

AMSTON LAKE DISTRICT

Annual Meeting

MINUTES

May 18, 2024 10:00 A.M.

Douglas Library of Hebron, 22 Main Street, Hebron, CT 06248

www.amstonlake.org

A. Call to Order:

President F. Hoisl called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. He went through the agenda and how the meeting would work.

B. Roll Call of Officers and Directors:

Present: F. Hoisl, B. Pelegano, J. Caines, L. Bowen, J. Arpin, J. Greenfield, T. Nixon, K. Patterson.

John Barnowski, 251 Deepwood Dr, Hebron. **Q:** Did a legal notice of the meeting run in the Hartford Courant? **A:** Yes, ten days prior to the meeting.

C. Introduction of Board of Directors:

F. Hoisl introduced the current directors and officers.

D. Acknowledgements:

F. Hoisl noted that A. Fichtel had resigned from the board and thanked him for all the work he's done for the District and his service on the board – he will be missed.

E. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion to approve the May 20, 2023 meeting minutes (E. Curtin/B. Pelegano), approved without objection.

F. Review Lake Operations and Committees:

The meeting included a slide presentation, which is available on the website. F. Hoisl reviewed the slides, highlighting the committees and the work done over the past year.

Barbara Scott, 20 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon. **Q:** How do I get an additional boat sticker?

A: Contact K. Patterson or it can be mailed.

Brett Harlow, 403 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon. Stated that the slide says 1.75" stones were used on the roads, but he used 1.25".

Karen Rustico, 253 Deepwood Dr, Hebron. **Q:** Why did our former limnologist AER terminate their contract early? **A:** they decided to focus their efforts on another branch of their business, rather than limnology. They came back and did a presentation for us at the end of the summer.

Dave Arnold, 34 Ames Rd, Hebron. **Q:** Is the invasive weeds identification poster available on the website? **A:** No, but good idea – it will be added.

Bob Blackmore 5 Rondaly Rd, Hebron. **Q:** Regarding the Long-Term Financial Planning Committee – is this another plan to stockpile money for another large purchase? **A:** No, it's a way to plan for things that we know might be coming down the road. The committee has no authority to spend money – they are only to make recommendations to the board of directors.

Karen Rustico, 253 Deepwood Dr, Hebron: **Q:** Asked F. Hoisl to talk about the grant money that is available through the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). **A:** The \$10K matching fund grants (it's possible we could use evidence of volunteer hours as matching funds) are to help address waterways that have issues with invasives, and also for

education about invasives. The money must be spent within 18 months. A grant application must be submitted sometime in the fall.

Joyce Clark, 6 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon: She suggested we send an email blast to ask if any District residents had experience with grant applications.

Bob Blackmore, 5 Rondaly Rd, Hebron: **Q:** How is the Weeds Committee different from the Lake Health Committee? **A:** The LHC dives into the details, taking tests, and interfacing with our limnologist, GZA, while the Weeds Committee is interfacing with residents who have other concerns and could possibly provide additional information to the LHC. **Q:** So there's nobody on the committee that has a personal waterfront agenda, like in 2009? **A:** F. Hoisl said anyone, waterfront or not, is encouraged to join this committee. **A:** J. Caines said this is an opportunity for us, as a District, to educate ourselves about the flora and fauna within the lake and to provide more knowledge to the residents. **A:** J. Arpin said our limnologist will be doing a plant survey at the lake on June 9. Also, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) will be holding an invasive weeds workshop later today.

Dave Arnold, 34 Ames Rd, Hebron: Pointed out how financially important the invasive weed problem is to all of us and our property values.

Barbara Lederer, 458 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon: **Q:** Will any repairs to the dam come out of the Dam Fund? **A:** It was decided a few years ago to move most of that money back into the General Fund so the Dam Fund itself currently only holds \$100.

John Matra, 265 Deepwood Dr, Hebron, president of the Amston Lake Association: He invited everyone to attend the ALA open house tomorrow, 1 – 3. He stated that our community is somewhat unique in having a clubhouse. The building is 70 years old and with the support of the ALD and some generous members, they completed \$30K worth of repairs, maintenance, and upgrades over the past year.

Sue Matyszyk, 87 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon: Thank you for highlighting the difference between the ALA and ALD.

Mark Karas, 55 W. Island Beach Rd, Lebanon: **Q:** We hear a lot about weeds, why don't we hear much about the fishery in the lake? **A:** We had a program to tag bass several years ago. DEEP used to do an electro-shock fish survey, but it hasn't been done in several years – since we are a private lake, we are lower on their list. The Lake Health Committee is starting to work with CAES on plant surveys and can possibly get them to do some fish counts for us.

