

Fulton Town Board

River residents rip lake district

by Jeff Brown
Reporter staff

Hank Stockwell appeared before the Fulton town board at its monthly meeting on June 11 and presented a petition signed by 68 residents urging the town board to join the Albion, Koshkonong, and Milton town boards in demanding detailed financial information from the Rock-Koshkonong Lake District.

To date, the Fulton and Sumner town boards have declined to join that effort. The Albion, Koshkonong, and Milton town boards maintain that collection and dissemination of the detailed financial information is mandated by state law, which requires lake districts to perform an annual audit of their financial transactions.

Lake district chairman Brian Christianson says the lake district has complied with the audit requirement by conducting an internal audit with the assistance of an outside accountant and by posting financial state-

ments on the lake district website and mailing them to the lake district electors.

"We would like to see a seven-year audit," said Stockwell. "We had hoped that you would support us like Milton, Albion, and Koshkonong. Those town boards want an audit."

Stockwell said the financial information listed on the lake district's website hasn't been updated since January 30. Furthermore, said Stockwell, it doesn't give a clear picture of how the lake district handles its money, it just lists balances in the lake district's checking and savings accounts and segregated accounts for the Indianford dam maintenance and lake improvement projects, balances that total \$884,662.20.

"All that money is there with no explanation of where it's going," said Stockwell. "When they do a report, they don't say how much the attorneys charge per hour, or how many hours they've paid the attorneys." Stockwell was referring to a lengthy legal battle waged by the lake district

against the Department of Natural Resources over who has the authority to set water levels on the Lake Koshkonong.

Board member Michelle Staff wondered about the motives of the petitioners. "Let's say you have the audit, and they find out all the money is where it's supposed to be. It just sounds to me like you're kind of upset at how they're spending it."

Stockwell said that was true. "Everything that's done on the lake really doesn't improve us on the river." But, he said the public has a right to know in more detail how the lake district spends its money, regardless of what it spends it on. "When you're operating with that much public money, it should be more transparent than what it is."

Bob Stange, a member of the town's planning and zoning committee, agreed. When board member Andy Walton, who also sits on the lake district's board, said the defini-

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tion of audit in the relevant state statute is "vague" Stange said "When you're talking eight-hundred to nine-hundred thousand dollars, vague is not good. If it's not being audited, that's dangerous."

Stange asked Walton if the monies in the lake district's dam fund were being invested. "I think all of it is invested," said Walton, "but there's very little return."

Board member Scott Farrington wondered aloud whether the board had the power to compel the lake district to perform an in-depth audit, but said he was troubled by the dollar amounts involved. "I'm guessing a lot of people are wondering either how it's invested or is somebody skimming off the top somewhere. With that much money it could be easily done."

Bill Carter spoke up from the audience said town of Fulton residents felt alienated from the rest of the residents in the lake district, particularly after tussling with the lake district board last year over how high water on the river needed to get before a slow/no-wake order went into effect. "There's a genuine distrust of the lake district, and we don't feel like we're part of it."

"We don't see anything coming down in the money spent except for the dam," said Carter, who added that nobody from the lake district came to help with sandbagging during flooding this past spring. "They hold the meeting every year in Fort Atkinson. Why? So they can load the meeting up?" said Carter. "It's hard for us to get a lot of people there. It's oil and water. You've got the lake, and you've got the river."

Walton said he had placed the petition on the agenda for the lake district board's next meeting on June 24, and that lake district electors would have the opportunity to vote on an in-

depth, independent audit at the lake district's annual meeting on August 10 at Fort Atkinson High school.

Farrington made a motion directing Walton to relay the concern expressed by the petitioners to the lake district board and express that the town board shared those concerns. Chairman Evan Sayre asked for second; after a long pause, Staff seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

In other news, the board approved liquor licenses for the following establishments:

- The Anchor Inn, Wade Inn, Off the Hook Grub and Pub, Dockside Bar and Grill, Emigail's Roadhouse, and Wisconsin Wine and Cheese Chalet (on premises sale and consumption of beer, wine and liquor);

- Comfort Inn (on premises sale and consumption of beer);

- Carl's Shell and Trep's Bait and Tackle (carry-out sales of beer); and

- Fermented Cellars (on premises sale and consumption of wine).

The board approved bartender licenses renewals for 65 people and new bartender licenses for Cassie Lambert, David Lambert, Miranda Lambert, and Michelle Nicholson.

The board also approved game and juke box licenses for the following establishments:

- The Anchor Inn (five gaming machines, one juke box)

- Dockside Bar and Grill (five gaming machines, one juke box)

- Emigail's Roadhouse (three gaming machines, one juke box)

- Off the Hook Grub and Pub (five gaming machines; one juke box); and

- Wade Inn (five gaming machines, one juke box).

The board also approved cigarette-machine licenses for Carl's Shell and Trep's Bait and Tackle.