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**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES**

**June 26, 2022**

The meeting was called to order by Maria Mostajo, LWA President, at 10:35am.She welcomed the members in attendance and thanked everyone for their continued support through the previous year. She then gave a brief overview of the day’s agenda noting that there would be time at the end for Q&A.

Maria then spoke about her understanding of the mission of the LWA Board - to educate and encourage all to care for the lake and its surroundings so that we can all continue to enjoy its many recreational offerings while building community and memories for generations to come. She emphasized that our programming and work is geared toward active engagement and to include as many interested people as possible, especially our next generation of leaders.

Stacey Lender, Vice President, introduced the members of the Board who were present- Reid Funston, Michael Cesari, Mary Jo Keating, Margaret Field, Claire Guadagno, Robert Hackney, David Holmes, Chris Spring, Nancy Williams Sarnoff and special guest Sean Hayden, Executive Director of the Lake Waramaug Task Force.

A motion was made and passed to request the waiving of the reading of the Membership Meeting Minutes from June 3, 2021.

**Election of New Directors -** Maria introduced the three new Board members who have been nominated this year. They are Michael Cesari, Claire Guadagno and Nancy Sarnoff Williams (short bios were made available on the last page of the Agenda).

**Vote on Current Slate of Directors -** For the current year, Maria Mostajo will continue to serve as Board President, Stacey Lender as Vice President, Linda Andryc as Secretary and Reid Funston as Treasurer. Additionally, Linda, Reid and Alan Levande will begin their second 3-year term.

A motion was made by Shauna Holiman to close the nominations and elect the proposed new and continuing Board members and was seconded by Pedro Bonachea.

**Financial Report -** Reid Funston gave a review of fiscal 2021-22 financials with total income of $88,000 and commented that it had been a great year for LWA including generous gifts for the Land-Use committee, our annual fireworks celebration, road safety and general donations. He noted that the PF-990 is available to all on our LWA website.

**Communications:**

News/photos from LWA can be found on our social media websites: #LakeWaramaug and #DogsOfWaramaug. All are encouraged to visit the LWA website at [www.waramaugassociation.org](http://www.waramaugassociation.org) to sign up for newsletters and social media communications. We will also be sending out our annual member survey once again this fall so that we can better understand the wants and needs of our LWA community.

**LWA Newsletter -** Mary Jo Keating encouraged everyone to read the 8-page annual spring newsletter and emphasized that all members are encouraged to create content for it in the coming year. All our welcome including children and adults- we are planning a “Creative Corner” which will include writing, art and photos. More information to follow.

**Social Media -** Chris Spring reported that the LWA Instagram and Facebook accounts added both “Followers” and “Likes” during the year and now have a combined audience of over 2,000 followers. We continue to post regularly on both sites including promoting the new Lake Waramaug “swag.” In addition, a partnership was created with the Gunn Museum to show a selection of their vintage images, which has been very popular. We plan to continue this program and to explore other ways to work with the museum. Other initiatives include a fishing contest for next year.

**Advocacy, Education and Awareness Campaigns:**

**Lake It Slow Update -** Maria talked about the goals of the Lake it Slow campaign which are to educate the community about the importance of driving, riding, walking and running on the roads surrounding the lake while being aware of the safety of all those that share the road. We have engaged our elected officials in the 3 neighboring towns so that they can better carry our message beyond the lake’s perimeters. LWA, in partnership with our elected officials, has also advocated with DOT to make some important safety changes around the lake including reducing the speed limit on Rt 45, adding speed reduction measures such as crosswalks at various locations around the lake and designating the lake roadways as “No through truck zones’. Your testimonials of harrowing experiences with speeding cars, cyclists, and photos of large trucks too big for our roads have helped to make our case for these much needed changes.The DOT has accepted their request and has committed to conduct a full investigation through the Division of Traffic Engineering (DTE) and the Office of the State Traffic Administration (OSTA). We are currently awaiting the DOT’s decision and will keep our membership apprised of their decisions.