G. Election of ALD Board of Directors:

Nominations for the board of directors 3-year terms, July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027, and re-elected without objection:

- Brandon Pelegano, Lebanon (nominated/seconded by L. Bowen/J. Caines)
- Karen Patterson, Hebron (S. Matyszyk/E. Curtin)
- Jeff Greenfield, Hebron (F. Hoisl/T. Nixon)

Nomination for the board of directors open 2-year term, July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026 and elected with one opposing vote:

- Karen Rustico, Hebron (J. Barinowski/B. Scott)

H. Election of ALD Board Officers:

Nominations for the officers listed below for one-year terms, July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, and re-elected without objection:

- Frank Hoisl, President (B. Pelegano/K. Rustico)
- Brandon Pelegano, Vice President (J. Greenfield/K. Rustico)
- Jim Caines, Treasurer (B. Pelegano/L. Bowen)
- Liz Bowen, Clerk (K. Patterson/B. Lederer)

John Barnowski, 251 Deepwood Dr, Hebron: **Q:** Which officers are seasonal residents and which are year-round? **A:** F. Hoisl and L. Bowen are seasonal, B. Pelegano and J. Caines are year-round.

I. Tax Collector's Report: This was covered by J. Caines in the Treasurer's report.

J. Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer J. Caines narrated the slides from the presentation, beginning with an explanation of the ALD's fiscal year, what the "grand list" is, the components of a balance sheet and profit & loss statement. The financial statements are now presented online by fund and he went over the four fund names (General, Lebanon Roads, Dam and Emergency/Rainy Day/Reserve Fund) and their usage. There is a process to access the money from the Emergency Fund, which the board recently voted to set at its current amount of \$75K, but which used to fluctuate as a percentage of the General Fund budget.

He then went over the year-to-date tax collections.

Karen Hinch, 25 Island Beach Rd, Lebanon: **Q:** Do we have separate accounts for these funds and do we have \$75K in cash set aside. **A:** Not separate accounts, but we do have four different "buckets" at the bank – the money market savings account includes what amounts to the Invasive Weeds and the Emergency Funds. He also keeps money in the checking account.

John Barnowski, 251 Deepwood Dr, Hebron. **Q:** How many properties are liened currently? **A:** Tax Collector E. Curtin offered to get him that information by the end of the meeting. Foreclosures are rare and there is no expense to the District.

J. Caines stated that the General Fund budget has been relatively steady over the last five years but is now continuing to grow for a few reasons. Last year's operating budget was \$176K (not including the one-time \$20K spent on the clubhouse), and this year it's \$196K due, in part, to the increase in limnologist fees and taxes on Lebanon property owned by the District. Additionally, the current year plan was to spend down \$39K in unspent funds, so that money is no longer available to offset our taxes.

Sue Matyszyk, 87 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon. **Q:** Are our new taxes based on the old or new mill rate in Lebanon? **A:** There is a slide that will answer that question.

Barbara Lederer, 453 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon. **Q:** At what point would we use the Invasive Plants Fund for invasive weeds testing and treatment that's happening now? **A:** The purpose of the fund is to be available for treatment, and the lake health budget is for testing and monitoring.

Joyce Clark, 6 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon. **Q:** Would the community have a vote to separate the Invasive Plants Fund and the Emergency Fund? **A:** They are separate funds. **Q:** Since the interest we would have recognized on the Invasive Plants Fund over ten years totals approximately \$9K, could that money be credited back into that specific fund? **A:** All the towns that he has spoken to deposit their bank interest into the General Fund, but yes, it might be

possible to apportion interest income from a fund back to that specific fund. **A:** We have approx. \$80K to treat the entire lake over three years – an adequate amount. That would give us time to replenish the fund over the following several years. **A:** The board has the authority to move money from fund to fund. The purpose of the Long-Term Financial Planning Committee is to help decide, given what we have in balances, is this the best balance for these funds. Over the coming years, choices will have to be made and we'd have to come to the District if we need to add more to a certain fund.

Karen Rustico, 253 Deepwood, Hebron. **Q:** Are we paying the limnologist out of the Invasive Plants Fund? **A:** No. General fund pays for operations – the Invasive Plants Fund is only for treatment. We don't budget for invasive weeds at this point, although that could change.

Rich Mackowski, 6 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon: When the Invasive Plants Fund started, it was only for weed control. He believes interest earned on that fund should be put back into that fund. **A:** When the fund was established, it wasn't even in an interest-bearing account. Across municipalities, interest earned is generally put back into the General Fund, but Treasurer J. Caines will investigate apportioning the interest.

John Barnowski, 251 Deepwood Dr, Hebron. **Q:** The largest line item in the budget is administrative costs – what are they? **A:** Costs include liability insurance and property taxes. Years of detailed monthly financials are posted on the website.

The proposed ALD mill rate for Hebron is 1.67, Lebanon is 1.86.

Sue Matyszyk, 87 Deepwood, Lebanon. Stated that the Lebanon assessment increases were so large at the lake that many people complained and some were lowered by the assessor's office.

K. Consider and Act Upon Proposed Budgets for FY 2024-25:

Motion to approve the FYE 6-30-2025 General Fund spending plan of \$196,880, of which \$191,000 will be funded with new tax revenue and the balance of \$5,880 will be funded using non-tax revenue of \$ 5,880 (J. Caines/J. Greenfield), passed without objection.

J. Caines stated that the year-over-year Lebanon Roads budget is an increase of \$16K, and \$8K of that will come from unspent funds. Additionally, if it is another light snow year, the money left in the budget will go towards road repairs – the faster we can improve the roads with the techniques that are proving to be successful, hopefully the less money we'll spend in the long run.

