

Great Sand Lakes Association Annual Meeting 2023

June 24, 2023 – 10:30 a.m.

Minutes of the meeting – Draft 3

Approved at the 2024 Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Great Sand Lakes Association was held at the Harwich Community Center on Saturday, June 24, 2023.

Patsy Lightbown (GSLA Clerk) called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. Patsy stated that Chris Briggs (GSLA President) had requested that she chair the annual meeting. Patsy thanked everyone for attending and expressed that she was thrilled with the number of people in attendance.

Patsy introduced herself, Clerk acting as President, Jim Robichaud, Past President, Bruce Paige, Treasurer, Ann Frechette, who will be giving the Water Quality presentation, Dr. Doug MacGilpin, Cathy Frazier, Vice President acting as Clerk, Margaret Fallon, Dave Callaghan, Past President and Past Treasurer and Chris Briggs, President.

Patsy thanked the members of the Board and their spouses for all the work they do throughout the year. Patsy also welcomed the members of the Association, especially the new owners who were present.

Patsy highlighted some of the work done by the Board throughout the previous year. This included regular monitoring of water quality and maintenance of our beaches by coordinating with the Town of Harwich and other state entities. The Board also updated paperwork for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as required to maintain non-profit status. The Board planned two well-attended social events – the summer picnic and the holiday luncheon. Patsy urged those who had not attended the holiday luncheon in the past, to consider joining this year at DiParma in Yarmouth, to be held on December 2.

The Board also responded to inquiries and comments from members who contacted us via the website. The goal of the Board is keeping members updated with information on protecting our ponds and maintaining our relationships with town leaders.

In addition to the members of the Board, Patsy recognized some of the members of the community for stepping up to help accomplish all that needs to be done in the neighborhood. A few words of thanks were extended to:

Deb Paige – transforming the garden at the GSLA entrance off Rte. 39

Judy Adams – hosting board meetings, among many other helpful tasks

Christina Hagopian, Brian Fry, and Donna Connolly – maintaining area around second flagpole

Dave & Marianne Driskill, and Glenn Bryant – WQ committee

Clinton – webmaster and invasives removal

Sawin family – providing funds for fresh flags

Kathy Robustelli & Bob Smith – maintaining the Pleasant Park beaches

Bob Smith, Christi Odiaga, Carol Dyer, Scott Bard, George Myers, and others who have participated in water quality testing activities

Joe Murray & Sue Egan – donation of the memorial bench on Clearwater beach

Kathy Gorman – maintaining the little library at Clearwater beach

Linda Duke, Carol Dyer, Margie Paist, Sandy Sheehan – helping with annual mailing

There were further neighborhood recognitions from the membership including Anna, Jay Anderson's daughter, who has been painting beautiful rocks and leaving them in mailboxes, and to the Cure family for donating a beautiful tree for Clearwater beach at Christmastime.

Prior to beginning the business portion of the meeting, Patsy welcomed all homeowners, but reminded attendees that only members who have paid 2023 dues may vote, and that each member household has up to two votes.

Minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting

The Minutes of the June 2022 Annual Meeting were approved as submitted.

President's Report

Patsy reported that everyone should have received a letter on or around April 1 from Chris Briggs, President of GSLA, describing a wonderful 2022. He emphasized plans for 2023, which included making sure members understand the schedule for wastewater treatment, and how it will protect our ponds. The reorganization of the website is something Clinton and Cathy Frazier continue to work on, in hopes of making information easier to find. They are also working to make more forms available digitally. We welcome comments and suggestions for improvement. Water quality testing will be expanded both in terms of a longer testing season and in terms of the variety of tests being conducted. We are thankful for the volunteers who have helped in the past and continue to seek additional volunteers. Ann Frechette is working on adding native

plantings on corner of Clearwater and Paradise Path. Ann invited residents who would like to donate plants to contact her.

Treasurer's Report

Bruce presented the Treasurer's report. He commented that most of the Association's income comes from membership dues, followed by donations. Last year, we collected \$22,000 and spent \$19,000. Insurance is our greatest expense followed by beach maintenance. Beach maintenance includes water testing and trash removal at three different beaches. There was also a small fence repair completed at beside the path off Rainbow Way. Overall, there was a surplus of \$3,000, leaving an end-of year cash position of \$24,000. Because it has been a few years since sand has been replaced on the beaches, we may soon need to replenish. Because sand is a rare commodity, it will be costly to replace. We will likely need most of the reserve cash in the next few years to accomplish this. Some funds have also been set aside when tree replacement is needed at the Association beach on Clearwater.

Bruce also mentioned about 1,000 hours of volunteer time that are not reflected in the financial statement. Bruce thanked everyone who has contributed to making Great Sand Lakes the wonderful place it is.

Membership Report

Our current membership is 214 of 238 possible households.

Introduction of New GSLA members:

Irene & Jimmy Najjar – Vacation Lane

Jerry & Donna Casey – Vacation Lane

Ronald Scott and Tracyann Morris-Scott – Carefree Way

Mark and MaryEllen Trombetta – Idle Way

Joyce Crowe – Clearwater Drive

Bonnie Welch – Mockingbird Lane

We welcome and appreciate new members. We also hope to see some new faces on the board of directors!

