

Lake Wylie Marine Commission
March 27, 2023
Clover Community YMCA – Community Room



Commissioners Present: Vice Chairman Ray Webber (York County)
Commissioner Brad Thomas (Gaston County)
Commissioner Dan Hartley (Gaston County)
Commissioner Sam Perkins (Mecklenburg County)
Commissioner Smitty Hanks (Gaston County)
Commissioner Quay Williford (York County)
Commissioner Dan Mullane (Mecklenburg County)

Commissioners Absent: Hunter Wilson, Chairman, A.W. Bill Beers, Secretary Treasurer

Staff Present: Neil Brennan, Executive Director; Chris Clark, Legal Counsel
Alice Flowers, Administrative Assistant

Meeting Minutes

Item 1 – Welcome

Vice Chairman Ray Webber called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and welcomed everyone present.

Item 2 – Approval of Minutes

Vice Chairman Webber asked if any changes need to be made to the February 27, 2023 minutes. Hearing none, the February minutes were approved by general consensus.

Item 3 – Approval of Agenda

Vice Chairman Webber asked if any changes need to be made to the March 27, 2023 agenda. Commissioner Hanks requested a discussion about Duke Energy Fishing Habitat Enhancement grant funding be added to the agenda for discussion. Vice Chairman Weber moved to adopt the March 27, 2023 agenda as amended. Commissioner Perkins seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Item 4 – Public Comment

Mr. Kelly Stick represented himself as a homeowner in the Belmont, NC side of Lake Wylie. He is also a guest of Commissioner Hanks and supports the Habitat Enhancement funding effort. Mr. Stick moved to the area about three years ago for the view of the lake and to fish. He struggles to find a place to fish because of the lack of a good habitat and/or lily pads for fishing. Should funding become available, Mr. Stick is willing to offer his time and effort to help develop a habitat enhancement if the equipment and products are available.

Item 5 – Stakeholder Reports

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) – Officer Joye reported that there has been a lot of activity at Papa Docs. Boaters and jet skiers are getting an earlier than usual start on the lake as the CMPD has noticed an unusually high level of activity with more people renting boats and jet skis. Thus far the CMPD has stopped a few people due to minor violations on the water. The stops are mostly due to the lack of knowledge of the No-Wake Zone policy and for not wearing their life jackets properly.

Officer Joye mentioned that the CMPD has ordered and received the medical equipment, refurbished bags as well as the check from the Lake Wylie Marine Commission. The CMPD much appreciates the support.

- Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office – No report was given.
- Tega Cay Police Department – No report was given.
- Mecklenburg County ABC Board Law Enforcement – No report was given.
- NC Wildlife Resources Commission – No report was given.
- SC Department of Natural Resources – No report was given.
- US Coast Guard-Sector NC – No report was given.
- Mecklenburg County Land Use Environmental Service – No report was given.

Gaston County Police Department (GCPD) – Sergeant Knupp reported that he is working on a plan for the southwest boat landing when the new beach opens. To his knowledge the new beach will be in Gaston County's jurisdiction, which means that the GCPD will be handling service calls for the beach. To Sergeant Knupp's understanding, there will be no lifeguards at this beach. Since the GCPD has never dealt with anything like this before, they are not sure of what to anticipate once the beach opens. Sergeant Knupp plans to connect with someone at Duke Energy that deals with public swimming areas. There will be signs warning that there are no lifeguards on duty. Belmont will assist the GCPD in servicing the beach area.

York County Sheriff's Office (YCSO) – Lieutenant Clark followed up from last month regarding the cars in the water near the dam. He talked with Sergeant Knupp and they are pushing the operation to remove the cars until June 2023 when they will have more help and warmer water. They have a mid-June training scheduled for the diving teams for their standard monthly training. There will be a full day operation to pull the cars out of the water.

US Coast Guard Auxiliary (USCGA) – Ms. Lisa Spencer reported that inspections are underway. They will be participating in The Rotary Club of Lake Wylie "Paddle For The Cure" event that is scheduled for April 15th.

Duke Energy – Mr. Kermitt Taylor reported that the lake level is still at 97.2, still in no-flow low-flow protocol, and no draught. There have been no dredges approved since the February meeting. He provided an update on access areas due to the construction. The Southpoint parking lot will open permanently on Friday, March 31, 2023. The beaches are scheduled to open on Memorial Day weekend.

The Allison Creek access area is still under construction and there is no projected date as to when it will open. Depending on construction delays, it could be ready to open by this summer.

The Fish and Tailrace access at Mountain Island Lake, near the dam, will remain closed for the next two to three years (2026) or until the work is complete.

Update on Wateree Dam project is going smoothly with a projected completion date around March/April 2024.

Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation (CRF) – Executive Director John Searby reported that they received the check from LWMC for the swim guide sites sponsorship. They will be adding three (3) new sites to Lake Wylie at the new Swim Beaches at Southpoint, one right above the Dam in South Carolina, and one at Catawba Creek near Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden in North Carolina. There will be a total of 11 sites on Lake Wylie for this summer.

Reminder that harmful algae bloom season is approaching and be on the lookout if you're out in the water. If you see anything that looks like green floating items that don't belong there, please let the folks at CRF know.

CRF received three boxes of PFDs that were donated to them. They will pass them on to law enforcement to distribute out to boat launches.

Mr. Searby Introduced the new South Fork Watershed Manager, Ambar Torres Molinari. Ambar recently completed her master's degree at North Carolina State University and her area of expertise is in the American Eel. She will be working primarily over the next 12 to 18 months on developing the South Fork Protection Restoration plan, which will identify projects in the South Fork Watershed that can improve water quality. CRF will be reaching out to the LWMC and other Stakeholders to get feedback on issues that are important such as restorations and land conservation projects.

It was asked if CRF had any information on the spillway on the Armstrong Ford Dam project. Mr. Searby replied that the building studies have been completed and formerly submitted to the cities of Belmont and Cramerton in Gaston County. Cramerton will take the lead because it is in their jurisdiction. They've identified state legislators to contact regarding getting funds that are available from the Federal down to the State level. LWMC asked to receive a copy of the study when it has been released to the public.

TowBoatUS – Logan Thomas reported that since the last meeting, they've had 34 calls for assistance: 32 routine calls and two sunken vessel recoveries. There have been requests to have SPLASH at events:

- 1) The Alzheimer Paddle for the Cure, sponsored by the Rotary Club at Camp Thunderbird on April 15th.
- 2) The Red Fez Club Children's event, sponsored by the America's Boating Club on May 20th.

Since the last meeting, TowBoatUS placed five new buoys, one at Buster Boyd Bridge on the North Carolina downstream side of the bridge, three at McDowell Park Riverpoint area, and one at the lower Armstrong Bridge. They will also be replacing buoys at the 85 Bridge location and the Railroad Bridge location.

Mr. Thomas reported that some danger buoys and channel markers are out of place or missing. Executive Director Brennan requested a list of the problem areas so he can forward the information to the appropriate North Carolina and/or South Carolina agency that is responsible for these aids to navigation.

Item 6 - Support for SC1 Boating Safety Group Follow Up

No report. Secretary Treasurer Beers was not present.

Item 7 - Catawba Sail and Power Squadron Children's Outing

No report. Secretary Treasurer Beers was not present.

Item 8 - Buoy Tracking Follow Up

Commissioner Perkins indicated that he will be following up with Mr. Logan Thomas of TowBoatUS regarding a PowerPoint presentation he wants to present at the April meeting.

Item 9 - Buoys and Buoy Maintenance Update

TowBoatUS reported that more cable and buoys are needed. Commissioner Hanks is to assist in ordering the needed gear.

Item 10 - Treasurer's Report

Vice Chairman Weber indicated that the budget report is in the March meeting minutes packet for review.

Item 11 - Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Brennan reported that:

No-Rise Certification

Senator Tillis' staff and Senator Budd's staff have responded to the LWMC request to investigate the applicability of the federal no-rise certification law to dock building on Lake Wylie.

Handouts

The pamphlets we hand out at events have been updated and reprinted.

Catawba-Wateree Water Management Group

I will represent LWMC at the day-long 2023 CWWMG Water for All Summit in Hickory on March 29th. The topic this year is “Balancing the Basin.”

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Application

HDR, the engineering firm shepherding the FERC application through the process for the City of Belmont, needs to conduct a site visit to respond to inquiries from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality regarding shore stabilization. These are the last two agencies to which responses are required before the FERC application can move to the last phases of approval.

LWMC Newsletter input

Please send any desired topics for inclusion in the newsletter to Executive Office Brennan.

Item 12 - Administrator’s Report

No report at this time.

Item 13 - Public Relations Report

Commissioner Perkins spoke with Laura Rabell regarding the website. She will provide Commissioner Perkins with her maintenance packet. There is some outdated information on the website that needs to be updated.

Item 14 - Announcement

Garibaldi Festival in Belmont on April 29. Volunteers are needed.
RiverFest 2023 is on May 13th from 11am – 4pm.

Additional Item: Duke Energy Fishing Habitat Enhancement - Commissioner Hanks informed the committee that Duke Energy has grant money available for habitat enhancement projects. Application opens on May 1 and the deadline to apply is July 31. After further discussion, Commissioner Hanks made a motion to proceed with the development of crafting a proposal for Duke Energy Habitat Enhancement funding program. Commissioner Perkins Seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Item 15 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm.