

**Vilas County Lakes & Rivers Association (VCLRA)
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Monday, September 14, 2020
9:30 a.m. Zoom Conference**

Present: Tom Ewing, Carol Warden, Steve Budnik, Emily Heald, Paul Lewandoski, Anne Kretschmann, Susan Knight, Celeste Hockings, Karen Dixon, Jeff Currie, Cathy Higley

Absent: Debby Soberg

Guest: Dick Jenks

Call to order: President Tom Ewing called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. and quorum established.

Agenda: Accepted as presented.

Secretary's Report: Motion by Carol Warden, second by Anne Kretschmann, to approve the 4-27-20 VCLRA board meeting minutes. Motion approved.

Treasurer's report: Anne reported the following to the board:

A few more memberships have come in resulting in Actual-to-Date membership of \$2245.53. We have a total membership of 60 with 62 lakes represented, 52 lakes associations/districts, and 10 individual/families. Checking Account Balance (9/12/20) = \$11,043.88.

We have given out 4 free memberships as of Jan 1. Spring Newsletter printing was paid, as was the fee for Cran-a-rama. This fee was refunded due to the event cancellation. Check was written to Tom Ewing for web hosting.

Karen moved, with second by Emily, to approve the Treasurer's Report. Motion approved

COMMITTEE REPORTS/OLD BUISNESS

Multi-county Workshop/ Annual Meeting discussion: Attendance was disappointing with 72 compared to last year in-person workshop that had over a 100 in attendance. Reasons – maybe the change from in-person to virtual, it was a nice day, internet issues in the Northwoods. We should try to find out if the Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Conference had fewer attendees from northern Wisconsin sign up for the virtual conference this past spring.

New Shoreland Owner Initiative status: The New Owner webpage is getting many of looks but we had only 4 people sign up for free memberships. There was consensus that we need to publicize the program more. Cathy has a list of about 300 people she can email. We also need an updated list of lakes associations and board members. She will work on getting us a combined list of contacts. Dick and Tom will work on an email, newsletter, and blog.

Blue Heron Award Initiative: Carol reported that Debbie Millar of Ballard Lake was presented the painted stone Blue Hereon award and photos were taken. An article and photo were placed in the Vilas County News-Review, Outdoor News, and Lakeland Times.

VCLRA Scholarship Program: We do follow-up on past winners because they have to send us their transcripts. The winner from last year sent his transcripts and was then sent a check.

VCLRA Booth Exhibits: None set up this year due to COVID-19.

DO Meter Grant status: We received an extension due to COVID-19 to build more usage data. We have until next year to send in our report.

Web Outreach status: We added numerous blog articles this year, online membership, and other refinements. How can we be more effective with outreach during the pandemic? We give out scholarships and Blue Heron Awards. We currently have 12 blogs, a newsletter that goes out three times a year, initiated the Greet your Neighbor program, join online, Facebook, and website. Other ideas: more newspaper articles, have a corporate membership, give our logo to businesses to display that they support us, etc.

Jeff suggested putting together a group for outreach projects – write articles for newspaper and update Facebook page. Susan thought that if the group met 4 times a year it could manage the tasks more easily.

Tom volunteered to take the lead on outreach by approaching board members by email.

County Conservationist/Lake Specialist Report: Cathy reported that they did not have a meeting in September but did have one in August when Dane Whittaker gave a report about targeting new landowners and renters. Money was spent on mileage for fieldwork and LTE's, lake surveys and water quality testing were done. They are also working on grant proposals.