Maria also noted that the DOT advised us to work with our elected officials to get speed radar signs installed and to get our troopers out on the roads as they too believe that enforcement and compliance by all of us is the key to changing behavior on the roads.

**Lake It Grow -** Stacey noted that the native plantings workshop formerly planned for July will be rescheduled soon.

**Lake It Low Impact -** More info will be coming soon on this initiative.

**Lake a Hike -** The LWA has launched a summer hiking series to highlight our beautiful lake from different perspectives and to learn about trails in and around our watershed and how the health of the surrounding area impacts our lake waters. All ages are welcomed and encouraged! Our first hike took place in early June at the Little Lake Waramaug Rock at the State Park and was attended by 20+ local residents. The second hike will take place on Saturday, July 9 at the Macricosta Preserve (Waramaug Rock) and will be led by several members of the Steep Rock Association. Details and sign-up/registration can be found on our website. Our third hike will be held at the East Kent Hamlet Preserve on August 6th and will be led by a Kent Land Trust guide. Another hike is being planned for September with details to follow.

**2022 Fireworks Celebration/Appeal -** Robert Hackney gave an update on this year’s fireworks celebration which will take place on Sunday, July 3. The costs for the display have increased by about $5000 and he asked for the community’s help in raising the money to fund our sponsorship. He expressed our gratitude to the Warren Fire Marshall for their assistance as well as to Cynthia and Lee Vance for their very generous offer, once again, to host the fireworks launch from their property. A state trooper will be directing traffic and the best viewing points will continue to be from local docks or boats.

We are continuing to explore other possible sites for the display next year as many people are not able to view the fireworks from the current location. Hiring a barge is unfortunately not feasible due to the danger of falling debris so our focus will be on possible land sites around the lake.

We are very grateful to Pedro Bonachea for coordinating the sale of flares for our annual “Ring the Lake” tradition- they will be available for purchase at the Hopkins Winery, the Smithy, and Country Wine and Spirits.

**Junior Committee -** Nancy Sarnoff Williams will be leading the formation of an LWA Junior Committee and she and Maria have reached our to twenty+ 22-30 year olds who are interested in participating. A Zoom meeting and social event will be held in the near future to further coordinate their plans. Ali Mann, one of our junior members, has taken on the job of designing and executing our LWA “merch” which will be available very soon. One of the areas the committee will be focusing on are ways to promote safe boating practices on the lake as well as fun activities for our communtiy- possible ideas being floated for next summer are a family scavenger hunt and relay race- more to come…

‘**State of the Lake’ Presentation by the Lake Waramaug Task Force -** Sean Hayden, Executive Director

Sean reported that so far this year, the lake is doing really well. Using a secchi disk to measure water clarity on a weekly basis, the color and clarity of the lake have been getting better after a challenging year of horrific rain and wind events where the soil was not able to absorb the water quickly enough to prevent major storm water runoff into the lake. More positive news is that the invasive species prevalent in the lake in past years are now basically gone.

Sean noted that we’re experiencing the effects of climate change and the Task Force is concerned about the number of development projects that are becoming more ambitious and their potential damaging effect on the environment surrounding the lake.

Sean spoke about a new campaign which began last fall in which four submersible mini-Dot® temperature/dissolved oxygen data loggers were installed in the lake. Strung together in a line, each logger was placed at a different depth and collects hourly water temperature and dissolved oxygen concentrations year-round. This data will help the Task Force forecast favorable conditions for cyanobacteria blooms and understand how the lake gains and loses heat. In this way, we can prepare for and combat the negative water quality effects of climate change.

The Zooplankton farm, which was created to return the native population to their natural population pre-introduction of the alewife in order to armor and protect the Lake against toxic cyanobacteria blooms, has been experimenting with some new approaches this year. This is an ongoing effort and more date will need to be collected before it can be determined whether the farm is proving to be effective.

Sean also talked about the creation of a weekly data dashboard, a current project still under construction which will be an important tool in tracking and analyzing all the data gathered from the the various testing being done around the lake.

He noted that the State Health Department checks the levels of harmful e coli bacteria by doing weekly samplings of the water along all three beaches. Levels of e coli bacteria are sometimes very concentrated along the shore line but are generally low in the middle of the lake. Links to the health departments reports can be found on the LWTF website.