Motion to approve the FYE 6-30-2025 Lebanon Roads budget of \$40,000 which will be funded by new tax revenues of \$32,000. The balance will be funded with the \$8,000 surplus currently in the fund (J. Caines/B. Lederer). Approved by the Lebanon residents only without objection.

Laurel Hennebury, 253 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon: She has 104 signatures on a petition requesting three changes to ALD board meetings:

- Move the resident/guests comment item to earlier in the meeting with two minutes per person to address the board,
- Allow up to five minutes upon request from residents/guests to address the board if the resident feels they have interests, concerns, information, or expertise pertinent to a particular agenda item,
- Conduct ALD annual meetings in person, absent of a public health or safety concern.

Motion to add discussion of this petition to our agenda (L. Hennebury/ J. Barnowski) approved by 29 residents, one opposed, and four abstentions so the motion carried.

John Mathieu, 28 Manion Ln, Lebanon. **Q:** Can anyone attend ALD meetings? **A:** Yes, they are open to the public as we are a municipality.

Ari Novis, 273 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon: **Q:** Is the request for five minutes per issue or per person? **A:** Currently, resident comment is allowed only during that agenda item; this petition is asking that anyone asking to speak be allowed five minutes at any time. That is not the norm in any municipality. **Q:** So if three people wanted to speak for five minutes per issue, that could be an additional 15 minutes of resident comments? **A:** Correct.

J. Greenfield: Stated that there are probably no issues with two of the three requests; however, entertaining five minutes of comments from any and every resident that claims expertise could harm the function of the board. To try to have a board meeting where every issue becomes a community forum is completely unworkable.

Karen Hinch, 25 Island Beach Rd, Lebanon: She agrees with J. Greenfield, and also stated that resident comments should come before the board votes on anything.

Karen Rustico, 253 Deepwood Dr, Hebron: She believes that resident comments should come at the beginning and would like two periods for resident comments.

L. Bowen: She explained that, a few years ago, the resident comment section was moved to after Old Business on the agenda, as they found many resident's questions were answered after listening to the board discussion. Additionally, a two-minute time limit would be welcomed, as some residents speak for 10 minutes or more. The five minutes of additional input from every resident that requests it would be difficult to manage. She finds it curious that most board meetings have at most, 3 – 5 of the same residents in attendance, yet 104 people have signed a petition without ever attending a board meeting.

L. Hennebury, 253 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon: She doesn't think it's fair to say that the people who signed the petition have not been to a board meeting. The spirit of this is to let residents talk more at meetings, which she feels currently is not a democratic process. She's open to compromise.

Sue Matyszyk, 87 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon: If only three people on average come to a meeting, she feels that five minutes for each is not a long time.

John Barnowski, 251 Deepwood Dr, Hebron: **Q:** Has this issue been raised with the Office of Policy and Management? **A:** No. The rules we follow are our ALD bylaws.

Les Parlin, 21 Ryan Terrace, Lebanon. He attends board meetings often and hasn't seen any issues. He says there's been a lot of flexibility in the meetings – he's heard residents speak at great length about things they have not done any research on, expecting answers right away and slowing things down.

Donna Ciarfella, 113 Deepwood Dr, Hebron. She agrees with Les and Jeff in that five minutes could drag out the meetings. A compromise could be to have two resident comment periods – one at the beginning of the meeting, and a second at the discretion of the board.

Barbara Scott, 20 Deepwood Dr, Lebanon. Her personal experience has been that she had to wait until the middle of the meeting and was unable to ask questions later in the meeting. She

suggested that if a resident had a question that needed to be researched, it be put on the agenda for next meeting.

Motion to approve the following (F. Hoisl/ J. Barnowski):

- Move the resident/guests comment item to earlier in the agenda with up to two minutes per person to address the board,
- Upon request, allow up to two minutes, at the discretion of the board, of input per resident/guest if the resident feels they have interests, concerns, information, or expertise pertinent to an agenda item,
- Conduct ALD annual meetings in person, absent of a pandemic or public health or safety concern.

Motion approved.

F. Hoisl spoke to everyone about the use of herbicides on their properties and its detrimental effects on the lake. Lake health is directly proportional to everyone's property values.

John Matra, 265 Deepwood Dr, Hebron. **Q:** Is there a list of approved products. **A:** No, but best to use grass clippings, mulch, slow-release nitrogen and to completely stay away from herbicides. The milfoil treatment is targeted to that specific weed – but a lot of herbicides just kill everything in their path.

L. Establish Date for 2025 District Annual Meeting:

Motion to hold the annual District meeting on Saturday, May 24, 2025 at a location to be determined (F. Hoisl/B. Pelegano), amended to Saturday, May 31, 2025 to avoid the Memorial Day weekend, passed without objection.

M. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:52 p.m. (K. Patterson/ F. Hoisl) approved without objection.

Respectfully submitted by
Liz Bowen, Clerk
Amston Lake District

Please refer to subsequent meeting minutes for approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.