

**MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKSHOP**  
**of the**  
**LAKE COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY**  
**July 8, 2020**

The Budget Workshop of the Board of Trustees of the Lake County Water Authority was held at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 8, 2020 in the Lake County Water Authority Administration Building, Conference Room at 27351 State Road 19, Tavares, Florida.

**Members Present-District # Staff Present**

Amy Stone, Chairman (#5)  
Carolyn Maimone, Vice Chair (#3)  
Trampis BonJorn (#2)  
Peggy Cox (#1)  
Keith Farner (At-Large)  
Courtney Stokes (At-Large) 11

Ron Hart, Executive Director  
Dr. Jason Danaher, Water Resources Director Steve Crawford, Water Res. Project Manager  
Ben Garcia, Office/IT Manager  
Tracey Percoco, Financial Analyst Anna Ely, Recording Secretary  
Ben Gugliotti, Land Resources Director via Zoom

A list of others present that signed the attendance roster is filed in the permanent files of the Water Authority.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 11:17 am.

Mr. Hart explained that they could look at the budget in a couple of different ways; with a bird's eye view or a line by line detailed look. He stated that he'll start with a bird's eye view and members of the Board can let him know if there is anything they would like to take a more in-depth look at.

He explained that this is just a draft of the budget and there is wiggle room to move funding around should the Board wish to make any changes. He also noted that he had worked with Chairman Stone to create a wish list of items that members of the Board and staff would like to look at for the upcoming year.

Chairman Stone stated that she wanted to go over a few things before they dove into the budget. She stated that she is 100% against raising the millage. She stated that unfortunately she didn't see any way to lower millage, although she would love to do so.

She noted that the Board had previously given Mr. Hart direction to keep 2 million dollars in the budget for the Lake Yale Project, but knowing DEP's stand at this time, it doesn't appear they will be able to complete that project any time soon.

Chairman Stone explained that considering that, she had worked with Mr. Hart to create a Wish List of projects of different projects that the staff and Board Members would like to see accomplished.

She stated that personally, one of the things she wanted on the list is to add an additional Marine Patrol Deputy. She stated that she had spoken to the Lake County Sheriff yesterday and he was very supportive of having an additional Deputy. She noted that he has asked what her pie in the sky request would be and she explained that would like that if the Water Authority should fund another Marine Patrol Deputy, that he too would add an additional Marine Patrol Deputy that would be funded through his budget.

Chairman Stone asked the Board if they would be receptive to taking one million dollars from the Lake Yale budget and leaving one million as a reserve in the Lake Yale budget. She stated that if they were agreeable, they could then accomplish the first six or seven items on the wish

Budget Workshop Minutes – July 8, 2020

list which would include another deputy and boat for the Marine Patrol. Chairman Stone stated that she is also okay with #11 on the list, which is Community Grants for \$5,000, and noted that if they choose to do #4, they don't have to do #5, as it is included in the cost of #4.

Ms. Cox stated that she is not only on-board with the idea, she is thrilled; she noted that boat traffic on the Clermont Chain has increased significantly and additional deputies are greatly needed.

Ms. Cox asked the existing millage rate and it was noted that it is .3557 mils.

Mr. Farner stated that the increase on traffic on the lakes is tremendous and when the Marine Patrol is out there everyone seems to behave a bit better. He stated that he would like to see two or three more deputies if they could get them, as there is a need for them.

Chairman Stone stated she would like to add additional deputies one year at a time. She suggested adding one this year and look at adding another deputy next year. She noted that there aren't enough boats, so the more we increase deputies the more boats that are needed.

There was discussion regarding Trout Lake and Ms. Stokes suggested the possibility of increasing the amount of funding awarded to Trout Lake this year. It was noted that by increasing our contribution to their education budget, it would free up some of Trout Lake's other funding so they can replace equipment, etc. that was damaged, stolen or destroyed due to recent vandalism.

