

# ROCK LAKE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

[www.rocklake.org](http://www.rocklake.org)

Minutes for April 19, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Via ZOOM

**1) Call to Order** – 6:30 p.m.

Members present: Mike Nesemann, Nathan Pyles, John Crump, Stan Smoniewski, John Thode, Jim Colegrove, Susan Trier, Bruce Ward, Sharron Webster

Absent: Ralph DePasquale

Guests: Anita Martin, Rob Stroup, Cory Nelson

**2) Good News Minute** – Meeting participants shared recent good news.

**3) Motion to accept the agenda** - Made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

**4) Secretary's Report** – Motion to approve March 15, 2020 minutes made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

**5) Treasure's Report.** Jim had previously mailed out the current monthly report. A motion to approve it was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. Susan asked, on behalf of, if the monthly statements are routinely made available, but only the annual report is published.

**6) Public Comment(s)/Correspondence** –

A. Guests. Anita Martin and Rob Stroup, a new member, were introduced.

B. Mail. Jim said we had received quite a bit of mail in conjunction with the recent membership drive (see 7.I. below). He also received the most recent [Lake Tides](#) and [Rock River Coalition newsletter](#).

C. Email. Stan received several emails from PayPal which he forwarded to Jim. Jim forwarded several emails from new members to Susan and we will send instructions on how to avoid getting us labeled as spam.

D. Facebook. Susan has been publishing a series of articles drawn from the work of [Doug Tallamy](#). She is hoping people will share and repost. Good response thus far. Also, we were contacted by someone wondering if there were any summer internship opportunities. Although we currently are not in a position to fund it, assuming it is unfunded an intern might find it productive to liaise on the storm sewer issues between RLIA and the [Rock River Storm Water Group](#), which includes the Whitewater chapter and its student based marketing group, [Creative Marketing Unlimited](#). Susan will pass it on to Patricia and Mike will again try to get in contact with the RRSWG.

**7) Committee Reports**

A. Water Quality Agriculture. Nathan reported the Jefferson County Soil Builders held its field day with 32 attendees, including 5-6 farmers from Jefferson County. Many were farmers involved in similar healthy soil programs from Racine, Sullivan, and other surrounding areas who can offer ideas and support to this new group. Michelle Probst of the U.W. Ag. Extension, constructed a field lab comparing soil with cover crops to soil using current farming practices. The cover crop soil was less compacted and healthier.

B. Water Quality Residential. Susan reported that the riparian owners' pamphlet is in the final reviewing stage and should be ready soon for distribution. County data indicates there are about 356 riparian owners and perhaps another 75 cooperative owners, e.g., the Cedars where 29 families share riparian rights. It was

suggested we print additional copies for future owners as well as possible distribution to various Town and City offices and others. A motion to accept any additional minor editorial changes was made, seconded, and passed unanimously. An additional motion to provide up to \$1,000 for printing and distribution was made, seconded, and passed unanimously. All agreed the pamphlet was very impressive and should prove of significant value.

C. Water Quality Streets. Nathan said there seem to be gaps in effective erosion control in the area being developed south of town and encouraged members to document any subsequent erosion. Any issues should be reported to the City of Lake Mills as this development is on property annexed by the City.

D. Water Quality Sampling. Jim reported on communication between Jefferson Co. Land and Water and RLIA with the RLIA having committed to paying for additional testing including phosphorous, chlorophyl, and chloride. The State lab will bill us when the samples are processed.

E. Water Quality Miljala Channel. Susan has been working with Patricia reviewing all the previous reports and efforts to clean up the channel. See item 9.A.

F. Public Outreach Nothing to report.

G. Habitat – Fisheries. Nothing to report.

H. Habitat – other. Mike summarized the turtle subcommittee's projects and requested up to \$300 to cover additional RLIA turtle crossing signs and 6 turtle nest protective cages. A motion to provide up to \$300 for these projects was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

I. Membership. Jim reported great news, 42 new members signed up subsequent to our membership mailing initiative. But he presented data showing a troubling, consistent decline in membership renewal for long time members. A discussion ensued with ideas re engaging members, including sending out quarterly reports and increasing the number of activities members can participate in. A problem with communicating is that we lack email/phone numbers for a fair number of members. Susan also raised the issue of legacy giving, where older members arrange for a gift/donation to the RLIA as part of their estate planning.