When asked about whether it was permissible to clear swimming areas of vegetation, Sean said that this did not require a permit and that an iron rake or hand pulling could be used.

**Upcoming Initiatives:**

**Guide Rails -** Maria spoke about the very sudden appearance of the DOT on Route 45 in mid-April of this year as they began to quickly replace the existing guide rails. The DOT, under a routine maintenance program, had decided to replace the existing wood beam/2 cable guide rails with the very big and bulky galvanized steel barriers seen on our highways. Following some phone calls and a meeting with the DOT engineer in charge of the project, a concerned local resident and the LWA was able to convince to use a less bulky version known as a “Box Beam” system. We tried to get the DOT to halt its installation to give the community an opportunity to provide input and to consider other options that might be more in keeping with the rural and scenic character of our lake roads, but we were told that the best they could do was the box beam- this is what they stock, is the most economical, and most importantly, is considered safe by current DOT standards. Evidently, to give the community notice, the DOT posted an ad about the proposed guide rail work in the Waterbury newspaper last fall and obtained permission from the scenic road committee within DOT. It seems that no one in our community ever saw that ad and that no study or design review was undertaken by this committee.

A small committee has been formed to better understand the DOT’s process and to look at potential options that could be proposed to them before they undertake the replacement of the guide rails on North Shore Road next spring and eventually West Shore Road as well. We would like to thank Paul Herzan, one of our members, who immediately jumped into action when the DOT work first began to reach out to his various contacts in conservation organizations, within the DOT and to other towns who have faced a similar issue to gather information that might be helpful. Our plan is to launch an educational campaign, so that our community understands the DOT’s plans, and would would like to hear from you and give you an opportunity to provide input into our eventual recommendation to the DOT. Our Board has approved hiring a consultant who has over 30 years of experience dealing with the DOT and has worked with a number of local towns to help guide us through this process. We also intend to meet with our 3 town selectmen to ask them to support our work and recommendation as they did with the Lake It Slow Campaign. While no decision has been made on what we will recommend, we have done some research and have come up with some preliminary ideas (photos of these possibilities were handed out to the audience).

A meeting will be held next month with the consultant who will provide more detail and his thoughts. An invitation will be sent out for all those who might be interested in getting involved or have some expertise in this area.

**Exploring Historic Register Designation -** In response to the recent guide rail issue, Maria started exploring ways that our scenic road and heritage lake designations could help protect us from the DOT’s actions. In digging through past LWA files, she learned that in the late 1990’s, in response to the state’s efforts to install a public boat launch on the lake, a number of very committed LWA members raised money and met with elected officials and eventually prevented this plan from going through.

Today, the LWA is exploring the possibility of applying to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places- a list of the nation’s cultural resources worthy of preservation because of their significance in American life. There are close to 95,000 listings including all historic areas in the National Park system and historical landmarks and properties across the country that are significant to the nation, to a state, or even to a local community.

It is an arduous application process and it is important to know that if approved, it does NOT put any restrictions on the use of one’s property or the territory designated as a historic place. It is truly an honor to be recognized in this way and would make us eligible to receive both federal and state grants for preservation activities.

We had an initial meeting with Jenny Scofield, from the State Preservation Office, and she has given us some very helpful information. She has recommended that we highlight our recreational history and so we will be forming a committee to further explore this process. Should you be interested and/or have some expertise in this area, we would love to have you join us.

**Memorials and Acknowledgements -**

The LWA has directed a very generous donation of $2000 by Heather Allen to the Warren Land Trust.

We are very grateful to those who have passed this year who dedicated their passion, enthusiasm and hard work to serve the LWA community for many years- Billie Mullen, Tom Yamin, Ken Hecken, Mary Loghney and Kate Talmadge.

We would like to thank the LWCC for allowing us to use this beautiful space, Carolyn Hartman, without whom we all could not do what we do, and our Board members- it has been a great year with more to come.

And finally, to our members- thank you for your continued support!