Eileen Tramontana, Director of Trout Lake Nature Center, spoke about the tremendous increase of visitors to their facility and an increase in their virtual education components, even over last year. She spoke about the damage done to the facility during a recent break-in, noting that several computers, pieces of equipment and displays were either damaged or destroyed and that there was also fire and water damage to be repaired.

It was noted that the funding in the budget is currently set at \$18,500, and it was suggested by members of the Board to increase the funding to \$30,000.

Chairman Stone stated that she had recently met with the Sheriff's Department there was some discussion regarding a new cloud-based camera that is harder to vandalize, and that Trout Lake may want to look into it. She also suggested that the Water Authority also get with Sean Parks and/or the Sheriff's Department to find out more.

Mr. Hart stated that it sounded like the changes the Board were okay with moving one million from the Lake Yale Reserve, add another Marine Patrol Deputy into the budget, and to budget \$30,000 for Trout Lake. He noted that those changes would be updated in the budget and be reflected on the budget at their next meeting.

Mr. Hart stated that he had created a wish list for Board discussion compiling different items that have been suggested by staff and members of the Board, that they might want to add to the budget.

<b>Project Number</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
1	Hickory Point Roadway and Parking Lots Asphalt Coating and Restriping	\$200,000
2	Hickory Point Overflow Parking Center Lane Paving	\$100,000
3	Additional Marine Patrol Boat	\$60,000
4	Hickory Point 9 Boat Ramp Extensions + 3 dock replacements	\$460,000
5	Hickory Point Boat Ramp Floating Dock Replacement	\$60,000
6	Another Marine Patrol Deputy	\$114,475
7	Enclosed Vehicle Garage	\$500,000
8	Replace Cherry Lake Dam	\$900,000
9	Lake Susan Lodge Boat Ramp	\$1,100,000
10	Replace Cherry Lake Dam + add Navigation Lock	\$1,800,000
11	Community + Education Mini Grants	\$5,000.00
	Total	\$5,299,475

### **1. Hickory Point Roadway and Parking Lots Asphalt Coating and Restriping**

It was noted that the roadways and parking lots within the park are in need of recoating and restriping.

### **2. Hickory Point Overflow Parking Center Lane Paving**

Mr. Hart stated that this would be to create an asphalt strip through the parking area adjacent to the soccer field. He stated that due to the erosion of the roadway, one of the water meters have been exposed and is damaging the undercarriage of vehicles when they hit the meter. He explained that although staff fills in the road, with the traffic and the rain, it is continually being eroded and will continue to be a problem, but if they can pave it, that will solve the problem of the water valve box becoming exposed and damaging vehicles.

### **3. Additional Marine Patrol Boat - to provide funding for an additional Marine Patrol boat.**

He explained that at this time they are having to borrow a boat from the City of Tavares when they need to have more deputies on the water.

Ms. Cox noted that there needed to be a boat for each Marine Patrol Deputy. It was stated that while the boat that this one would be replacing has many hours on it, it is still serviceable and with the addition of another deputy and boat, there would be enough boats for each Marine Patrol Deputy.

Chairman Stone stated that if they add one boat and deputy this year, the following year they could add an additional deputy and boat. She stated at if other Board members wanted to fund 2 deputies and 2 boats, she would be in support of that as long as they didn't raise the millage.

Mr. Farner pointed out that they could also move additional money out of the Lake Yale reserve.

Chairman Stone noted that as this is the budget workshop, they can make changes, and pull them back should they decide not to do them, or they can wait and add them in another meeting. She stated that this workshop is where they get to have the most discussion, as the rest of the upcoming meetings are in a more formal setting. She stated that she would speak with the Sheriff again to make sure he would be okay with the addition of two additional deputies funded by the Water Authority rather than just one.

All Board members agreed with adding lines 1 through 6, and line 11 to the budget.

### **4. Hickory Point 9 Boat Ramp Extensions Plus 3 Dock Replacements**

Mr. Hart stated that there are 12 ramps at Hickory Point and only 3 of them are deep draft ramps. He explained that the other ramps become a hazard when water levels are low, as boats can drop off the end of the ramp and can't be pulled out. He stated that because of this they have to close the 9 shallow ramps, leaving only the 3 deep draft ramps available during low water levels.

