Wrighter Lake Membership Meeting

September 2, 2023

The meeting, with approximately 66 people in attendance, was held in person at the Tourje residence.

Board Members in attendance included: Tom Novitsky, Mackenzie DiVite, Cate DeGraw, Tim Ellis, Susan Edelman, Bob Lissner, and Carl Arabia.

1. OPENING AND INTRODUCTION:

President Tom Novitsky called the meeting to order, introducing the first agenda item, which was to list the retiring board members and elect incoming board members as follows:

RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS:

Bob Lissner, Stephanie Kirsch, Jess Ody

RETURNING BOARD MEMBERS:

Mackenzie DiVite, Susan Edelman, Carl Arabia , Tim Ellis, Craig Bryant, Cate DeGraw, Tom Novitsky

NEW MEMBERS:

Tim Greene, Tom Tyler, Mason Kirsch, Nancy McDonald, Vicky Rate, Bill Rate (with the Rates sharing a position)

APPROVAL OF NEW MEMBERS:

Tom recognized new members in the audience.

Tom proposed a motion to adopt the board new members. Motion passed unanimously.

Thank you to the retiring board members.

1. BUDGETARY OPTIONS:

Tom outlined the main reason for our gathering: a potential dues increase and/or operations adjustment to account for ongoing funding shortfalls mainly attributed to SAV (weed) survey costs and overall inflation. He and explained the three voting options on the table.

1. Have the association continue to support the costs of Wrighter Lake Day fireworks. This adds about $4,000 to budgeted expenses. If weed testing is not funded and no other changes to budgeted expenses are made, dues for 2024 should be at least $245.
2. Have the association continue to support performing an annual SAV survey. This adds about $4,400 to budgeted expenses. If fireworks are not funded and no other changes to budgeted expenses are made, dues for 2024 should be at least $245.
3. Maintain the current support for lake and community activities — including for Wrighter Lake Day fireworks and for an annual weed assessment survey. If no other changes to budgeted expenses are made, dues for 2024 should be at least $295.

Tom opened up the floor for questions:

Q:

How many members are part of the financial projection numbers?

A:

The assumption is 70. As a point of reference, in 2023, the membership level was 80.

Q:

Why do we water test every year? Has there ever been a problem?

A:

Water every year is excellent, and this has been true for the past 20 years or so. The cost is $1,000 each year to test water quality. The purpose of the test is to quickly identify issues if they should arise, such as leaking septic systems. Thirteen locations are tested annually and the testing sites rotate, so that every area of the lake is periodically tested. A show of hands at the July 15th annual meeting (2023) indicated the membership was generally in favor of yearly testing.

Q:

Please review association expenses with us so that we may better understand how an increased membership dues would work.

A:

Tom outlined yearly expenses for the audience in order to bolster discussion about a dues increase.

In recent years, expenses exceeded dues with the SAV (weed) survey being the biggest reason recent-year fund balances are declining. (The balance we hold in reserve is declining each year.) Other main expenses are fireworks costs and rising inflation.

Q:

Are we overspending on tents WL Day? People did not seem to stay under the tents that were rented this year.

A:

Since the pandemic we found other ways to enjoy Wrighter Lake Day such as the scavenger hunt and other activities. The committee used to spend $2,500 on WL Day. Going forward we may indeed forgo renting tents for Wrighter Lake Day, decrease expenses to $800-$900, and look for other formats for activities that day.

Q:

Why is there no voting option today that considers omitting fireworks AND the SAV (weed) survey?

A:

The options presented today were based on feedback from the July annual membership meeting. But we can look into that option. People were instructed to place comments on their ballots if they had additional suggestions.

*Tom paused to discussed the actual SAV survey from this year.*

2023 SAV SURVEY:

* Overall biomass increased from 2022 levels.
* Curly leaf pondweed increased also.
* Physical removal improved weeds at north end of lake.

 

Further questions came from the floor:

Q:

I think that spending that much to say we have weeds is a lot. What is the intention behind the SAV survey? We would probably do nothing, so why survey?

A:

An alternative is to have an organized assessment we do ourselves. But the alternative is not knowing at all. One challenge is that the weed biomass changes annually.

Q:

Why should we put our water quality at risk (by not testing)? Our property values are tied directly to the lake water quality.

