

Little Sissabagama Shoreowners Association Meeting May 26, 2007

President Chuck Abrams called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM
Peter Lytle introduced the Little Sissabagama website and invited anyone who has not seen it to be sure and do so. It took approximately 1 year to design and hundreds of hours of work to get it up and running. It contains a great deal of pertinent information about Little Siss as well as a local activities calendar, photos and history of the lake. In the future the website will also have sound capabilities. Peter went through the website, link-by-link to familiarize everyone with it's content. He also requested additional photos from Little Siss residents with brief comments about where and when they were taken. Tim Barsness is our web master and his email address is: tbarsness@barsnesssolutions.com
Any contributions to the site should be emailed directly to Tim.

Chuck introduced Rick Gauger from the West Wisconsin Land Trust who talked about land management and his recommendations for Stout Island. His recommendations are:

- 1) Convince the assessor that a non-profit should be exempt from property taxes.
- 2) Place a conservation easement (CE) on the Island. A conservation easement is permanent land preservation. Assessors are required by law to take into account that the CE is in place. However, only 25% of the landowners that have placed CE's on their properties have received property tax reductions.
- 3) Place a conservation easement on the property and then agree to hold educational events on the property, in hopes that the assessor will consider the public benefit of the educational programs.
- 4) Place a conservation easement on the property and then apply for a Lake Protection Grant to supplement the endowment currently set up for property taxes. Maximum grant size would be 200K.
- 5) Place a conservation easement on the property and then gift the property to an organization that will assume the property taxes, or exempt out the taxes due to public education programming: Such as West Wisconsin Land Trust or Audubon
- 6) Do the above steps in stages, i.e. #2, see what the assessor says, then move on.

If we keep it with a conservation easement, property taxes will continue about the way they have and the state/DNR will have no say about what is done on or with Stout Island.

Chuck mentioned that applying for a conservation easement would be tough to get and the liability to our Little Siss Shoreowner's Association would be greater if we did it on our own.

The Western Wisconsin Land Trust organization can apply for an easement on our behalf, a better solution for the Association and a more likely tax reduction.

Financial requirements:

- 1) Conservation easement through West Wisconsin Land Trust (the island would not be open to the general public), we would still be responsible for taxes. There would be a one-time fee of \$15,000 to cover lawyer's fees, appraisals and fee to WWLT.

Rick's recommendation is to gift Stout Island to West Wisconsin Land Trust (a private, non-profit, regional, 501C3 conservation organization started in 1988). The WWLT would then own Stout Island on our behalf and would allow it to be a State Natural Area. We would have no yearly fees or taxes. We would, however, agree to allow 1 or 2 educational events to be held each year on the island to help it qualify as a State Natural Area and to help lower the annual property taxes.

Rick also recommended that our current Stout Island Fund be put into an endowment fund for future payment of taxes. The WWLT will match whatever amount we put into the fund.

Mike Skwira asked what would happen if the WWLT folded, could we designate that we would regain ownership of Stout Island?

Mark Johnson then recommended that we " apply for a conservation easement through the WWLT, keep the Stout Island Fund and have WWLT negotiate restrictions.

We should hire a private appraisal done on Stout Island and the Little Siss Shoreowners Association would continue to pay the taxes. There would still be no public access to the lake."

The question is, would we be able to pay the land trust fee out of the Stout Island Fund?

As a back-up solution, gift Stout Island to the WWLT. Rick then suggested an annual fee of \$40. Per household to help offset the initial fee of \$15,000. He also mentioned that there are federal funds available for funding fish management, even though there is no public access.

Minutes from the September meeting were approved.

Treasurer's report: Mike Skwira

Association acct. \$1535.

Trust owes us \$ 1842

Balance \$3377.

Total assets in Stout Island Fund \$ 66,300. (6 1/8 % interest rate)

Wildlife report: Del Anderson mentioned that Frank Pratt does boom shocking on the side. Because of our Northern problem the DNR is willing to boom shock in fall or spring at no cost, they just need access to the lake. Margaret Schneider offered to let the DNR access the lake from their property. Ray Krolak made a motion to have the DNR put a proposal together to boom shock or do a fish study of Little Siss. Jim Kissinger seconded the motion. All present were in favor.

Mallard Lane report: Chuck Abrams reported that Edgewater did decide to move forward in stages to improve/widen Mallard Lane. The group on Mallard Lane tried to get an exemption to prevent loss of so many trees and to help lower the required state standard width.

Drake Lane Report: Bill Zimmer said nothing would happen for 5-7 years because of a lack of funding available.

Stone Lake grocery store: Currently closed. Jim Kissinger passed out survey/fact sheets about what we as local landowners would like to see done with the grocery store property. Apparently, the past owner of the Winter grocery is possibly interested in investing. There could possibly be small interest loans available for this site through the Office of Economic Development.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 AM

Present: Patrick Corcoran, Del Anderson, Molly Tomczak, Mark Johnson, Rick Gauger, Carol & Chuck Abrams, Jane & Renner Johnston, Leslie Kreofsky, Peter & Marlo Schield, Greg Kissinger, Leslie Fisher, David Cook, Alice & Jim Kissinger, Janet Johnson, Ray & Irene Krolak, Brad Johnson, Karen & Mike Skwira, John Montgomery, Margaret & Armond Schneider and Jeanne Schnack.