He explained that this project would be to extend those 9 ramps far enough out into the water so that even in times of drought and low water levels they could be utilized. He noted that a lot of fishing tournaments launch from our location and it really becomes prohibitive when water levels are low.

Mr. Hart also explained that the floating docks are the type that are used residentially rather than being of commercial grade structures. He stated that the docks are very rocky and unstable and are coming apart because of the wave action from the lake.

It was noted that the cost of line 5 is included in the cost of line 4, and they approve line 4, there is no need for a separate line item for line 5.

### **5. Hickory Point Boat Ramp Floating Dock Replacement**

Included in discussion of Item 4.

## **6. Another Marine Patrol Deputy**

Included in discussion of Item 3.

## **7. Enclosed Vehicle Garage**

Mr. Hart stated that we have four bays in the pole barn, but there is still a lot of equipment sitting under temporary shelters and this project would allow for the building of enclosed garage that would hold equipment and protect them from the elements.

## **8. Replace Cherry Lake Dam**

Mr. Hart explained that replacing the Cherry Lake Dam is something that they are going to have to do eventually. He stated that there is money in the proposed budget for the replacement of the Villa City Dam and for the design of the Cherry Lake Dam, but not for the actual replacement of the structure.

## **9. Lake Susan Lodge Boat Ramp**

Mr. Hart explained that the property is up for sale and that purchase of the property is something that they might want to consider if they wanted to create another boat ramp in the South Lake area. He stated that there would be opposition from residents on Lake Minnehaha, as they would not be in favor of increased boat traffic on the lake.

Ms. Cox stated that the property had been rezoned several years ago for condominiums and would have to be rezoned again. She noted that there has always been opposition of an additional boat ramp from the residents on the lake.

Mr. Farner asked to have this topic as an agenda item in the future as he would like a bit more information.

## **10. Replace Cherry Lake Dam and add Navigation Lock**

Mr. Hart explained that another option for the Cherry Lake Dam would be to also add a navigational lock, which would allow for boat traffic to navigate between the Clermont pool and the Villa City pool. He stated that this project would also include the cost of Line 8, to replace the Cherry Lake Dam. He explained that the lock would be an electric lock, to be operated by the boater, and would not be manned. He noted that there would be both support and opposition to this proposal, as although there are many citizens that would be happy with the access, there are also residents in the Villa City/Cherry Lake area who would not be happy with the increased boat traffic.

Mr. Farner stated that he thought they were trying to go to all fixed weirs, and Mr. Hart explained that while the other dam structures are now fixed weirs, Villa City and Cherry Lake have to remain operable and will not be replaced with fixed weirs. Mr. Hart also explained that when the Cherry Lake Dam was initially built, it included an electric boat lift so that boaters could lift their boat out of the water and transfer it to the other side of the dam and as boats got bigger and heavier the lift became a hazard and the lift was removed.

Mr. Farner stated that he would like to look into it and would like a presentation by staff regarding the proposal. Mr. Hart stated that it could be put on the agenda.

Chairman Stone stated that she had texted the Sheriff and he had replied that he was agreeable to the Water Authority adding two Marine Patrol Deputies. Other Board members stated that there is a need for additional deputies and agreed to budgeting for two new deputies at this time. They stated that funding for the additional deputy could come out of the one million left in the Lake Yale Project reserve. It was noted that it can always be removed from the final budget she they decide not to add the additional deputy.

## **11. Community and Education Mini Grants**

Mr. Hart noted that the Board consensus appeared to be to put items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 11 in the agenda, and to double the amounts for items 3 and 6 for the additional deputy.

*The Board took a break from 12:15 pm to 12:30 pm.*

Chairman Stone reconvened the meeting and stated that she had just been on the phone with Commissioner Parks regarding the issues at Scrub Point and whether he would support an ordinance banning alcohol on the property. She noted that it wouldn't ban people from having alcohol on their boat while anchored out from the shore, but it would prohibit the possession of alcohol on the property. She stated that Commissioner Parks had stated that he would support such an ordinance and that he would talk to the County Attorney. She stated that the Water Authority needs to decide what they want in the ordinance.

