterson/J. Greenfield)
- Liz Bowen, 156 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon (B. Pelgano/J. Greenfield)
- Al Fichtel, 203 Deepwood Dr, Hebron (B. Pelegano/J. Greenfield)

G. Election of ALD Board Officers:

Nominations for the officers listed below for one-year terms, July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, and re-elected without objection:

- Frank Hoisl, President (B. Pelegano/ A. Fichtel)
- Brandon Pelegano, Vice President (J. Greenfield/A. Fichtel)
- Jim Caines, Treasurer (B. Pelegano/ A. Fichtel)
- Liz Bowen, Clerk (B. Pelegano/ A. Fichtel)

H. Tax Collector and Treasurer's Report:

J. Caines reported that so far this year we have collected 94.5% of taxes owed, as well as 63.4% of back taxes, with two months remaining in the fiscal year. Both percentages are in line with last year's collection figures. He then went over the ALD revenue and expenses year-to-date. He pointed out that the Lebanon road expenses were only \$5,560 of the budgeted \$30,000, but the remainder will likely still be spent in this fiscal year as the contractor works on all the remaining Lebanon private roads.

He then compared the total of all fund balances on June 30, 2022 (\$280,211) to the current balances (\$308,017), while reminding everyone that there are still two months of expenses coming up until the end of the fiscal year, which will lower that total.

Barbara Lederer, 458 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon:

Q: Are we earning interest on the fund balances? **A:** Yes.

J. Caines explained the net impact of the proposed budgets, which would bring us very close to eliminating the remaining prior years' unspent funds. The two line items that make up the bulk of the spending increase over last year are the fees for the new limnologist, and a contribution to the Amston Lake Association (ALA) for repairs and improvements to the clubhouse.

I. Consideration of Funding ALA Clubhouse Repairs/Improvements:

J. Caines explained that late in the budgeting process, the ALA approached the ALD with a request for monetary assistance for clubhouse repairs. He presented an initial contractor quote, which was used as the basis for adding the line item to the budget. Additional quotes are under review, and much work remains before any work is done and money is paid.

J. Consider and Act Upon Proposed Budgets for FY 2020-2021:

J. Caines presented the proposed spending plans and budgets. The total spending plan of \$196,000 calls for the use of \$39,000 in unspent prior year funds, and \$7,000 of non-tax revenue (bank interest, dock & late fees), meaning that our tax revenue needed would be \$150,000, funded equally by Hebron and Lebanon residents. This is approximately what residents paid in FY 2021-22. This would be an increase of \$21,175 over the prior year.

Charlene Reagan, 6 Wood Acres Rd, Hebron:

Q: What is the tax implication of the budget for the residents? **A:** J. Caines stated that there would be an increase of \$21,175 over the prior year, or approximately 16.4%.

Bob Blackmore, 5 Rondaly Rd, Hebron:

Q: Can you take an additional \$21,000 out of the surplus so that there won't be a tax increase? **A:** No, the proposed budget already uses up the majority of the remaining unspent funds. **Q:** Is the Emergency Fund still kept at 50% of the operating budget? **A:** Yes. **Q:** Can the Emergency Fund be brought down to 5% like many of the surrounding towns? **A:** The town budgets are in the millions of dollars and shouldn't be compared to ours, but anything can be considered. **A:** A. Fichtel believes that Bob is saying that we are holding too much money in cash, and asking that we take \$21,175 out of our other funds so that we don't have a tax increase.

Motion to take \$21,175 from the surplus of \$308,00 and apply it to the proposed budget (B. Blackmore/A. Fichtel). J. Greenfield pointed out that the surplus that will remain at the end of the current fiscal year will only be approximately \$39,000 and next year's budget already proposes to spend it down to close to zero. We shouldn't deplete our reserves any further. Discussion ensued.

John Matra, 265 Deepwood Dr, Hebron:

He hopes that everyone will put a 16% increase in perspective, which is probably on average, a \$22 increase. He feels it's a small price to pay for the services the residents receive. It's a privilege to live here.

Laurel Hennebury, 458 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon:

She agrees that the total impact to residents is not a lot of money, but the principle of having a lot of money in savings is worthy of discussion. She'd like to see more study and more community discussion before any more significant cuts are made to the budget. She thanks the board for presenting a responsible and balanced budget.

Eileen Curtin, ALD Treasurer, 11 Woodland Rd, Lebanon:

As treasurer, she ran some numbers and the effects of the proposed budget as presented – the Hebron mill rate would be 1.32 (effecting a \$31.12 increase on Ms. Reagan's property) and the Lebanon rate would be 2.61 (effecting an \$11.05 increase on Ms. Curtin's own property).

B. Pelegano, 276 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon:

He'd hate for the community to be under pressure to take out a loan and then be surprised with a special assessment if an emergency arose. Additionally, the District is collecting interest income on the money in reserves.

A. Fichtel, 203 Deepwood, Hebron:

He doesn't want to pare the budget down, but does want to look at another way to pay for it. Even though it's a small increase, he feels the increases are never-ending and that a 16% increase shouldn't be trivialized.

Karen Patterson, 113 Deepwood Dr, Hebron:

She pointed out that last year we lowered taxes by \$20,000 because we used unspent funds from prior years. This proposed budget is merely returning it to the same amount that we budgeted in taxes two years ago.

B. Pelegano called the vote. L. Bowen seconded. Results of vote: majority approved to stop discussion.

Vote on previous motion by Bob Blackmore to amend the current budget request.

Results of vote: Five in favor, 38 opposed. Motion failed.

Motion to approve the 2023-2024 General Fund Spending Plan of \$196,000, of which \$150,000 will be funded with new tax revenue and the balance of \$46,000 will be funded using non-tax revenue of \$7,000 and unspent prior year General Funds of \$39,000 (B. Pelegano/ L. Bowen) was approved by a vote of 45 in favor, 2 opposed.

Motion to approve the 2023-2024 Lebanon Roads budget of \$24,000 which will be paid by new tax revenues (J. Caines/ B. Pelegano) approved by the Lebanon residents only by a vote of 25 in favor, 1 opposed.

K. Establish Date for 2024 District Annual Meeting:

Motion to hold the 2024 Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 18, 2024. at a time and location to be determined (F. Hoisl/B. Pelegano) was approved without objection.

Barbara Lederer, 458 Deepwood Dr, Hebron:

Hopes the board will consider doing next year's meeting as a hybrid so that people that haven't returned for the summer can join online.

L. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:15 p.m. (K. Patterson/B. Pelegano) was approved without objection.

Respectfully submitted by
Liz Bowen, Clerk
Amston Lake District

Please refer to subsequent meeting minutes for approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.