

Becker County COLA Meeting Minutes

Detroit Lakes Police Station

Thursday, May 18, 2023, 5:30 PM CST

Attendees:

Jenni Barr – Big Cormorant

Chuck Becker – Big Sugarbush

Sue Borstad – Pickerel Lake

Jim Brouse – Height of Land

Cheryl Chivers – Little Detroit

John Flynn – Big Detroit Lake

Sandi Gruhot – Melissa/Sallie

Brian Johanse – Melissa/Sallie

Marietta Keenan – Island Lake

Gary Klein – Cotton Lake

Carol Lee – Little Detroit

Roger Lee – Buffalo Lake

Brenda Moses – Pelican River Watershed

Duane Olson – Nelson Lake

Gordon Olson – White Earth

John Ovrebo – White Earth

Jake Rissmann – Stakke Lake

Carol Schornack – Melissa/Sallie

David Suby – Pickerel Lake

Kyle Vareberg – Becker County Zoning

5:30 pm

Presentation and Q&A by Kyle Vareberg, Zoning Administrator

The purpose of the zoning department is to protect resources and property rights. There are 6 people in the department, including a 911 address coordinator, 2 shoreland technicians, a sewer inspector and office support.

Permits: Most permits are applied for on-line and they are usually processed within 10 days. A physical inspection is made of every lake property that is granted a permit. If a variance is needed all neighboring properties within 500 feet must be notified. The President of each Lake Association is also notified via email. In all cases, structures must be outside the shore impact zone and impervious surface must not exceed 25%, unless offset by mitigation. Set-backs are determined by The DNR classification of the lake and the set-back of neighboring properties. The three main classifications are:

- Natural Environment - 150' Setback
- Recreational Development – 100' Setback
- General Development – 75' Setback

Taxes: Vareberg stated that even though property values are increasing, taxes should level off because there is so much new development bringing in revenue. Now that people can work from home, many have chosen to work from the lake.

Comprehensive Plan: If you're planning to buy a lake home in Becker County to turn into a short-term internet rental (VRBO) the county is looking to rein-in the proliferation of online rental properties. Currently they must be permitted annually, have a 12 vehicle parking plan, and maximum occupancy is 3 persons per bedroom. The county also wants firm control over any new concentrated animal feedlots, wind farms or solar farms. It is also looking to put some sharper teeth into enforcement of its zoning laws. All that will come together in an upcoming revamp of the county's comprehensive plan, which hasn't been updated in 20 years. Public stakeholder meetings will start in July. It will take about a year to get a new plan in place. The total budget for the plan is \$100,000 and 5 different engineering groups will be bidding.

Q&A

Q. Will there be any new regulations regarding wake boats in light of the studies that are being done?

A. Some interest has been shown.

Q. What can be done to improve enforcement?

A. Higher fines

Q. What is the biggest complaint?

A. Vegetation removal, including trees along the lakeshore. Zoning relies on owners to report on any violations they witness. Zoning asks that they report their observations. Becker Soil and Water has a list of Landscape Companies that are certified by the county. Pelican River Watershed also has qualified inspectors.

Q. How can you find out about permits that have been applied for?

A. There is a lot of re-development in the area. You can find permits under a parcel search on the county website.

Q. How many variance requests do you receive in a year?

A. About 40. There is a \$400 fee to process a variance request. Zoning receives many impervious surface reduction requests.

Members thanked Vareberg for speaking and the business meeting began at 6:10 p.m.

Old Business: Vice President, David Suby, presiding.

Chuck Becker made a motion to approve the October 20, 2023 minutes. Roger Lee seconded the motion. Minutes were approved.

Introductions:

Members introduced themselves and talked about one good thing and one bad thing they see on their lake.

- There was a question about the houseboat that continues to be anchored in Big Detroit. Does it have a septic system? When and how is the sewage treated?
- You can register for the upcoming webinar on the St. Anthony wake boat study with Jeff Marr on May 31st from 6:30 to 8:00. It is being hosted by Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates. Information on these and other sessions is provided in the "News of Interest" section of this the MN COLA newsletter. Minnesota Lakes and Rivers has been granted additional money from the MN Lottery and will extend their research another 3 years.
- Cotton Lake is working on a water quality plan. They have sent a survey to their members for input.
- Stakke Lake was concerned about winter fish kill and wake boats on their small lake.

New Business: The EC determined that an uncertified audit of the budget would be performed this year. John Flynn made a motion to accept an uncertified audit and Sue Borstad seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Vice President, David Suby presented the Bylaws changes to be voted upon.

- The Administrative Assistant will be divided into two positions, Secretary and Program coordinator. John Flynn made a motion to accept the change and Jennie Baar seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Vice President, David Suby, read the changes to the bylaws which will need to be approved at the June 2023 meeting.

- Establishing a Social Media Position.
- Article IV Dues, Section 2, Change September 1st to October 31st.

It was announced that our email address has been changed to beckercountycolumn@gmail.com.

A new Membership Dues form was introduced with the dues increase. It will be emailed to lake association Treasurers. White Earth has not been getting the dues notice and requested that theirs be mailed to them.

EC and General Meeting Schedules were presented. Our next general membership meeting will be held in the Library on June 22nd with RMB Labs presenting.

Sue Borstad make a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chuck Becker seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.