

Seymour Lake Association - Board of Directors Meeting - September 9, 2023 - 9 a.m.

Present: Rhonda Shippee, President; Bonnie McWain, Vice President; Jean McKenny, Treasurer; Linda Buzzell, Secretary; Tim Buzzell, Bruce Barter, Bruce Remick, Bill Bilowus, Tom Adams, Woody Woods, Denis Fortin, Candy Moot (via phone)

Absent: Sean Selby

Committee Members: Peggy Barter, Chuck Nichols

1. **Membership** - Tom Adams - Jim Mitchell on Wayeeses will take Brenda's Wierschke's place; Dick Morley takes Erik Lessing's; Anne Stafford has joined the committee and will cover Elliott Acres which will help Bonnie who had that area. 358 members to date.

Chuck Nichols presented a report on membership software needed. His report is attached as a hard copy to the Secretary's files. He recommended Microsoft 365 for nonprofits with 3 users (Chuck, Andy Barter and Rhonda Shippee) which is subscription for \$100/yr. A Motion to accept Chuck's recommendation was made by Tom Adams, seconded by Jean McKenny, accepted.

Tom feels the membership renewal in an email with PDF is the way to go. Some discussion about personalizing the PDF with membership number etc. Still mail to the 10% who have not shared emails. He would like to try February for the email. When they plug in their membership number, all pertinent information pops up and they will only have to add or change information. Jethro can upload the information for new memberships too.

2. **Secretary's Report - August 18, 2023** - A Motion was made by Bonnie McWain to approve the report, seconded by Bruce Remick, approved.

3. Old Business -

Mail - Rhonda read a letter from Erik Lessing thanking us for his retirement card and gift. He also sent a package containing info he had collected over the years - newsletters, history, old watershed plan 1977, etc.

Member Dues Analysis – Rhonda presented the following analysis she prepared for a discussion about whether to increase our current membership dues.

LAKE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP DUES ON OTHER LAKES

ECHO LAKE	\$25 Individual; \$50 Family
WILLOUGHBY	\$25 Basic; \$50 Champion; \$100+ Guardian
JOE'S POND	\$40 per lake property
MAIDSTONE LAKE	\$50 per lake property
SEYMOUR LAKE	\$10 Individual; \$30 Family

- Echo and Seymour are the only lakes I found that have separate individual and family memberships. Most lakes assess dues by property. Eliminating our family/individual membership structure would require a change to the By-Laws regarding voting.
- As of 9/1/23 we have 80 individual members and 275 family memberships. At 351 total this is slightly below last year's figure of 369 but there will still be one more e-mail to those from 2022 who have not renewed.

CURRENT SEYMOUR DUES OBSERVATIONS

- SLA has had the current dues structure since 2007 (16 years ago!) when they were increased from \$5 Single/\$15 Family to our current rate of \$10 Single/\$30 Family.
- Our income from membership fees has been stagnant over the past 10 years at \$9,070-\$9,780. **Ideally our membership fees should cover our annual operating expenses and the additional donations support our cash reserves** should we have to deal with combating invasives. Over the past three years our membership fees have covered 69%; 59% and 48.6% of our operating expenses (see attached spreadsheet of 10 year income and expenses). This is a significant downward trend attributable to a fairly constant level of donations and increasing expenses.
- Currently 118 or 34% of our 2023 members do not make an additional donation. Increasing our dues would generate more income from these members.
- The current most popular donation amount is \$20 (60 members) and \$70 (39 members). These are generally family memberships who "round up" to \$50 or \$100 total. I believe that if we increase our dues, those members will still likely round up to a similar amount. While the donation amount will be less, the net to SLA will not change.
- While we are proud of our current fund balance of \$158,000+, a review of what Salem Lake has expended in the past 5 years and projected for the next five years is sobering. Our current funds will quickly be depleted should we have to battle milfoil. I believe it is time to be more proactive rather than continuing to hope we don't discover milfoil in our lake.

WHAT ARE SOME OPTIONS FOR INCREASING OUR DUES STRUCTURE?

See below for income that our current membership level would generate under current membership fees (in bold) and some potential scenarios should we decide to increase our membership fees.

	\$10/\$30	\$15/\$45	\$20/\$40	\$25/\$45	\$25/\$50	\$30/\$60
SINGLE (80)	\$800	\$1,200	\$1,600	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,400
FAMILY (275)	\$8,605	\$12,375	\$11,000	\$12,375	\$13,750	\$16,500
TOTAL	\$9,405	\$13,575	\$12,600	\$14,375	\$15,750	\$18,900

- Our operating expenses in 2022 were \$20,121. None of the above scenarios achieve that amount. Thanks to Candy's hard work with FOVLAP, the AIS program funding from the state should be greater in 2024 so hopefully we can reduce our annual operating cost for AIS somewhat. I believe our goal should be to cover our annual operating expenses with dues and use donations for our fund balance.
- If we select an option where the family membership is double the single membership it would eliminate the "2-Single option" some couples choose instead of a family membership (there would be no cost savings to doing that). Just a point that would simplify the process of counting members.

I have thought that SLA's dues are extremely low even prior to becoming a director several years ago and long before I became President in 2021. I do hear other members express that opinion as well. I strongly believe one of our critical roles as a board is to insure the financial viability of SLA. We are certainly not financially destitute at this time but if we must fight a milfoil infestation it might not take long before we are quite uncomfortable. I don't want to look back and say, "why didn't we do something". I feel it is my job as President to bring my concerns to the Board and I appreciate your thoughtful consideration.

