

**Deer Lake Watershed Association**  
Board Meeting – Wednesday, October 21, 2020  
Virtual Meeting via Facebook™ Messenger

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 6:18 p.m. by President Bill Cromell. This is a virtual meeting held via connections where all members can hear each other and most had visuals of members present. Prior to this meeting, an agenda of topics to be discussed had been sent via email to all DLWA members who had a listed email address on file.

**ATTENDEES:** Board members participating: Bill Cromell, Gail Blackmer, Mark Smith, Val Cromell, Chris Fischer, Bruce Steege, and alternate board members Vaughn Duitsman and Travis Mangan. Alternate member Jeff Dunlap was not available.

**AGENDA REVIEW AND APPROVAL** – Following review of agenda, Bruce **moved** to approve agenda as amended. **Seconded** by Mark.

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS** – President Bill Cromell welcomed the newly elected members to the DLWA Board of Directors, and asked for all present to give a brief introduction about their connection to DLW area:

**Bill Cromell** – first came to the area over 40 years ago through upland and deer hunting north of Effie. Bill and Val also recreated for many years in the area and now have built their retirement home on Deer Lake. Bill is serving his second term on the board, is an active member of the community including township supervisor and running a storage and services business.

**Chris Fischer** – lives in the Twin Cities with his wife and bought an older log cabin at the end of S. Pickerel Road seven years ago and visits most weekends. Chris has had family connections to the area for quite a while, he is our go-to for the website maintenance and keeps us on track with privacy and copyright regulations.

**Travis Mangan** – is a new alternate member representing Mirror Lake area as he and extended family (16 of them!) own a tract of land and cabin near that lake. Travis has a background in biology and chemistry, and obviously in hunting, as he called in while travelling on the road to go hunting waterfowl – (someone else was driving).

**Bruce Steege** – came to the area from Zumbrota and has been coming with family for 52 years! He and his wife Cheryl took an opportunity to buy a home on Deer Lake a couple years ago and now spend most of their time here. Bruce joined DLWA and has become active in harvesting wild rice and improving water flow.

**Vaughn Duitsman** – first started vacationing on Pickerel Lake when he was 5 years old, coming from Illinois with his family. He has worked in technology and farming but has

always returned to this area. He now owns a piece of land on Deer Lake with his wife Nadya, who undoubtedly is the wild mushroom expert of the area. They spent the later part of the summer here in their motor home until the early winter weather chased them out. We watched Vaughn as he was driving south while attending the meeting!

**Mark Smith** – with Donna Childers bought a place on Deer Lake in 2012. Mark really enjoys his fishing and figured this area was just far enough north of the city to be able to have good habitat but to come frequently. His business has been mostly idled this summer due to Covid so he spent it here. Mark is passionate about clean water and following regulations to ensure our natural resources are protected.

**Val Cromell** grew up on Deer Lake and both her Blackmer and Jensen grandparents were homesteaders in the area. She lived in Bemidji, Duluth and Grand Rapids for many years, returning “home” for weekends and vacation days. Val moved back to Deer Lake permanently in 2015 when she and husband Bill built their retirement home on Deer Lake. Val cares deeply about preserving the environment and resources of the Deer Lake Watershed for future generations. Val is currently the treasurer for our organization and tracks all membership list details.

**Gail Blackmer** serves as secretary for the board, and resides on Deer Lake property that has been in the Blackmer family nearly 100 years. She also owns and operates Deer Lake Charlie’s tavern where summer residents, locals, and folks travelling through the area can gather to discuss and learn about what our watershed has to offer for recreation or environmental protection.

TREASURER REPORT: Val Cromell provided Treasurer’s report, listing fund balances as follows: General Fund - \$6,254.81; Continuous Flow Fund - \$1,841.29; Water Protection Fund - \$1,171.52; the designated reserve for website maintenance has \$438.85, and the CCC Camp historical preservation savings account is at \$565.42. It was noted that the Continuous Flow Fund has a portion of annual membership dollars transferred to that fund as well as receiving direct donations. Since the last board meeting, the DLWA has received a total of \$265.00 in member donations. Disbursements include fees for the water quality testing that was conducted on Pickerel Lake this summer. The Treasurer’s report was approved on a **motion** by Gail, **seconded** by Mark.

SECRETARY’S REPORT: Gail Blackmer provided Secretary’s report, noting that the minutes from the July 15, 2020 meeting had been distributed via email to board members. Minutes of the July meeting were approved on a **motion** by Bill, **seconded** by Chris. The July minutes may now be posted on the website and will be sent by the secretary to the full membership for whom emails are on file. It was noted that usually there are minutes of the annual meeting reviewed at this time, however there was no meeting this year due to Covid, and that the items and information sent out in August to all members were reported as the results of the board member election and passage of by-law amendments. There will not be additional minutes

created referencing an annual meeting in 2020. Gail shared a thank you note received from MN Dep't of Transportation for DLWA members participating in annual roadside clean-up activity.

