

Special Meeting of the Windemere Township Board - December 17, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM by Chairman, John Wesely. Others present were Supervisors Pete Steen & Heidi Kroening, Clerk Scott Danelski, Minnesota State Senator Jason Rarick, Minnesota State Representative Mike Sudin, Pine County Commissioner John Mikrot, Minnesota DNR Hydrologist Heidi Lindgren, Minnesota State Floodplain (NFIP) Manager Ceil Strauss, Pine County Soil & Water Conservation District Manager Jill Carlier, Pine County Engineer Mark LeBrun, Pine County Zoning Land Resource Manager Caleb Anderson, Mark Dunaski & Bill Yechouts of the Windemere Township Lakes Association. Absent, Treasurer Ron Mossberg.

WINDEMERE TOWNSHIP HIGH-WATER ISSUES :

The meeting began with Mark Dunaski and Bill Yechouts of the Windemere Township Lakes Association giving a presentation on the current status of the high-water issues on lakes around the township. The Windemere Township Lakes Association put together an ad hoc group in July 2019 who circulated a survey to area residents in order gather information regarding the high-water issue and damages to their property as a result of the high water. The survey received 277 responses of which 94 responses indicated property damage totaling approximately \$1.22 million. Dunaski stated that Sturgeon Lake is a record high-water level, and the area received approximately 43.5 inches of precipitation thus far by October, 12.5 inches above the average annual precipitation of 31 inches for the year.

Several other area residents voiced their concerns over the continued high water and property damage they have endured as a result of the continued high water. Residents requested immediate relief with a short-term solution to remove water from Sturgeon Lake as well as a long-term solution to help managed the water levels of township lakes.

Pine County Engineer Mark LeBrun and Minnesota DNR Hydrologist Heidi Lindgren addressed the audience and stated that the problem is very complex. LeBrun said short-term wise, they have not come up with any solutions as the water keeps coming up do the high underground water tables. Water cannot just be pumped from the lakes and placed elsewhere as there are many other factors that need to be looked into first, such as the areas where the water would be pumped to are also experiencing high-water issues themselves, and some Windemere township lakes contain milfoil that could possibly be spread to other pristine waters downstream. LeBrun said he has spoken to some engineers with hydrology experience and stated they were not optimistic of finding viable options and stated they recommended a feasibility study as an option. LeBrun estimated the cost of the feasibility study would be approximately \$30,000.00. However, LeBrun stated that it would be four to five years out if everything went great to implement a solution.

Minnesota State Floodplain (NFIP) Manager Ceil Strauss then addressed the audience and stated that Windemere Township is not enrolled the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the area has not been mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and does not show Windemere township lakes as being in a floodplain, only the river.

Pine County Zoning Land and Resource Manager Caleb Anderson stated the county office administers the Wetlands Conservation Act and suggested that anyone contemplating shoreland projects to contact his office prior to starting the project.

Minnesota State Senator Jason Rarick and Minnesota State Representative Mike Sundin both address the audience.

Representative Sudin said it sounded like there may be some culpability with the State when Interstate Highway 35 was built and would be exploring that aspect. He also stated that though it was too late for this year's bonding cycle, he stated that once the problem is identified and a solution designed, he would be willing to help fund the financial end of it.

State Senator Rarick stated he would work to fund the DNR for priority work, and that this project would most likely be one to two bonding cycles away. He said the process could be started and look at what other sources are available and he would also help prod the Minnesota Department of Transportation to look at the issues.

Motion made by Wesely, seconded by Kroening to adjourn the special meeting at 8:56 PM.

Motion passed, 3 Aye – 0 Nay.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED :

APPROVED :

Scott Danelski, Clerk

John Wesely, Chairman