

AMSTON LAKE DISTRICT

Annual Meeting

MINUTES

May 30, 2026 10:00 A.M.

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

www.amstonlake.org

A. Call to Order:

President B. Pelegano called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

B. Roll Call of Officers and Directors:

Present: President B. Pelegano, Vice President K. Patterson, Treasurer J. Caines, Clerk L. Bowen, and Directors J. Arpin, T. Nixon, C. Rockoff, and K. Rustico.

Absent: Director J. Greenfield.

C. Introduction of Board of Directors: This agenda item was skipped, as the current officers had been introduced during the roll call. B. Pelegano reviewed the agenda, asking participants to keep their comments to under a minute.

D. Acknowledgements: B. Pelegano thanked all the board members and other officers for their hard work throughout the year. He also thanked the volunteers that help out in the community, stating that the amount of money the District saves through volunteerism is tremendous. Even the small acts add up.

E. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion to approve the May 31, 2025 meeting minutes (K. Patterson/J. Caines), approved without objection.

F. Review Lake Operations and Committees:

The meeting included a slide presentation, which can be viewed on the website. B. Pelegano reviewed the slides, highlighting the committees and the work done over the past year.

John Matra, 265 Deepwood Dr, Hebron: He spoke as president of the Amston Lake Association (ALA) and discussed the year-round activities that ALA provides, as well as the marquee summer events. He then went over the ALA presentation slides, reporting that the Phase 1 and 2 clubhouse renovations are done, with Phase 3 projects yet to be completed.

G. Election of ALD Board of Directors:

Nominations for the three open seats on the board of directors for 3-year terms, July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2029:

- Karen Rustico, Hebron (nominated by J. Baronowski)
- Liz Bowen, Lebanon (K. Patterson)
- Teri Nixon, Lebanon (E. Curtin)
- Al Fichtel, Hebron (K. Hinch)
- Gail Golden, Hebron (J. Arpin), who did not accept the nomination

Residents voted by paper ballot, choosing three names. The winners had to receive a simple majority. Results: L. Bowen: 74, T. Nixon: 66, A. Fichtel: 48. B. Pelegano thanked K. Rustico for her past service on the board.

H. Election of ALD Board Officers:

The officers listed below were nominated and re-elected for one-year terms, July 1, 2026 –

June 30, 2027, without objection:

- Brandon Pelegano, President (nominated by K. Patterson)
- Karen Patterson, Vice President (B. Pelegano)
- Jim Caines, Treasurer (K. Patterson)
- Liz Bowen, Clerk (E. Curtin)

I. Tax Collector and Treasurer Reports:

Treasurer J. Caines went over the slides showing the year-to-date financials and tax collections, as well as fund and cash balances.

J. Consider and Act Upon Proposed Budgets for FY 2026-27:

Treasurer J. Caines presented the proposed General Fund Budget, and illustrated the tax implications for the residents of each of the two towns.

Ari Novis, 203 Deepwood Drive, Hebron: **Q:** Have the numbers presented on the screen been updated from the handouts? **A:** Yes. The handout doesn't include non-tax revenue, a difference of \$5500 in revenue.

Laurel Hennebury, 458 Deepwood Drive, Lebanon: **Q:** Can you explain what a "tree plan" is? **A:** Includes the line item for tree trimming and removal.

Al Fichtel, 203 Deepwood Drive, Hebron: **Q:** Where have the balances of the funds come from? **A:** It's a combination of underspending what we planned to in the prior year, and also collecting more revenue than we had planned, as J. Caines estimates non-tax revenue very conservatively. **Q:** Does the underspending come primarily from the Beach Pass Checkers and might that be considered overtaxing? **A:** A surplus would result from not spending the money budgeted for BPCs; however, we have to budget for a summer of optimal weather. **Q:** Has there ever been a time that we weren't able to pay them? **A:** No.

Motion to approve the FYE 6-30-2027 General Fund spending plan of \$225,500, of which \$215,500 will be funded with new tax revenue and the balance of \$10,000 will be funded using non-tax revenue and existing funds (J. Caines/ B. Pelegano).

John Baronowski, 251 Deepwood Drive, Hebron: **Q:** What will the new mill rates be? **A:** The ALD General Fund mill rate for Hebron will be 1.83, and for Lebanon, 1.58.