Cathy also reported on a new outreach program initiative that is already included in a grant and asked if the VCLRA would be willing to take a lead. *The Lake Business Outreach Program will protect lakes and rivers through partnerships with businesses that rely on local water resources to promote the Northwoods economy and recreation.*

Staff would include Lac du Flambeau Tribe (Celeste Hockings)
North Lakeland Discovery Center (Emily Heald)
Vilas County Land & Water Conservation (Cathy Higley, LTE Rob Campion)
Oneida County Land & Water Conservation (Stephanie Boismenu)

Cathy asked if the VCLRA would be willing to put some money toward lake businesses installing shoreline best practices. There was consensus that the program supports the VCLRA mission but there is concern about the sustainability of the program and how to institutionalize it. Cathy said that it would be the responsibility of the Lake Conservationists. Susan noted that we would need a list of lakes that have AIS and what AIS they contain.

Carol Warden moved, with a second from Jeff Currie, that the VCLRA would support the Lake Business Outreach Program by being a sponsor and donating money in the amount yet to be determined. Motion was approved. For more information about the program, go to [Lake Business Outreach Program \(DOC\)](#), [PDF version](#)

NEW BUSINESS:

Planning topics discussion

- Need everyone to help identify additional board members (currently down 1, but also need to find a replacement for Carol who is willing to stay on until we find someone). We are heavy on representation from north-west corner of county and Eagle River. Could use representation of north-eastern part (Land

O'Lakes, Phelps, Conover) and southwestern part (St. Germain, Arbor Vitae) of county. Also, a river dweller?

- How can we be more effective during the pandemic?

We still gave out a scholarship and a Blue Heron Award

We held the Seven-county lakes & rivers Zoom meeting, but participation was low (72, well less than last year's in-person event)

We have done numerous web-based engagements (10 blog articles in 2020, a newsletter, "Greet your Neighbor" rollout)

Online membership (join or renew by check or credit card) was implemented in 2020

No public exhibits or opportunities to speak at LA meetings (most everything cancelled)

More ideas - more Facebook presence, articles in newspapers, push corporate membership, offer businesses logos and other information to display to show they support us

- How we can better support Vilas County Land and Water Conservation for the coming year?

We got a grant for the DO meter and have provided letters of support for their grant proposals

We are exploring a partnering opportunity on AIS prevention outreach (Cathy Higley). The board approved a motion today to take a lead in supporting the outreach program by being a sponsor and contributing some money.

- How can we better support youth education?

We give an annual scholarship to an area HS student and publicized it in the papers

We occasionally hear from students that found our "Useful Links" helpful for a school project.

Many more students are studying from home due to Covid-19 and benefit from online learning – a missed opportunity! We've discussed a kids' webpage (content similar to our former grandparents' corner).

More ideas: Have school contests for posters and essays on a variety of subjects i.e. lakes, rivers, forests, etc. Winners could get some kind of recognition – award, money, article printed in newspaper and on our website. VCLRA board members would be willing to be judges.

- Susan suggested displaying signs on lake properties of Blue Heron Awardees to promote shoreline excellence (she saw this done in Minnesota). Tom will find out more information regarding the size and cost of signs by contacting a board member of his lake association who does their signs to promote their lake association membership. We could give winners a choice of receiving a painted rock or a sign.

- Feedback from member Dave Slezewski, Big Portage Lake (who BTW is a north-east corner dweller) Is anyone tackling lake human problems associated with fireworks, excessive noise, etc. and related wildlife disruption and human quality of lake life.

How about an AIS prevention billboard at each of the main highway arteries into Vilas County, i.e., US 45, WI 17 and 70, etc.? Too many boaters (especially out-of-stater's) still unaware of issues.

Note: Susan will check the literature and poll the Center for Limnology faculty. She provided an article that discusses the effects of perchlorates (chemical in fireworks) that said it degrades quickly and hasn't created any problems [Fireworks article, Oceanography Vol.23, No.2](#)

Susan is also going to see what she can find out about effects of noise from fireworks on wildlife.

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January 2021 newsletter - Deferred to next meeting

Adjourn: Susan moved, with second by Carol, to adjourn at 11:42 a.m. Motion approved.

Next meeting: Monday, October 26 at 9:00 a.m. via ZOOM

Respectfully submitted by:

Karen Dixon, Secretary