

Conservation district denies request for fence, buoys

WB Press p1 5/28/2025

BY SHANNON GRANHOLM
MANAGING EDITOR

WHITE BEAR LAKE — Members of the White Bear Conservation District (WBCD) board have split opinions on whether a lake homeowner should be allowed to install a fence and buoy system, similar to what the city of White Bear Lake did at the dog beach at Matoska Park.

Eighth Street homeowners Rachel and Brian Bonin, who live near the dog beach, would like to install a chain-link fence on the shore to the water's edge with float buoys extending into the water.

"They requested a fence to try to mitigate dogs

moving from the dog park area to their swimming area adjacent to it," Chair Byran DeSmet explained.

The district's Lake Utilization Committee voted 2-2 on the request, and board members had varying opinions.

"It seems to me that if the fence and the buoys the city has installed aren't performing the ways that they are intended to perform, which is to keep the dogs on one side versus traveling to the other side, that is an issue with the city, and they should adjust their fence in some way to do a better job," DeSmet said.

Director Christopher Churchill said, "I don't think there should be any fences ... If the city is not taking care of their fences ... and someone needs to put

something up to protect their property, I think they should have a right to do that."

Vice Chair Meredith Walburg pointed out that the request was to place a barrier right on the lot line, which traditionally, the district has not allowed.

Director Scott Costello said, "It is the responsibility of the swimming area owner to define that, not the neighbors. If the buoys and fence that are already there aren't containing the dogs, then adding more isn't going to work either."

Director Mark Wisniewski said he was not in favor of the request. "I'm strongly opposed to this

SEE HOMEOWNER REQUEST, PAGE 20

FROM PAGE 1

application. I think if the first one isn't working, I don't think approving a second one improves the situation for the out-of-control dogs that Brian described. I think we take it up with the city."

Churchill responded, "I have a hard problem with giving the city the ability to do this and nobody else. That is not fair." He suggested if the city's fence is not working, then it should be removed.

Costello urged caution regarding the dog beach. "We have to be careful there. If you read the local paper, you know how big of a deal that dog beach is to people

... We need to stay clear of the dog beach issue. We don't want to be dragged into it," he said. Churchill responded, "We were dragged into it as soon as we approved that fence."

Attorney Alan Kantrud explained that the approval of the city's fence was to mitigate the effects of the dog park in a public park.

"I caution against taking it back (the permit for the fence) because one person has come in and said it isn't working," Kantrud said. "I strongly suggest not revoking theirs just because you are not giving private property owners the same permission ... If you revoke that permission and that mitigation, you own any

problems that happen in the lake. I don't think that is a good idea."

Churchill said the district has received numerous complaints in the last five months about the dog beach. "The city is giving the big bird to everybody, saying they are not going to do anything with it. So, in my eyes, if we are the ones accountable for the water and putting structures in the water, we should have a say in what goes there and removal," he said.

Ultimately, the Bonin's request was denied with a 3-7 vote (DeSmet, Walburg, Costello, Diane Longville, Wisniewski, Susie Mahoney and Shari Salzman-Hankins voted to deny the application).