A:

Here to date, we don’t have a problem that hasn’t been challenging enough to treat. With surveying, we at least have an idea of what is going on with weeds.

Q:

So far we have curly pond weed, but what if (the much more invasive and troublesome) hydrilla weed shows up? Hydrilla weed requires aggressive and costly treatment compared to curly pondweed. What is our treatment plan?

A:

The treatment plan is a separate question. The question today is whether we continue the SAV survey, which tests for both of these weed types.

Q:

Can we do a hybrid between an official paid-for survey one year alternating with a membership-driven survey the next?

A:

We’d have to come up with a quantifiable system, and we are open to discussing that.

Comment: Good scientific data is important so we can compare year to year. Any dues increase is little compared to the benefit.

A:

Tom echoed the comment. We’ve seen great variability of weeds around the lake from year to year. Right now we do not have a good plan for remediation. We do have a plan for evaluating the problem.

Bob Lissner rose to commend the couple in kayaks who spent time the day before, raking and removing weeds from the lake. His opinion is that $4,500 is a lot of money for the amount of information we receive about weeds in the lake and also that more residents need to become more involved in removing weeds manually.

Q:

Do we do the survey the same time each year?

A:

Yes, July each year.

Q:

There was a question about leaving fireworks in the budget.

A:

Many members agreed they wanted to keep the fireworks in the association budget per a show of hands at the July membership meeting. Today’s vote will tell us more definitively what the members want.

Comment: Jack Byrnes took the floor to say he found a Trapdoor Pond Snail in the lake. (His guest, a visiting Biology professor from Scranton, found the snail). These snails can be invasive and are introduced to lakes by boats from other water bodies that have not been properly cleaned. This is just another example of why we should be spending the money to test our lake water regularly. It is also a reminder that visitors must properly clean their boats and vessels.

Comment: The purpose of the Board of Directors is to protect the lake water quality. Its purpose is not to entertain the membership with fireworks and Wrighter Lake Day.

Comment: The purpose of lake association has never changed. It is interesting to note that dues in the 1960’s of $25 would equate to $242 in today’s dollars.

**Tom instructed members to please complete the ballot with instructions to write in any additional opinions and comments. (For example, if you believe the association should eliminate fireworks AND the SAV survey from its budget.)**

*Thirty-five ballots were collected with an additional nine ballots completed before the meeting (online). Results to be communicated shortly.*

1. WRIGHTER LAKE HISTORY:

Cate DeGraw explained a new program to be undertaken next summer 2024: Wrighter Lake History Happy Hour.

All lake residents are invited to the inaugural season of Wrighter Lake History Happy Hour. We will gather during this community-wide event to share our personal memories, and family lineage of various cottages and neighbors. An audio and/or video recording will be done to archive a full history to share with future generations.

There will be three sessions during the summer of 2024:

* Friday, June 21 at the Hofman/DiVite’s home
* Friday, July 26 at the Dooley’s Home
* Friday, August 16th at the O’Neil’s Home

All events will be planned from 5-7pm.

The Hosts will provide lite refreshments and guests are asked to share an appetizer or dessert.

Please plan on bringing a folding chair.

Even though it has rained enough this summer that there should not be any rain next summer, we will cancel the event in case of rain.

Format: Each session will include 2 Lake residents who will be invited to share their family history at Wrighter Lake. If you or someone in your family would be interested in sharing your family’s history, please email Cate DeGraw at cdegraw@mac.com. A moderator will be on hand to help facilitate questions and conversations to capture and preserve the unique community of Wrighter Lake and the surrounding community.

The Wrighter Lake Association hopes that you will be able to attend these events and become a part of our future history.

Thank you to families who agreed to open their homes.

If anyone has photographs they'd like to share, please share them with Tom Novitsky.

1. TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR:

Results of today’s vote will be relayed quickly (sometime in September) so that, for example, if fireworks become separate from the association, there is sufficient time to pull together a plan for the fire company and take up a private collection.

Please pay dues by Memorial Day so cash flow can be properly managed over the summer.

1. MEETING ADJOURNED

Thank you to Steve Tourje for allowing us to use this location for the meeting. And thank you to everyone for coming. We appreciate your continued support.

Meeting Adjourned.