Al Fichtel, 203 Deepwood Drive, Hebron: **Q:** Can you tell us what that will mean to us in the increase in our taxes for the coming year? **A:** The increase year-over-year is approximately 3.1%.

Motion was approved with three objections.

J. Caines presented the slides for the proposed Lebanon Roads budget, which remains the same as last year, to be voted on by Lebanon residents only. The total mill rate for Lebanon residents, with the inclusion of this budget, will be 2.17.

Sue Matyszyk, 87 Deepwood Drive, Lebanon: The condition of the Lebanon roads is much better than in the past.

John Baronowski: **Q:** Is this all based on our current assessments? **A:** Yes. **Q:** How will the revaluation currently taking place in Hebron affect that? **A:** The Hebron grand list that will be

set on October 1, 2026 will affect your July 1, 2027 taxes.

Jody Stubbings, 15 Cove Road, Lebanon: **Q:** If the roads budget is staying the same, why is it showing a \$59 increase? **A:** There is no increase from last year – the slide illustrates the difference between Hebron and Lebanon residents – Hebron residents pay nothing toward the roads, while Lebanon residents will pay \$59 per \$100,000 of assessed value.

Motion to approve the FYE 6-30-2027 Lebanon Roads Fund spending plan of \$40,000, which will be funded with new tax revenue of \$40,000 (J. Caines, S. Matyszyk) approved by the Lebanon residents only, without objection.

K. Consider and Act Upon Special Project – Dock Expansion:

J. Caines explained that after the slides were created, he realized that he hadn't added in the 2027 dock rental fees as expected revenue, lowering the tax impact from \$17,580 to \$13,080. He then presented the slides for the proposed Dock Expansion.

Gail Golden, 203 Deepwood Drive, Hebron: **Q:** What will the cost be to install and remove the docks each year if we can't find volunteers to do it? **A:** Estimates range from \$2,100 – \$4,000 and would be added to the dock rental fees charged. **Q:** What will the increase in dock fees be? **A:** Currently, \$300 for large boats and \$150 for small. If the slips are fully rented next year, new fees proposed will total \$4,500 each year and will pay back the cost of the docks in three years.

Barbara Lederer, 458 Deepwood Drive, Lebanon: **Q:** This proposal adds three slips to accommodate the three large boats that didn't get slips this year. What happens next year when three more people want slips? **A:** The Dock Committee and the board are mindful that the lake doesn't need to be covered with docks and are not proposing endless expansion.

Les Parlin, 21 Ryan Terrace, Lebanon: **Q:** Is there any consideration for lake health? From attending the board meetings he's heard as many as nine 10 X 40 benthic barriers are being considered for the Lollipop docks, an area that has very diverse plant life. **A:** Benthic barriers are being considered because currently boats using the docks churn up weeds that then migrate over to the southeast part of that cove; however, at this time only two benthic barriers will be installed.

Al Fichtel: There appear to be moving parts to the funding for this proposal. It's irresponsible to bring this proposal to this meeting if there's not a solid cost estimate. He drew a plan several years ago that added three large slips to Lollipop and could be managed easily by volunteers, yet this has a \$28,000 price tag plus several unknown associated costs.

Debbie Lawler, 221 Deepwood Drive, Hebron: **Q:** Are the permit costs associated with doing this work a part of the \$28,000? **A:** The committee is unaware of any permit costs. **Q:** Have you checked the slip fees at other lakes – ours seem cheap. **A:** Ours are less expensive, but we also have a shorter season. The committee will reconsider the fees each season.

Laurel Hennebury: She is not opposed to having docks, but there doesn't seem to be a long-range plan. At some point, we have to be clear about how many docks the lake can sustain. The reality is that not everyone can have a pontoon boat on this lake and we need to cap it.

John Matra: Part of the problem is the lottery itself. Perhaps a waitlist system should be considered.

Donna Ciarfella, 113 Deepwood Drive, Hebron: She is a member of the Dock Committee and

also works on our pass registrations. She's noticed a change in community needs and desires, with people buying larger boats. Without being lakefront or having a slip, you have to launch your boat from Main Beach, which results in boat inspector costs to the District. They consistently have 10 small boats requesting a slip, and last year there were five larger boats that were unable to get a slip. This new system is designed to meet today's needs.

John Baronowski: He wondered how many people apply for slips on an annual basis – perhaps those who didn't get a slip this year should be given higher consideration for next year.

