

ROCK LAKE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

www.rocklake.org

**Minutes for January 15, 2022 at 9:00 A.M.
Via ZOOM**

1) Call to Order – 09:00 A.M.

Members present: Jim Colegrove, Mike Neemann, John Crump, Susan Trier, Bruce Ward, Jim Kerler, John Thode, Candace Diaz, Tom Krejcie
Guests: Corey Nelson, Stan Smoniewski, Girl Scout Representatives (Kassandra Reed, Addy Haight, and others)
Absent: Nathan Pyles,

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

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

4) Public Comments. None, see GS reps discussion under 5 D).

5) Committee Planning Reports/Discussion

A) Agriculture. Deferred.

B) Water Quality – City Street: Jim & Brue

No new plans. Susan suggested idea of promoting “drain champions” where people adapt a storm sewer drain (those draining into the lake), possibly adding a second “clean-up” day in fall with a focus on cleaning leaves and litter off those drains. Jim said the city had mailed the leaf litter insert twice with a monthly bill. Seems like this initiative has evoked a good response.

C) Habitat – fisheries: Bruce & Corey

Bruce and Cory discussed a fish sticks project to improve fish habitat in the lake. According to DNR publications, almost all fish species utilize woody habitat for at least one portion of their life cycle. Rock Lake has a minimal amount of wood in the water around the shoreline so it would be helpful to increase the amount of woody cover where possible. Landowners should also be encouraged to leave fallen trees in the water if possible. Studies have shown a decrease in smallmouth bass and perch in lakes where trees have been removed.

They met with officials from DNR Fisheries, DNR Parks and Jefferson County Water Resources on 02/14/22 at Sandy Beach. Patricia Cicero from Jefferson

County had previously done a wave energy study and determined the south end of the lake between the railroad trestle and Sandy Beach Rd would be the best spot for such a project. They did some measuring and drilled several holes in the ice to determine lake bottom composition. The lake bottom was too hard for such a project at that location. A fish sticks project has a number of requirements including that there should be a soft bottom 50' from shore to allow the tree tops to anchor themselves.

The DNR Fisheries supervisor recommended a tree drop instead of fish sticks. A tree drop is simply dropping a number of trees (yet to be determined) that are near the water, on the DNR owned land next to the Glacial Drumlin Trail. The trees need to be live or very recently dead. There are several less than desirable trees in this area that are due for removal anyway. The crown of the trees would be in the water with a portion of the trunk up on shore.

It was decided that the DNR Parks people who manage this land would identify which trees in this area would work and what permits are needed in the spring. We will start slowly on this project and add more trees if this project is successful.

Bruce and Cory also spoke to the DNR Fisheries Tech in this area who completed a fall electrofishing survey in Oct of 2021. He was looking for young of year (YOY) walleye to help determine if the walleye in the lake are naturally spawning. The conditions were not ideal during the survey and no YOY walleye were documented. He did find approx. 25 walleye that averaged 15 inches in the 6 mile stretch that was surveyed. A more comprehensive survey will be done on the lake this spring which should give a better idea on walleye reproduction.

The DNR Parks Manager for the area advised she was looking into the cost of dredging out the channel from the Mud Lake canoe launch out into the main lake due to complaints they have received from silt filling in the channel. She got one estimate of around \$100,000 to do that small stretch of about 100 yards. This cost is in part due to the requirement of transporting the soil and drying it out. At this point that project is not funded due to cost.

Marissa Ulman from Jefferson Co. Water Resources has documented some erosion issues in the Tyranena Park area. She is working with the City Parks Director to address at least 2 areas in the park to mitigate the erosion on paths leading to the lake, one area being the kayak landing near the circle drive in the park.

It appears that some ATV type vehicles are using the kayak landing area near the north parking lot to access the lake, which could be exacerbating some soil damage near the kayak landing. ATV's should really be using the boat launch areas around the lake to gain access, to avoid further shoreline damage. A city ordinance restricting access of ATV's in Tyrannena Park would be one consideration and will be discussed in the future.

