

TOWN of MAY
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
September 7, 2023

The Board of Supervisors of the Town of May convened a special meeting on Thursday, September 7th, 2023 at the May Town Hall at 6:00 p.m. Those present included: Board members John Pazlar, Steve Magner and Don Rolf via Zoom; Planner Nate Sparks, Engineer Mark Erichson, Attorney Dave Snyder, and Clerk/Treasurer Bobbi Hummel.

Notice was posted on the township's website and at the Town Hall more than 72 hours prior to September 7th, 2023.

The sole purpose of the special meeting is to learn about the mission and goals of Square Lake Conservancy group.

Board Chair John Pazlar called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m.

Square Lake Conservancy Group. A newly formed group representing all area citizens in protecting the May Township Conservancy Zone.

David (*no last name provided*) is a resident of Scandia and River Grove Parent. Their petition states the following (in part). "To support elected officials in their decisions to reject irreversible harmful development in Wilder Forest and protect and preserve May Township Conservancy District." About 400 signatures have been received.

Angie Hung former River Grove parent and local resident. Ms. Hung introduces Square Lake Conservancy Call to Action Video, outlining their goals.

- 1) Assist Wilder Foundation in selling its land at fair market value to a conservation-centric, community supported buyer that meets Conservancy District ordinance requirements.
- 2) Provide a secure, long-term home for River Grove: Marine Area Community School to continue its nature-based K-5 education.
- 3) Provide a secure, long-term home for Big River Farms to continue organic food production and farm education programming for immigrant and BIPOC farmers.
- 4) Establish a permanent conservation easement over the 55 acres of Wilder Forest adjacent to Square Lake.

- 5) Establish 300-ft buffer protections over the remaining undeveloped land surrounding Mays Lake, Clear Lake, Terrapin Lake and the land adjacent to East Boot Lake that is currently owned by Wilder Foundation.
- 6) Protect the 2400 acre St. Croix Greenway Corridor from subdivision and development.
- 7) Upgrade and replace failing septic systems within this corridor.
- 8) Provide opportunities for low-impact nature study and enjoyment.
- 9) Unite the community and provide a long-term community-asset.

This set of goals is not advocating for any particular land owner or any particular buyer. These are community supported goals for any future land owner with the hope they would care for the land with these goals in mind.

The Wilder Forest is a 600-acre parcel. It includes a “campus” area (most recently former River Grove Elementary School), Big River Farms (150 acres). The land has been well taken care of over the past 50-70 years. There are 70 rare and endangers species and 3 shallow high-quality lakes on the land.

Square Lake is of great concern. It is popular for people as far away as Mpls./St. Paul. It does not have invasive species and has crystal clear water. 55 acres is adjacent to Wilder Forest and entirely undeveloped, this is part of what helps Square Lake clean. Tarapin, Mays, and Clear Lakes are at higher risk should any development start clearing the shores or swimming. They are shallow and are susceptible to harm. East Boot Lake was recently taken off the impaired water list.

SLC would like to see a 300-foot buffer surrounding the undeveloped portions of the lakes to create less impact. This would protect bird and amphibian populations.

Ms. Hung also states that having a local school is also important for the community. They have been operating in the Wilder Forest for the past 6 years and have invested funds to improve the property, hoping they would stay long-term. River Grove school is moving to Stillwater with the help of Manitou Fund and hopes to rebuild a new school with Manitou in the future.

Tim Kelley, Attorney with Stinson, offers his legal opinion on behalf of Square Lake Association. Minnesota Catholic Youth Partnership has not provided the town with detailed plans regarding how/where/when of their actual use of the Wilder Forest. It is incorrect for CYP to think all that is required is building permits for them to begin operation. The 1992 CUP identifies any significant change in use requires the land owner to apply for a CUP amendment. The camp CYP is proposing is a significant change. It opens up a camp to persons of all ages, and all types of uses. It also creates a change of intensification. “*Montage of Doom*” is a video shows the historical use for camps of this nature. 250-500 overnight campers far exceed any given numbers identified in the master plan. The unused square footage identified in the master plan was intended to host 24 people, not a lodge able to host 250-500 adults. For these reasons, an amendment is necessary and required.

Planner Sparks notes that the Catholic Youth Partnership has not made any formal application with the township at this time. If a request is presented the township will provide a formal analysis, at this point discussions have been informal.

Attorney Snyder reminds everyone that CYP has asked the township what is allowable under the existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP). The language from the 1991 CUP does not exactly correlate to the proposed uses/language of today. Additionally, some uses from 1991 have been removed and some added back in. The procedural way to reconcile that was to create a matrix that outlines the allowed and not allowed uses of the land. Staff had begun work on a matrix as Square Lake Conservancy requested input on the matrix. Work then stopped on the matrix as scheduling for the request was made. There may be an interest at this time in overhauling, reworking, examining, or addressing the conservancy district zoning in the township.

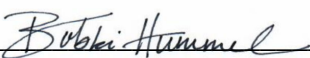
Pazlar is supportive of looking at the zoning in the conservancy district. The Square Lake Conservancy might like some input on it as well. Pazlar does not find a need to place a moratorium to review these particular changes.

Mark Diessner with Square Lake Conservancy comments that there have been varied and changing proposals with a tremendous number of verbal exchanges and it is difficult to approve something that doesn't exist. Without any proposal in front of the Board there is nothing to comment on officially. He suggests that the Board direct CYP to provide short- and long-term plans that can be reviewed and make an educated decision on a more specific plan. Pazlar agrees, a long-term plan is needed and asks Attorney Snyder for comments/corrections.

Magner appreciates the comments but notes the time and requests to end this workshop out of respect of others in attendance tonight for the regular Board meeting.

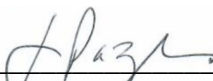
Meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.

Submitted:



Bobbi Hummel
Clerk/Treasurer

Approved:



John Pazlar
Board Supervisor, Chair