Deceased Members: Patsy acknowledged the death of the following Great Sand Lakes neighbors. They were honored with a moment of silence.

Bob Philpott

Marion Barnes

Mary Facey

Yves and Odile Lambert

Phil Mantoni

Old Business/New Business:

Ann Frechette provided a presentation on the work being done in our community and across the Cape to protect our ponds. (The presentation will be available on the GSLA website) She began with a regional report. There has been degradation of freshwater and saltwater quality due to excess nutrients, primarily due to leakage from septic systems. Historically, saltwater cleanup has been the regional focus. In the past year, the Cape Cod Commission has started to look at freshwater ponds. They are updating a pond and lake atlas, organizing a pond network resource, and connecting pond groups to funding sources. They have started a data collection project on a group of 50 Cape ponds to determine how topography affects the water quality – GSLA ponds are not included in the sample [NOTE: Information that was subsequently available shows Sand Lake as one of the ponds being monitored]. Ann referred members to the website to read a 2007 study on our GSLA ponds, and how they protect the drinking water supply.

Currently, three types of tests are used to monitor water quality in the Great Sand Lakes ponds. Barnstable County tests for E. coli. The Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) started testing in 2019 for cyanobacteria. GSLA volunteers collect data that are sent to UMASS Dartmouth for review. A review of findings is available on the GSLA website.

Results of our testing show our ponds are very clear. Our water is soft due to the low level of calcium carbonate. Soft water doesn't protect well against changes in acidity, but our ponds have not historically seen issues with acidity.

Over the years, mineral content testing in July and August shows an amount of phosphorus over the threshold for what would promote cyanobacteria. Ann showed a graph of spikes in the phosphorus and explained we don't know reason for spikes. The

measurement of nitrogen also showed excess amounts. Combined with high temperatures, these spikes in nutrients make cyanobacteria growth more likely. Ann explained that cyanobacteria is dangerous to both humans and dogs when the growth is above a low level, and further explained it is at its most toxic level when a mat is dying down. There is currently no statewide mandate for closing a beach because of cyanobacteria, but the state dept of public health recently released a document with recommendations for posting warnings with consistent signage to be used statewide.

Ann described how some pond associations will attempt to treat a pond with alum to remove excess nutrients. However, it is a costly and temporary solution whereby the nutrients bind to the alum and sink to the bottom. These treatments provide only a temporary improvement because the nutrients do not leave the pond.

Ann described two tests that can be performed to check for the presence of cyanobacteria – the stick test and the jar test. The Water Quality Committee has been trained in these two procedures. Ann had handouts available describing the tests, and mentioned a link on the website to a video describing the tests. She explained that the stick test is very simple. First, find a stick and plunge into the scum in question. If the stick comes out fibrous, it is a typical green alga that is non-toxic. If the result is similar to removing the stick from a can of paint, it is suspect and further testing should be done. The jar test requires a sample be placed in a cool, dark place. If gas bubbles rise to the top causing a sediment, it is likely cyanobacteria. If the sediment sinks, it is likely harmless.

Ann stated that the GSLA Board has agreed to pay for extended cyanobacteria testing into the fall as blooms may be more likely to occur due to changing temperatures. The lack of deep freezes during the winter may also contribute to more frequent blooms.

Ann concluded that the big picture is that excess minerals need to be addressed to help avoid cyanobacteria issues. The best way to accomplish this is through the sewer project. She noted that the GSLA did a great job as a neighborhood advocating for sewerage along Queen Anne Road. We were on the schedule for 2048, and have now been moved up to 2026. It is an important change because 70-75% of excess phosphorus and nitrogen in the ponds are coming from septic systems. Harwich has a contract with Chatham to process the sewage. Harwich has been paying for this processing but because of the limited sewerage in Harwich, it has not been sending the expected amount of raw sewage for treatment. Harwich received more than \$600,000 of funding to complete the sewerage plan, and the town is bound by a federal requirement to complete the project on time. Any potential lawsuits or town issues should not affect the Queen Anne sewerage schedule. Ann gave credit to the Water Quality Committee: Clinton, Glenn Bryant, Marianne Driskill, Dave Driskill and Dave Callaghan who worked to help get this plan in place.

Other activities of the Water Quality Committee include the organization of a Weed Watchers Workshop provided by the Massachusetts Lakes and Ponds Program, scheduled for July 10, 2023 in the Harwich Community Center. Participants will learn to

identify invasives around our ponds. She thanked Clinton and Glenn who have been doing the invasives removal, and Dave Callaghan who measures the sediment in the storm drains. The committee also does erosion monitoring, and has begun to add plantings to slow erosion.

Ann suggested that members can also do their part by maintaining septic systems, identifying and removing invasives (or asking a committee member to come and do it for them), building up a barrier garden by planting plants with deep roots to remove minerals from the soil before they enter the ponds, or volunteering to do water quality sampling for GSLA or APCC.

