

Cascade Thornapple River Association Annual Meeting 2015

March 19, 2015 Wisner Center

6:37 PM

Welcome and Introductions. All Board members present except departing members Bill Uecker and John Meyer. Attendees is about 65. Meeting was held in the Good/Skutt room and we were fairly full. Agenda was distributed in the mailing.

Secretary's Report from 2014 was approved as written/provided

Treasurer's Report was approved as submitted

Payment of dues can be done on the website or by credit card here at the meeting.

6:42 Elections - we need a minimum of two new members. Volunteers were requested from the audience.. An explanation of the responsibilities of the board was provided. The board is in need of a treasurer and a mailing list administrator. Kerry Gorsuch, Mark Renzenbrink, Ron McColum, Chuck Whitley, Scott Rissi and Rob Andrews, are all on two year terms. A motion to install the board members was introduced, supported and passed.

Buoys have arrived. Glow in the dark models were purchased and were installed. They are not as bright as we would have liked but they are visible at night. They are also larger than the last order of buoys even though the same size was ordered.

Water testing has been performed by Rusty Trapp for nearly 10 years and he has indicated that he would like someone else to take over. We are looking for two people to volunteer to take water samples in the spring and fall. A sign up sheet has been provided for people who are interested in taking over this responsibility.

The deck section that was lodged in the mud plain east of the golf course has been partially removed. The deck section was filled with concrete and the concrete was broken up but remains on the bottom. All of the wood sections were cut up and removed from the river. Discussion about the owner of the deck section being responsible to pay for the removal resulted in the CTRA noting that there is no way to enforce the owner to pay. It is not something any authority is interested in taking responsibility for. CTRA is expecting a charge from Thornapple, Inc. to remove the deck however a bill has not been received.

6:52 Airport deicing system is nearly complete. They are working on the pipe sections from Thornapple River Drive to the west toward the airport. The work is expected to be complete this fall and they system ready to begin operation this winter. Scott will be attending a meeting in June with the Airport Authority to be briefed on the construction progress/completion.

CTRA is asking river users to remain attentive if they observe any petroleum type slicks on the river. Once in 2013 and 2014 oil was observed flowing out of the creek across from Sequoia Street. The DNR was contacted but they did not respond. The pollution hotline was contacted and they responded immediately but the source of the spill could not be located and the flow of oil quickly subsided. The creek where the oil was observed runs east to Whitneyville Road and Buttrick Road. If anyone sees oil on the water they are asked to call the Michigan Pollution Hotline immediately at **1-800-292-4706**.

6:58 Fireworks show was a success in 2014. The cost of the show was completely covered by donations plus a little surplus remains. The meeting attendees agreed that it is desired to have fireworks again in 2015. The agreed upon date is 9/15/2015 at dusk. Donations for the fireworks show can be made online at the CTRA website. The goal for 2015 is to raise \$2,000 which is slightly more than the cost of the 2014 show.

7:04 Special Assessment District(SAD) A summary of the process in creating a SAD was discussed. The reason for the SAD would be to generate funds to help pay for the proposed improvements to the river including but not limited to; aquatic weed control, dredging, river clean up and sedimentation control. A map of a sample district was presented at the meeting. It was noted that property owned by the State of Michigan, Kent County and Non-taxable parcels are automatically excluded from the district. The costs for the SAD need to be established. CTRA has received a proposal from Professional Lake Management for a 5 year plan to address the invasive aquatic weed species that is in the river. This proposal ranges from \$38,000 per year to \$58,000 per year as the cost will vary depending on the amount and frequency of treatment that is required to attempt to eradicate the weeds. This estimate along with the estimates of other programs would be accumulated to establish the SAD amount. The number of years that the SAD would be in effect would set the term. The longer the term results in a lower financial obligation by each parcel in the district each year. This is very similar to how Millages and Bonds are applied to property taxes.

The Township indicated that they would require nearly universal support from the members of the district for the Township to have any interest in moving on the issue. The spending of the fund accumulated thru the SAD is managed by the Township, not the CTRA. CTRA board estimates the appropriate amount to be charged for the district members would be in the \$275 to \$350 range annually.

The audience asked what percentage of the Membership makes up the parcels in the proposed SAD? That number had not been calculated at the time of the meeting.

CTRA Board members met with an attorney who has extensive experience with authoring SADs. He advised CTRA not to include back-lot owners in the District as this commonly causes motions like this to fail. The audience asked if it would be possible to set up a back-lot SAD? It was responded that this could be done. The audience asked if it would be possible to raise CTRA membership dues for back-lot owners. The response was it is possible. Another option discussed was to raise membership dues but our experience has been that membership numbers decline as the cost of dues goes up. A member of the audience proposed tying membership in the CTRA in with the SAD.

The township will be looking for a balance of cost and benefit of the SAD objective. The Township will set the final wording of the SAD.

7:39 The audience was concerned about the feasibility of successfully completing this process. Is it possible to get 80% support if the recommendation is \$275 to \$325 and the term is 15 to 20 years? The audience recommended that CTRA conduct an membership drive to generate more interest in the association.

7:45 Jamie from Professional Lake Management (PLM) discussed the proposal that was provided to CTRA and how the weed control program would be applied to the river. Jamie indicated there is a direct correlation between muck and weeds. Muck is created by vegetation such as leaves, grass clippings and wood decomposing in the river. As property owners and residents along the river the main reason to perform weed control is to protect property values as the more prevalent the weeds, the less attractive the water will be. Once you have weeds there is no way to completely eradicate them. Treatments only reduce the appearance of the weeds. It will take multiple treatments per year to establish a lasting effect on weed growth. Mechanical harvesting of the weeds will also be required. The audience asked if the winter drawdown would kill milfoil? It has not been effective thus far. The audience was requested to compare the weed beds in the river today to the river map that was created in 1983. There are numerous weed beds now that did not exist then. This is a rapidly growing problem. The audience asked about the possibility of corporate sponsorships, soliciting the railroad or seeking support from private sponsors? The audience also asked about using funds that are generated by the dam. The CTRA indicated that these ideas would not generate the funds needed to support the needs of the river. The CTRA is estimating the cost of the SAD could generate \$90,000 per year where 300 district members would pay \$300 annually. This money should be used for weed control and sedimentation control initially. Other programs such as dredging would be implemented later in the duration of the program when there is a fund balance large enough to support the annual cost of the work completed. It was commented that the Township may be seeking a grant to do a study of all the tributaries in the Township that flow into the river. A member of the audience asked if the CTRA had explored the idea of using a natural treatment such as a weevil for weed control. The response was this form of treatment did not exist any longer.

8:20 A vote was taken of the audience if there was support to form a committee whose responsibility would be to grow the association. Approximately 50 responded YES and 8 responded NO.

It was proposed that there are three options where to go from here: 1. Do more research 2. Move forward with developing the SAD 3. Do nothing. A motion was made to move forward with organizing a SAD for 15 years at \$300/year per parcel in the SAD. The motion passed with only 4 audience members responding NO.

An audience member asked about the buoy's at the dam being relocated and blocking access to the safe portage area. Discussion was held regarding past requests that have been made to add a dock to the safe portage area at the dam and how STS has repeatedly rejected the proposal. The audience agreed that the portage area needs to be improved as the current conditions are in fact hazardous to the safety of the public. It was recommended that the Township should look into adding an emergency phone to the portage area.

The meeting was Adjourned at 8:44PM.

Notes recorded by Rob Andrews, Secretary