It would be my recommendation that we consider either the \$25/\$50 or \$30/\$60 option for increasing our dues.

Discussion by Board:

Candy Moot brought up the point that in the legal and accounting definition of membership dues, dues are intended to cover membership only. She always thought donations went to Reserves but they technically don't. Peggy Barter and Bonnie McWain brought up former SLA President Lyman McWain who felt it was essential that we start a Reserve Fund for the time we needed money immediately when milfoil becomes a problem in the lake. He felt that educating members about the problem as well as having a financial component to help if we needed it was necessary. Dues should cover operating costs. The last time we raised dues was 2007. Tim Buzzell felt we should use the newsletter as our platform to reinforce education about invasive species, greeters etc. Tom Adams changed his opinion about dues and feels we need to cover operating costs. Should we send an email blast with all this information?

Tom Adams made a Motion to raise dues from \$10 to \$30 for single memberships and from \$30 to \$60 for family, seconded by Candy Moot. Bonnie McWain felt that \$20/\$40 or \$25/\$50 would be more palatable. Jean McKenny felt this isn't the time to raise dues. Tom Adams made a new Motion to raise dues to \$25/\$50, seconded by Candy Moot; passed 12-yes and one opposed. The November newsletter will explain the change and why we felt it was needed. We will also include an explanation in the 2024 membership renewal letter when that is sent.

4. Treasurer's Report - Jean McKenny - this report is contained as a hard copy in the Secretary's files. A Motion was made by Tim Buzzell to accept the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Bonnie McWain, accepted. Rhonda mentioned an email from Marie Tule, our auditor, that Doug Jangraw has volunteered to help Marie on the Committee. Since our Bylaws

state one or more auditors, Rhonda feels it's appropriate to accept Doug's help and will appoint him. She shared a summary he provided of his work and professional organization experience and noted that she feels he is highly qualified.

5. Committees:

Water Quality - Peggy Barter – Patrick Hurley said LWAP survey of roads and streams will begin when leaves are off the trees. Tracey Becken formed a committee to attack phragmites along the shore at the beach. The lay monitoring section of the website was updated this year. The Water Quality Committee will try to have a workshop next spring.

Boating - Tim Buzzell - Regarding dredging the boat access, he and Chuck Nichols met with Commissioner Herrick and he said that he already had the approval to dredge to 4 ft along the entire front of the boat launch area. Hope to be done this fall. DEC has a firm policy on no excavation in lake waters after Oct 15 but Herrick thinks he can get a waiver. No training wall in the lake to prevent fanning out of Sucker Brook or removing the illegal peninsula. Tim suggested a compromise - line of "mafia" blocks along old boat launch pad as a "mini" training wall. Herrick thinks this is a possibility. "Couch it" as temporary and experimental so DEC may approve. Regarding the peninsula, they asked if they would remove the last 50-70', Herrick doubted it but would bring it back to his people. FEMA will finance only storm related damage but the State has agreed to fund any excavation over and above what FEMA will cover.

Thanks to Denis Fortin, Bruce Remick, Bill Bilowus and Sean Selby for acquiring and installing the red buoys marking the present channel.

Discussion about whether to send an email blast so membership will know what we've accomplished. It was decided Candy will send an email blast with drone photos from Denis Fortin of the buoys and also mention that we have a verbal agreement from the state for dredging. Candy responded to Brittney Wilson, Governor's office liaison to DEC, that Tim had met with Herrick and that he was very responsive. Also that Tim and Chuck suggested a "temporary" solution with concrete blocks.

Milfoil/VIP - Rhonda Shippee - check is in the mail for 50% of the program from the State, final report in November. Need to keep in mind Beth Torpey wants to resign and we need to fill her position. FOVLAP meeting - everyone was worried about milfoil.

Newsletter - Denis Fortin - filling up quickly for both the fall and spring addition.

On Line - Candy Moot - a member suggested we add a section on the website where members could post lake related items for sale and suggested that proceeds be donated to SLA. Some are uncomfortable requiring proceeds be donated to SLA but leave that as an option. It was agreed the time for this is the start of summer so we will reconsider closer to that time.

Wake Boats - still hopeful the proposed regulation will be approved by the legislature's LCAR committee. There is a group called "Responsible Wakes for VT Lakes" trying to scuttle the plan. If there is a final regulation determination this fall it will likely have an immediate effective date. We need to be ready to educate boat owners.

Fishing/Loons - Bill Bilowus and Woody Woods - Alot of loons congregating around the lake now. Fishing is much better. Even the kingfishers are back. Bill says he is waiting to hear from Pete Emerson and Levi Brown from the State regarding having a 5th year of the smelt program next year. Denis reported he never received the lead fishing container for the boat launch. He will follow up.

6. New Business: Rhonda, Beth Torpey and Peggy Barter attended the virtual FOVLAP annual meeting held last Thursday - Oliver Pierson is going to Dept. of Forestry. Echo and Harvey lakes are going to do the 200 ft buoy experiment. In the lake reports, many are reporting combatting milfoil. Many feel like they are fighting a losing battle. Some didn't have the support of members and one said the State is very slow in approving permits which was frustrating. FOVLAP is designing the "door hanger" with info on milfoil, boating regulations etc Hopefully we can customize for Seymour and produce next year.

Next Meeting - October 21 at 9 a.m. Town Office - Adjourned 12:10 pm