Ann proposed guest speakers for next year's annual meeting could include Dan Pelletier, Harwich Water Superintendent, to address the status of the sewer project and/or someone knowledgeable in the design and building of barrier gardens. She then asked if anyone had questions

Q: It was a very thorough presentation. Will it be available on the website?

Ann noted that she will be posting the exact presentation on the website.

Q: Did they use ARPA Grant Services as a match for the grants? Christi Odiaga also wanted to point out that many GSLA properties will not be connected to the sewer system, so it is important to continue monitoring septic systems.

Ann doesn't think the grant was part of the matching. She also agreed that the sewer project is only on the Queen Anne side of the ponds for 2026. Because of that, the rest of us need to be vigilant about what happens to our septic systems. The sewer does not solve all our problems. We need a comprehensive neighborhood plan.

Q: Has the board considered prohibiting fertilizers?

Ann mentioned that at the most recent town meeting, the Town of Harwich voted down such a proposal. Jim Robichaud added that we as a board do not have the authority to make such a mandate. He stated that we can recommend that members limit detergents and items that Christi mentioned in the hopes that people take the recommendations. Margaret mentioned that we are not the kind of association that will dictate what you can and can't do on your property.

Q: Is there a list of best practices? Could we distribute a list of recommendations?

Last year the Water Quality Committee produced a bookmark with their recommendations, and it was sent with the annual mailing. Extras are available, and Margaret also adds the bookmarks to the new member packets.

Q: Could the spikes in nutrients be related to water system flushing?

Dave Callaghan said that the groundwater levels showed no relation to the spikes. One connection we did see was a bloom appearing after seven inches of rain. Dave pointed out that flushing of hydrants is done long before the summer season. Dave mentioned he thought the spikes were more likely caused by rainstorms.

New Business

The picnic is scheduled for August 5 with a rain date of August 6. Patsy remarked that the grillmasters always do a fabulous job at the picnic. In addition, Clinton contributes ribs, and the side dishes and desserts are always amazing. The boat races are fun every year, and the kayak races are now split into a younger group and an older group due to high participation numbers. Last year we experienced very hot temperatures, but it was still a great time.

The holiday party is December 2. Patsy suggested it might be worth making a special trip for this wonderful event.

Updating the Website

Cathy is working with Dave and Clinton to allow members the option to pay annual dues through PayPal, and to make any updates to their personal information on line. The on-line Boat Sticker process is about ready to go live on-line. The Board would like to remind the membership that all boats should be registered. There is no cost to do so. It is important that your boat be registered because in the event of a float-away boat, the Board can track down the owner. We do not require or encourage registration for short-term renters. By November, all boats should be removed from the GSLA beaches.

Q: How many boats can be registered?

There is no limit to the number of boats a homeowner may register.

Q: Do I need to register my floats?

The town requires that anything anchored to the bottom of the pond must be registered with the town, but not through our GSLA boat registration process.

Election of Board of Directors

Patsy explained that the GSLA renews the Board of Directors every year when members' terms expire. One of those members is Bruce Paige, and he has chosen not serve again. Patsy thanked Bruce for his service. Chris Briggs and Cathy Frazier will each be running for another term. Patsy asked a prospective board member, Pam Sawin, to introduce herself. Pam stated that she is a resident of Foxborough and Restabit Road. Pam grew up in Rhode Island where she enjoyed both freshwater and saltwater activities. She came to the Cape in the late 1970s. She has lived in Great Sand Lakes now for 25 years, and enjoys spending time here with her children and

grandchildren. She is a retired CPA and has also served as Treasurer of several non-profit organizations. She looks forward to bringing that experience to the board. She thanked everyone for their consideration.

Patsy asked if there were any nominations from the floor, and there were none. The election of Chris Briggs, Cathy Frazier, and Pamela Sawin to a term ending June 30, 2026 was confirmed by acclamation.

Election of Treasurer and Clerk:

The President and Vice President are chosen from within the Board. It is the responsibility of the annual meeting to elect the Treasurer and Clerk. Pam Sawin was elected to the Board and was confirmed as Treasurer. Patsy was confirmed as Clerk. Both were affirmed by the membership.

Questions from the Membership:

There were no further questions from the membership. Ann mentioned that the Board proposes to revise the way we do beach clean up. Rather than designate a particular day or days for cleanup, it is suggested that a committee be formed for each of the beach areas. Each committee will be made up of people who live near one of the GSLA beaches and a chair will be chosen for each area. The cleanup committee for each beach will be responsible for removing trash and debris, not changing any ecology. Any concerns or anything that may seem risky to the pond would require contact with the board first. Ann will be sending an email with information to those who have volunteered.

Ann also mentioned the possible formation of a Social Committee. GSLA currently plans the yearly picnic and holiday party, but there are opportunities to add further social events, including trips or social gatherings. If there is any interest in this, please contact a member of the Board.

Meeting was adjourned at 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted

Cathy Frazier, Acting Clerk