

Rare dissension among district board

- By Debra Neutkens/Editor
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WHITE BEAR LAKE — A few members of the White Bear Lake Conservation District weren't quite on board with the new slate of officers elected Feb. 21.

Bryan DeSmet, White Bear Township, is the new chair. Vice chair is Mark Ganz, of Mahtomedi, and White Bear Township representative Diane Longville remains treasurer.

Directors Gene Altstatt and Pat McCann voted no to the nominees; preferring to have a nomination committee.

“The slate presented doesn't represent a ‘proactive’ group. This is a ‘reactive’ group,” Altstatt said. “We have a lot of issues that are unaddressed: Commercial Bay, ordinances, bylaws, lack of a strategic plan and eliminating committees that are proactive. We should have a committee talk to all members about the slate.”

George St. Germain maintained that Altstatt didn't know the facts. “In many things, we have to react,” he said. “And we are proactive about watermilfoil and zebra mussels. The present slate isn't that old.”

In other business at last week's meeting, the board:

- Disbanded the lake level resolution committee, formed in 2012.

DeSmet noted that the group hasn't met in a year and its mission to identify solutions to the low lake level has been accomplished.

- Approved dock permits for Tally's, East Shore Dock association in Mahtomedi, the VFW and city of White Bear Lake.

The VFW ordered new docks from MINNCOR Industries, the same source as the city's new dock system. The system replaces deteriorating docks installed 20-plus years ago. Housing Committee Chairman Jerry Briggs indicated in a letter to the district that the VFW was spending \$90,000 on the new docks. The footprint is the same at 26 slips plus two for visitors.

Docks in front of Pete Sampair's property (Acqua) on Lake Avenue S. were reduced from 12 slips to six slips plus four tie ups. His docks are on the end of Tally's due to the shallow water in Commercial Bay.

The board postponed a decision on Docks of White Bear Lake, property owned by White Bear Shopping Center in front of Admiral D's. A new layout for the docks was proposed, which the

board thought would increase congestion. Approval was tabled to give the committee time to consider the change.

Marina owner Brian McGoldrick told the board the shopping center owns 78 percent of the frontage along the bay, and only Docks of White Bear is in compliance. “We are all jammed in there,” he said. “We want to be treated fairly and equitably. The city doesn’t even adhere to its own ordinance.”

- Heard a plea for help during public comment time. An attorney for Russ Becker, the homeowner who lives on the tip of the Dellwood peninsula, asked the board for help in solving an issue his client has with boaters on the sandbar near his dock.

“This has become a public beach,” noted counsel, Paul Rogosheske. “Mr. Becker’s boathouse and boats have been vandalized; and speakers play loud, horrible music. We prefer to work with the district to find a solution.”

The attorney played a short video for the board showing boaters drinking beer and one smoking what looked to be marijuana on the sandbar. One boater was tied up to Becker’s dock, which is trespassing.

Ganz, who heads the lake utilization committee, told Rogosheske he has seen it and agrees, it’s a problem. In fact, Ganz spotted his boat and his son in the video when the camera panned around the point. The vice chair feels enforcement is the answer to the “bold actions” by some of the boaters and agreed to work with the homeowner.

- Discussed potential ownership of a lake augmentation project. Director Scott Costello said he didn’t see any point in discussing ownership until the project becomes reality. The issue was tabled indefinitely.

- Heard from Costello that Ramsey County has hired an invasive species administrator. Eurasian milfoil treatment is the district’s single largest expense.

- Considered a resolution for a fund balance policy. The policy would guide the district’s budgeting process and be no less than 150 percent of the budget for the following year and no more than 200 percent. A draft policy will be sent to the five communities that are assessed by the district for review.