Property Assessments and Lake District Zoning - Part 1 ***Chapter # 26***

Property assessments and Lake District zoning were a big part of what the SLCOA examined for the lake community. Many meetings and committees were dedicated to recommending and correcting rules and regulations for these issues. The village of Perry's zoning officer knew that the Lake District was different from the village and the zoning had to be handled differently. The Zoning Officer working together with the SLCOA and the lake property owners would do the best they could to make this process fair for all that owned property on and around Silver Lake.

SLCOA was asked to give input to Castile Supervisor Bob Bowles regarding Silver Lake and Silver Lake District for zoning recommendations. Zoning Officer Eric Parker discussed zoning changes at the November '90 SLCOA meeting at which time he sought input on: lake access, decks and boathouses, utilities, special use permits for Lake District and future development.

Changes of the many zoning recommendations were discussed at SLCOA meetings separately. In August there would be a summary of all the discussions. The March 23, 1991 meeting discussed lake access by the public—Options: 1) Leave as is; 2) leave up to the marinas & individual tracts; 3) Silver Lake would have one public launch at the south end (carry on) for which DEC money was available to upgrade with a cement ramp.

Two resolutions were passed by the SLCOA regarding lake access: Resolution 1 – SLCOA supported the opening of an upgraded launch (cement ramp constructed by the DEC) at the south end of the lake. Resolution 2 – Eventually close the launch at the north end (Walker Road) after the south end became a full boat launch. Vince Cali voiced objections to the resolutions, saying the SLCOA had the purpose of improving quality of lake life. Weekend boaters would likely be encouraged and he made a comparison to Conesus Lake where public ramps added congestion to the lake. Margaret Kirkgasser partially supported this point of view to not go out our way to encourage activity. Don Cook stated that the Walker Road boat launch is a traffic hazard. John Pachuta continued; the DEC appropriated $25,000 and the Wildlife Federation, DEC, Letchworth State Park, and many fishing organizations were pushing for a rebuilt boat ramp at the south end of Silver Lake. Vince still questioned why the SLCOA supported it. This issue would be rehashed at the August meeting.

Comments from the floor at the August 1991 Annual meeting included one from Castile town Supervisor Bowles, a member of the Wyoming County Land Acquisition Committee, which had opposed anything being bought by the State. For the record, Bowles stated that the DEC does not own or control the boat launch at the south end of the lake, the Department of Parks and Recreation did. The funds for the launch had been appropriated but it was uncertain when the work would begin. Mr. Bowles had met with the DEC and said that Castile would oppose development there until the State pays for the back taxes owed on that park. He also said that the State of New York owns Silver Lake and the Water Control Board and the DEC control water allotments. The Watershed Commission does not have legal authority to restrict water except on a voluntary basis as had been done through local media. As far as 9 major leaks in the line serving Mt Morris, Mr. Cowie had been promised that repairs would be done by November 1st.

April 20, 1991 the SLCOA opened dialog on the zoning changes for the Lake District for Docks and Boathouses, as in the case of Austin/Shearman Tract where docks have been built out over the water. The question asked by Eric Parker was, does the SLCOA want to allow this? Questions before the SLCOA were: Does the SLCOA support docks? Does the SLCOA support boat houses being built? Does the SLCOA support the upgrading of existing boathouses or tearing them down? The SLCOA had a choice of letting the town decide or take a stand by passing a resolution. An opinion was voiced by Chris Meyers and George Evans that they did not want to see a change in the shoreline which was already too cluttered.

The resolutions that were voted and passed were: 1)The SLCOA was opposed to the building of new boat houses; 2) The SLCOA supports local law 3, regarding the demolition of unsafe structures as passed at the 4/15/91 meeting of the Perry Village Board and encourage Castile and the Town of Perry to adopt the same. 3) SLCOA supports building and the rebuilding of docks out over the lake with footage limitations on height, length, and width. It was agreed for gas, water, and roads the SLCOA would leave it up to the individual tracts to make decisions regarding services. Elaine reported John Pachuta had a discussion with both agencies the DEC and the ACE. There were no regulations for docks. A suggestion that local government control dock sizes was unlikely due to liability.

The Perry Town Supervisor Anne Humphrey outlined the duties of the Silver Lake Task Force/Waterfront Revitalization Committee. The group included representatives from local and state agencies, businesses and property owners who had an interest in the future development and protection of Silver Lake. It compiled rules and regulations that applied to Silver Lake and would eventually draft a document that could resolve some long standing waterfront and property use issues.

Watershed Commission members identified and prioritized erosion hotspots in the watershed. The Commission would have liked to help fund a percent of remediation work through the Wyoming County Soil & Water Conservation Service of similar agency. Dredging was considered too costly. The FX Browne report recommended lake inputs be lessened before in-lake work be done. The Watershed Commission proposed zoning codes for towns and villages to include erosion measures.

Terry Murphy resigned his office of Mayor of Perry effective 3/31/92. He planned to stay active on the Watershed Commission until a replacement was found. Perry's Deputy Mayor Roy Griswold replaced Terry Murphy as Chairman of the Watershed Commission.

Castile Supervisor Bob Bowles told members and guests at the 1994 Annual Meeting that the town had received several requests to establish a water district. Homeowners on three-quarters of the lake cannot use well water for consumption since most of it is sulfuric. It was an issue the town researched 10–12 years ago and planned to look at it once again. Project engineers were asked to revamp costs on several alternatives presented in the mid-1980s. The town board did not act on it then since it felt there wasn't a majority or residents who supported it. Over the last decade, homes on the lake had been upgraded, many to year-around dwellings. Nearby farms are expanding and demands from outside municipal users are expected to increase. The town felt that it was time to look at a public water supply again. Bob Bowles stressed that homeowners would be involved throughout the process which would include several public hearings.

At the 1994 September meeting of the SLA the town of Castile board meeting of September 8th was discussed. 70 people attended this meeting to hear an update on the proposal of the water district. The town wanted input on whether or not it should spend $5,200 to update the 1983 survey and current costs to establish a public water system on the lake. People complained over the lack of notice for the meeting and felt that the town should have gone ahead with the survey before calling a meeting because there were no costs estimates available at the time of the town meeting. The town Board would call another meeting in June-July of 1995 to review the completed update.

At the October 1994 meeting it was said that the county has a new planner, Barbara Shilling. She had not reactivated the Silver Lake Task Force but would do so as soon as she learns more about it. The town of Castile, the county, and the town of Perry were all working on their budgets. All were impacted by the lost tax revenues (a half-million county wide) now that farmers are not taxed for upright or bunker silos. The loss of revenue would be spread out over the rest of the tax base.

Lorraine had met with the new State Parks Commissioner, Bernadette Castro, who said NYS would not acquire more land and take it off the tax rolls.