Mr. Farner asked about the ABC Ag Diversion listed in Section 710-340 on Page 6 and Mr. Hart explained that this was a Water Resources project to move water that comes from the Apopka North Shore and flows around the Lake Jem Sod Farm, where it then flows into a ditch and into the Apopka Beauclair Canal downstream of the NuRF.

Mr. Hart stated that was discussed by the Board a couple of years ago and would allow the Agency to work with the owner of the sod farm to purchase a portion of their property and create a diversion so that the water would then be routed into the lime pit on the sod farm property, which would act as a stormwater treatment facility. Dr. Danaher noted that that line item is for 50% of the projected project cost at this time.

Mr. Farner stated that he would also suggest budgeting more security for the Agency's facilities, especially at Hickory Point. He stated that if there were more cameras and monitors, and people knew they were there; it might possibly deter some of the vandalism.

Mr. Hart noted that Mr. Garcia could incorporate that into the budget. He explained that Mr. Garcia has already installed a camera system inside the pavilion, so we get alerts if there is any movement. He noted that the main problem areas are the pavilion and the restrooms at the swim beach and boat ramp. Board members also suggested signs informing people that they are being recorded.

Mr. Hart explained that one thing they wouldn't see reflected in the budget line items are employee raises. He stated that during the past year the Agency has decreased the overall cost of employee salaries by \$122,000, by replacing higher paid positions with people within the Agency.

He stated that the budget includes a three percent salary increase for each position and explained that historically it has been an across-the-board type of raise with everyone receiving three percent. He stated that he would like the Board's permission to be able to designate a portion of that three percent as a "cost of living" increase, and a portion be to performance/merit based. He stated that management would like to make sure that those go above and beyond are awarded a little bit more.

Mr. Farner stated that while he is okay with a three percent raise, but he would like to subject of performance/merit-based pay as a future agenda item, as that often leads to disaster.

Mr. Hart stated that he would leave it in the budget as it is now, and they could discuss any changes to implementation at the September meeting. Mr. Hart noted that replacement of two Agency vehicles has also been incorporated into the budget. He explained that he and senior staff looked at the vehicle inventory and noted the two main vehicles that need replacing are the old Executive Director 2007 Explorer that leaves people stranded, and the 4-wheel drive pick-up truck that is in very poor condition and can't be operated in 4-wheel drive.

Mr. Hart gave a quick rundown of each of the individual sections of the budget and what is generally covered under section.

Mr. Farner noted that under travel and per diem he wanted to ensure that the Water Authority has someone attending all Fish and Wildlife Board Meetings wherever they are held within the state.

Ms. Cox asked if there were any new expenses associated with NuRF that haven't been discussed and Dr. Danaher explained that costs associated with a new centrifuge and building had been incorporated into the budget and are both part of Part II of the Pegasus Evaluation and Design Project.

Budget Workshop Minutes – July 8, 2020

Ms. Cox also asked about Stormwater Grants and noted that the City of Minneola wasn't listed. Mr. Hart stated that he had put in a call to talk with them and he would let the Board once he has spoken with them.

Mr. Hart stated that there is \$750,000 in the budget for stormwater grants and should the Board wish they could earmark part of that amount for the City of Minneola. The Board agreed that something needed to be done regarding runoff into Lake Minneola.

Mr. Hart explained that in the past the Board had approved a 50/50 stormwater grant for the City of Minneola with \$150,000 being funded by the City and \$150,000 funded by the Water Authority, but the City of Minneola had not followed through on the proposed project. He stated that they can sit down with the City Manager to discuss the possibility of a stormwater project to address the run-off.

He also addressed the changes to the budget layout and explained that staff is working to make it easier to read and understand and is more transparent.

**There were no more questions from the Board and the workshop was adjourned at 1:10 pm.**

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Anna Ely, Recording Secretary

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Gary Cooney, Secretary-Treasurer

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Amy Stone, Chairman