Karen Patterson, 113 Deepwood Drive, Hebron: There have been a lot of good suggestions about the lottery system moving forward. But we need to consider whether to go ahead with this dock expansion and perhaps the board should discuss this as an agenda item during a monthly meeting before the lottery is held next year.

Gail Golden: **Q:** Who ran the dock lottery this year and how many people did not get a slip?

A: Board members T. Nixon and C. Rockoff ran the lottery. There were 17 entries, two people did not get a slip, but one winner gave up her slip; so ultimately one person did not get a slip.

A motion was made to call the question (L. Hennebury/K. Patterson). Motion to call the question was approved, with three objections and one abstention. Discussion ensued about the appropriateness of calling the question, as no motion had yet been made.

Motion to approve the FYE 6-30-2027 Special Project Dock Expansion spending plan of \$27,780, of which \$13,080 will be funded with new tax revenue and the balance of \$10,000 will be funded using dock slip revenue and existing funds (J. Caines/K. Hinch).

Al Fichtel: Our taxes are already going up 3.19%, and we've already been taxed on the \$10,000 in the Dock Fund. We're being hit for \$28,000 to get 2 – 3 more slips, when only one person didn't get a slip this year. **Q:** What is the effect on our taxes when you add this in?

A: Per \$100,000 of assessed value, it will add \$10 for Hebron residents and \$11 for Lebanon residents.

Karen Patterson: \$5,000 from the General Fund that went unspent from last year was moved into the Dock Fund when it was created two years ago, not \$10,000. The purpose was to try to level out taxes so that the ALD wouldn't have to ask for such a large sum. The other \$5,000 is from dock fees, because prior to the establishment of the Dock Fund, the user fees were going into the General Fund. The Long-term Financial Planning Committee recommended the change so that the Dock Fund could be built up to pay for something like this. The only other alternative to this proposal would be to wait until enough money is built up (would likely be several more years and the price will be that much higher). If people choose to not go forward, the only other option is to wait and build up the fund.

Liz Bowen, 156 Deepwood Drive, Lebanon: She did not vote to approve this proposal at the May board meeting, and felt that there was a third option, which is to not expand the docks at all. At what point do we say the number of docks is enough – there doesn't seem to be a plan for an end game.

Karen Hinch, 25 Island Beach Road, Lebanon: Waterfront people do not have this issue; you can't just tell people who live off the lake that they are out of luck.

Nick Salerno, 10 Turner Road, Hebron: **Q:** There have been no costs presented for winterizing and storing these docks. **A:** The quotes are \$2100 – \$4,000. **Q:** In ten years, we've never had to hire this service out, why start now? **A:** The challenge is to find volunteers to do this work.

Ted Strickland, 365 Deepwood Drive, Lebanon: Perhaps a separate enterprise should be created just for the docks. He doesn't want to pay more in taxes so that someone else can put a boat in. Some of the specifics of this proposal are too nebulous and don't include all the costs. Why should we pay taxes on something that isn't improving our property or helping the community at large.

Al Fichtel: Until he bought lakefront property here, he carted his boat up and down the east coast, launching it where he could. If you don't have a dock, trailering is always an option – it's not the end of the world.

Sue Matyszyk, Deepwood Drive, Lebanon: **Q:** How much does it cost the District to pay the inspectors each time a boat goes in or out? **A:** \$15 each time, so \$30 round trip. President B. Pelegano stated that Lake Health Committee member, A. Novis, is looking into some potential state funding that could reimburse the District 50% of our 2026 boat inspector fees.

The motion did not pass, with 26 residents voting yes, and 51 residents voting no.

At this point, President B. Pelegano encouraged the residents to attend two upcoming presentations at the ALA clubhouse hosted by the Amston Lake Health Committee: the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station on Saturday, June 6 at 10 a.m., and GZA (our lake limnologists) on Saturday, June 20, at 10 a.m.

L. Establish Date for 2027 District Annual Meeting:

Motion to hold the annual District meeting on Saturday, May 29, 2027 at a location to be determined (B. Pelegano/K. Rustico). Tax Collector E. Curtin explained that by setting our mill rate from the approved budget so late in the month, it causes delays with our tax software provider, QDS, resulting in our tax bills being sent out late. Motion to amend the motion to hold the meeting May 22, 2027 (B. Pelegano/K. Rustico), unanimously approved.

M. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:02 p.m. (K. Rustico/A. Fichtel) passed 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.