

Called to order by President Mike Acton at 4:00

Present: *Mike Acton, Gina Hagen, Grant Poole, George Punches, Howard Hughes, Jim Simons, Laura (and Owen) Heintzelman, Alice Hendricks, Mike Stifler, Mary Reed, Herb Lenon, Tim Morley, Dick Tomlinson, Kathy Ervin, DeeDee Miller, Tim Ervin, Bob Evans, Dave Van Eerden, Jim Simons*

1. Introductions

2. Minutes from previous meeting approved with correction offered by Mary Reed.

3. Endowment Report

▲ Paul Fairchild, who was unable to attend the meeting, has volunteered to develop a strategic plan to raise money for the Endowment. Acton, however, reported that Fairchild's preliminary recommendations are to establish a fundraising goal of \$1 million over the next 3-4 years. This amount could generate about \$50,000 annually to support Watershed Plan implementation.

One of the key elements required at this point is figuring out how much money is needed to carry out the watershed plan. Mike Stifler, Dee Dee Miller, Kathy Ervin and Herb Lenon, along with Dick Tomlinson, volunteered to work on this project along with a DEQ designee to be identified by Mike Stifler and report back to the Executive Committee in March. The project will involve the preparation of a spreadsheet that will estimate the costs of implementing the Plan for the next three years based upon the priorities that are contained in the Plan.

▲ The Portage Lake Watershed Forever Advisory Committee (Chaired by Mike Acton) met October 15 to award grants. Nine hundred (\$900) of the \$1,200 available was granted to Onekama Township to help defray e-coli testing costs, putting up watershed signs along county roads, and preparing Homeowners' Packets. The remaining \$300 will be used to pay for the Fall Newsletter and miscellaneous expenses.

4. Monitoring and Inventory

▲ Onekama School Principal Gina Hagen reported on Portage Lake water testing conducted semi-annually by Onekama high school students as part of their earth science classes. These tests have been conducted for 13 years and the information

comprises the longest data set available about Portage Lake. Ms. Hagan was asked if the school needed additional equipment for the testing; she didn't know but will follow-up. It was agreed that, if there was more equipment needed and the funds were available, such a purchase would qualify for grants from the Portage Lake Watershed Forever (PLWF) Endowment Fund at the Manistee County Community Foundation.

Ms. Hagan remarked that participating in the water testing was "the highlight of the year" for some of the students. (See more details about this project at the Onkama Consolidated District's website: www.onkama.k12.mi.us)

▲ Grant Poole (Little River Band of Ottawa Indians) said that his testing revealed that oxygen stratification levels in the lake were normal. Mike Stifler from DEQ agreed.

▲ The Outreach & Education Committee passed out a draft of a fall newsletter which will be distributed to over 400 people by the end of the month. The update also contains a gentle reminder about contributing to the Endowment Fund.

5. Watershed Partners Spreadsheet

Acton urged partner organizations to look through the plan and 'adopt' portions of it to implement. Any group that does so is urged to inform a member of the Executive Committee for record keeping purposes.

The Community Outreach & Education Committee volunteered to be responsible for a project management spreadsheet to track progress. It was suggested that work on this occur after the committee meets to develop the recommended budget for the next three years since those recommendations will include the priority of steps for implementing the Watershed Plan. The committee will report back at the next executive committee meeting.

6. Phragmites Demonstration Project

Mary Reed reported that over 100 people were present at the demonstration at Farr Center on September 23, 2008. Mary then introduced Bre Grabill of Professional Lake Management (PLM). PLM was hired to conduct a survey to find out how much Phragmites was present in Portage Lake. Further consideration led Portage Lake Association and the Portage Lake Garden Club, sponsors of the event, to ask PLM to do a lake-wide AVA (Aquatic Vegetation Assessment). They wanted to know about *all* invasive species in Portage Lake, not just Phragmites. Among PLM's findings were:

- There are significant amounts of Eurasian watermilfoil in the lake
- 75% of Portage shows evidence of Phragmites
- A 5-year comprehensive strategy be created for controlling and managing the lake.

She mentioned several approaches, i.e., creation of a Special Assessment District and/or a Statutory Lake Board, which have been used by other lake-side communities experiencing similar problems such as Bear Lake and Lake Cadillac.

There was considerable interest in this topic and many questions asked. Acton suggested that a subcommittee be formed to get answers, explore options and strategies, make recommendations and report back to the Executive Committee. The purpose of the subcommittee is to identify the steps that should be considered to develop a lake-wide strategy for controlling and managing weed species of concern in and around Portage Lake. Herb Lenon, Dan Behring, Jim Simons and Mary Reed (Chair) volunteered to study the issue. It was noted that subcommittee members should investigate communities and case studies involving similar work. DEQ and the firm of PLM offered to assist with these references.

Further information about these topics is available at www.onekama.info/watershed/watershed.html.

7. Other

It was pointed out that implementation of the Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan can be accomplished through many different means and that the Executive Committee should be leveraging all of those means. One such path is through master plans, ordinances and ordinance administration and enforcement. Accordingly, the executive committee participated in a conference call with John Iacongelli of Beckett & Raeder, the firm selected by Onekama Township and the Village of Onekama to facilitate completion of a Joint Community Master Plan, only the sixth such plan in the state of Michigan. Beckett & Raeder facilitated the two community focus groups held this summer to gain input for the joint master plan. Iacongelli is currently working with a Leadership Team made up of various interests who are helping to guide the development of the Joint Master Plan. Iacongelli provided the following information:

- Two visioning sessions (held in June and July) solicited comments from year-round and seasonal residents about their concerns and what they felt were the most critical issues the community faces. The data gathered at those meetings identified three primary concerns: 1) Water Quality; 2) Community Character; and, 3) Natural Resources that are consistent with the priorities of the Watershed

Plan. To begin to address those concerns in the joint Master Plan, Iacoangelli is now fine-tuning and developing strategies which may include:

- A Riparian Buffer Ordinances; a process for developing a Sewer Master Plan; a program to identify existing problems involving septic systems; a Storm Water Management program and the identification of concerns to be incorporated in the existing zoning ordinances, and identify Brownfield sites (environmentally distressed properties) that could be redeveloped with incentives; mapping oil and gas wells to determine their relationship to water re-charge areas; conducting an inventory of point and non-point discharges; and, a ridge and steep slope ordinance.
- Of additional interest, Iaconangelli reported that Michigan's Legislature just passed PA 94 that enables local creation of a Water Resource Authority to deal with problems related to storm water, fish populations and aquatic and invasive species. It may also open a source of financial aid for the watershed.

Finally, he announced an **Open House** will be held on November 25 to give community members information about the Joint Master Plan and what impact it may have on the area. The Open house will be held from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Farr Center. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

Three final 'other' Other items.

Tim Ervin revealed that the Manistee County Community Foundation received two grants that will support The Joint Master Plan and Watershed initiatives: \$10,000 from the Oleson Foundation and \$17,000 from Michigan's Coastal Management Program.

George Panches displayed several 'density' maps used during Joint Master Plan deliberations. He pointed out that they would be at the Open House and in the draft Master Plan.

Dan Behring, who was not present, is conducting and Education Forums with churches.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held early in December at a date to be announced.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:06

Respectfully submitted.

Kathy Ervin