D) Habitat Other– Mike and Susan

Turtles:

- i) The GS representatives are going to do turtle-related activities as part of their [Bronze Award](#). Activities will include: decorating the turtle cages (by 3/21), having a “turtle of the week” series of articles to post on various social media sites, including RLIA (early April) and distributing information via pamphlets and displays at the schools (early April). They would also provide this information at the GS cookie sale tables (March) at which time they would provide information about turtle nesting and ascertain if anyone would be interested in a turtle nesting cage. We explained that the cages were only of value if someone saw the turtle actually nesting and laying eggs. It’s not like a birdhouse, where if you build it, they will come.
- ii) Turtle crossing signs. Susan will remind the county to “open” the permanent signs at the right time. We have 18 temporary RLIA turtle crossing signs and put out 16 last year. We will ask the Board for authorization for another 10 to replace loss as well as we hope to identify additional turtle crossing sites.
- iii) Turtle crossing observation and reporting. RLIA members will “patrol” in their neighborhoods. We will again educate the public as to the importance of reporting turtle crossing observations to the DNR and make a special slider on our website to facilitate that.
- iv) Jim Kerler will continue to look into making DNR land on the north end more hospitable to nesting turtles. This will be complicated and requires involvement by all the stakeholders so it will take a year or two at least before any actual project could start.

E) Water Quality, Residential. – John T, Susan, and John C.

- i) Continue to distribute new riparian homeowners’ packets.
- ii) Plan shoreland owners’ breakfast as pandemic conditions allow.

iii) Approach the city re differences in regulations with the town. Apparently the city, under the home rule rubric, can supersede county regulations whereas the town ordinances must be at least as strict as the county's. One example is retaining walls being interpreted as a structure in the township and but not in the city. Therefore, the city allows retaining walls within the 35' shoreland buffer zone.

iv) It was also suggested that we encourage the city to use the county zoning office personnel where possible, in place of the potentially more expensive private consultants. Mead and Hunt does good work, but the city may want to consider using the county expertise/personnel when appropriate. This could lead to a more uniform application of standards between the Town and the City. Both Town and City would have to be approached with this idea.

v) The Miljala Channel Grant application is in process of being evaluated by the State.

F) MEMBERSHIP. Jim and Tom. They are meeting to continue the transition for Tom to take over Jim's data base and membership procedures, as well as prepping for the treasurer's position. A general discussion on how to enlarge our membership ensued, including the annual membership drive mailing. Last year's successful mailing of 5,000 pamphlets involved the entire 53551 zip area, but because it follows postal routes, it included people as far away as Milford and Watertown. Should we do that or pursue a more limited, focused mailing? Tom did some research and, depending on the source and methods, found between 269 and 277 riparian lots. He also found roughly 130 additional addresses with lake access rights, e.g., the PIE, north shore condos, the Cedars, etc. He recommended focusing on riparian owners/access holders, saying we currently have only about 70 of the 270 riparian lot owners and if we could boost that, we might be given more attention when dealing with various government organizations.

Suggestions for boosting membership in the riparian/access group included sending reps to HOA meetings, RLIA members doing more one-on-one with neighbors, and perhaps establishing a life-time membership so people don't have to renew annually.

G) JRLLC (Add on item). Susan said that the two city representative slots on the JRLLC have been empty for months. She approached the city re an appeal in the newspaper and social media, but the city requested we hold off on that. So we will do an email blast to RLIA members asking for volunteers. She will send out a

draft of the email for Board consideration. JRLC has many items they are concerned with, one of which is beach closures. Based on the history of E. coli induced beach closures and advisories, the DNR has designated Sandy Beach (West) as an impaired waterway for E. Coli. Apparently human E coli differs from avian and there may be testing measures to distinguish between the two. Susan will look into that as something RLIA might support. Bruce said the proposed green infrastructure with native planting zone for filtering the storm sewer that empties into Sandy Bay Beach got dropped between the initial plans and final product. It was also pointed out that there are no private septic systems on the lake, town or city, i.e., all are connected to city sewers.

6) Next Meeting: Monday, February 21, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. Zoom.

7) Adjourn – A motion was made to adjourn, which was seconded and unanimously passed at 10:35 A.M.