J. Lake Recreation. Nothing to report.

## **8) Other Reports.**

A) County. Nothing to report.

B) JRLC. Stan. Reported that the Sandy Beach boat launch project is picking up steam and looks to be done by Memorial Day. He also reported that both the City and the Town have been approved for Clean Water/Clean Boat grants. In less propitious news, the Town Board, reversing former policy of limiting salt use as much as possible, achieved partly by mixing it with sand, has decided to eliminate the sand and will increase salt purchase from 70 tons/yr to 140 tons/yr. He also reported that the Slow No Wake Buoys have been placed.

## **9) Old Business.**

A) Bylaws Update Committee. Mike had sent out the first draft of the revised bylaws and led off the discussion by pointing out there was no expectation in finishing the revision tonight, rather it was a chance for preliminary discussions and encouraged members to engage each other and other interested parties in discussions before the May meeting. He also stressed that a general rule is to preserve flexibility in decision making by not attempting to address every possible situation but rather to give general guidance. The draft was reviewed and several edits suggested and incorporated. Particular attention was paid to item VIII. 1,

Indemnification of Officers and Directors. Jim and John C opened this discussion by pointing out that the RLIA has never had any sort of liability insurance and raising the issue of what the mission of the organization was and what sorts of activities might put officers or directors in legal jeopardy. Even a so called “nuisance suit” can create significant expenses. It was the subcommittee’s opinion that public education and encouraging all to follow principles and ordinances that protect the lake is clearly part of our mission. We all agreed that we should hold governmental bodies accountable to uphold related laws and ordinances, and that this is very unlikely to put us in legal jeopardy. However, there may be a line between those actions on the RLIA’s part vs putting the organization in an “enforcement” role.

That line can be challenging to define, but the subcommittee felt we should avoid holding individuals or groups, such as riparian owners or neighborhoods, accountable. For example, if we as an organization respond to a group or individual with a complaint about a perceived violation, or speak publicly at a meeting opposing an individual’s or group’s plans with their property, that may cross the line and could put us at some legal risk. But simply providing information about ordinances or Health Lake grants would be appropriate, particularly when we were providing this information to all relevant members of the public. The subcommittee favors allowing government bodies including the City, Town, County, State, and DNR to apply enforcement. In the meantime, Board members were encouraged to think about what our mission statement should be, and to attend the UW Stevens Point sponsored [Webinar](#) on 6 May re indemnity for Lake Districts and Associations.

Applying these principles to the Miljala channel, it is understood that there are problems with erosion, silt and pollutants such as phosphorus being carried into the lake. Addressing these issues has been an RLIA priority for well over a decade, but the issues remain sensitive and challenging. Susan had been tasked with researching these issues with the goal of developing a strategic plan. She is looking at how to best communicate our thoughts to the neighborhood which has asked us to involve them, while keeping in mind the role we need to play. John C has volunteered to join Susan in this endeavor and he plans to recruit at least one more board member to join them. Susan and John C’s subcommittee will bring these thoughts back to the Board.

B) Town Board Election f/u. Susan said the membership emails had gone out and she had received positive feedback on the candidate questionnaires from both candidates and voters. The Leader also ran our questions (with an attribute to the RLIA) and the candidates’ responses prior to the election. This seems like something we should continue.

C) Spring Clean Up. Bruce and Cory have set this up for 4/22 – 4/29 and a brochure will soon be posted on our website. Cory sent an article to the Leader, via Susan, which will likely be published in full. Flyers will be distributed to local businesses and members are encouraged to take pictures documenting the cleanup.

## **10) New Business**

A) RLIA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Plans. Tabled.

**11) Adjourn** – A motion was made to adjourn, which was seconded and unanimously passed at 8:50 p.m.

Next Meeting (via Zoom): Monday, May 17, 2021, 6:30 PM.