#### COMMITTEE UPDATES:

##### A. Continuous Outflow Committee

1. Outflow creek condition – Bill noted that the outflow of Deer Creek was flowing pretty well as seen from the bridge on county road # 525, however, vegetation is thick all along the creek, making navigation very difficult. Beaver dam debris by the rock dam was cleared twice in September. Mark stated he feels the beaver control and elimination has really made a difference, that this year the problem is the thick vegetation. This led to discussion on the benefit of a Surface Drive Motor which is able to get through the weed growth. Ideas were presented, with a general agreement that one of these motors available for experienced DLWA members would be very useful and we should pursue a capital purchase campaign to purchase one. This will remain on agendas as to fund raising ideas. Inflow creeks to Deer Lake were discussed, noting that trapping had occurred on Buck and Lorraine creeks. Bill described his learning curve at trapping beaver, suggesting that additional people who know the techniques or are willing to learn are needed. At this time, the water level gauge at the #533 bridge is 5.1, which indicates high water for this time of year.

B. Membership Committee – Val Cromell, committee chair, provided a report on membership activities. Val has sent out renewal reminders as members' annual memberships expire, and thank you notes when member donations are received. Currently, DLWA has 134 paid household memberships. There are eight new household or business members, and one new Lifetime Membership.

C. Events – We will take a wait and see approach to planning any events for next spring/summer and determine if public gatherings are okay while monitoring the pandemic disease spread. Everyone was okay with keeping the sponsor of "Chicago Night" fundraiser as a paid up member for his previous work at this. Additionally, Val reported that a donation of handmade "walking sticks" was given to the organization to use as a fundraising tool if we choose. Thank you, Gus Hellzen!

#### OLD BUSINESS

##### 1. Officer Elections

A. Treasurer - Val reviewed the treasurer duties as outlined and agreed to continue in this appointed position until the term expires in August 2021. She is currently serving as volunteer membership committee chair also, but encourages other volunteers to consider filling this position in the future, as it requires carefully monitoring a spreadsheet and may be a lot for the next treasurer to keep up with.

B. President – Bill's two year position as President of DLWA expired in August. Following discussion of terms and Bill's statement that rotating this position and new leadership can be a good thing, Bruce nominated Bill to continue as president for another term. Bill stated he would

continue for one more year, then prefers to have another person elected as president, whereupon **Chris moved** to nominate Bill for president until August 2021, **seconded by Mark**. All in favor, motion carried.

2. Water Quality Testing – Bill reported that he has conducted testing on Pickerel Lake. Procedure included taking one sample per month for five months, each delivered to the RMB testing lab in Hibbing within 24 hours of extraction. There is a fee of \$275.00 for each series of five tests. We are currently awaiting results from the lab. We think that SWDC will be testing Battle and Mirror lakes in 2021, and propose that we test Five Island and Deer lakes in 2021 also, pending volunteer availability.

3. Website Update – Chris reported on the website, noting that due to no events or activity happening this past summer, the website has not added much new graphics or information, but is still displayed on the internet. Chris reminded us that business advertising helps support the website, and we should seek new advertisers. One business did not renew. There have been some requests for more DLWA apparel, especially hats. This can be discussed later to arrange ordering hats with DLWA logo for sale.

#### NEW BUSINESS

A. Accomplishment Summary /Annual Report – Bill and Val volunteered to compile a summary of what the Association has accomplished in the past year to update all members. A draft will be sent to board members who were asked to please brainstorm actual accomplishments and submit their thoughts to Bill or Val.

B. Newsletter – Bill suggested that each board member pick a topic to write an article about. Any appropriate topic or style can be considered, detailed graphing or opinion, long or short. All board members should consider and provide input. Forty-five DLWA members have paid extra to receive a paper copy, which indicates there is interest in receiving a newsletter as part of their membership in DLWA. We hope to utilize Sheila Vorland's skills as a volunteer to prepare the formatting on the computer for newsletter publication.

C. DLWA Sign on Co Rd #533 – Art Lind has taken the road sign down and has it in his shop for the winter. It will be refurbished as needed. Thanks, Art!

D. Environmental Services – Itasca County sends information on requests for building and sewer permits to Carpenter Township, as applicable. There was a request to make this information available to DLWA board as well. DLWA does not have authority to rule on it, but it should be noted that the DLWA Board and residents have the opportunity to provide input to Environmental Services if they feel there is harm to the environment or regulations are not being followed. The DLWA Board appreciates knowledge of building and sewer placement around the lakes.

E. MN DNR CO Coverage - Some DLWA members have requested more surveillance in this area from our local conservation officer. The CO has been on the lake checking fishing boats and recreational watercraft for proper use and licensing, possibly due to pressure from us. This is an example of fostering good relationships between DLWA and DNR.

F. Next meeting – It was suggested that the next meeting take place on Monday, December 14, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. via Facebook video connection. Mark will organize the calls.

Adjourn – There being no further business, and adhering to member’s request to keep meetings approximately 1.5 hours in length, Val **moved** to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 pm., **seconded** by Mark. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Gail Blackmer, Secretary.