

**Public Information Meeting** of the Town of Chester Town Board was held on **July 13, 2016** at 7:00 pm at the Town of Chester Municipal Center, 6307 State Route 9, Chestertown, New York.

**Roll Call:** Supervisor Craig Leggett, Edna Wells, Mike Packer, Steve Durkish, Karen DuRose and Attorney for the Town, Robert Hafner.

**Formation of Friends Lake Park:**

Bob Hafner gave an overview of the process for forming a special tax district. A subpart of the town, a geographical area is a district, every property within that area will be assessed and taxed. All the tax money collected is held by the town separate from other money only to be use for the purpose of the district. The attorney advises a petition with a significant majority, two thirds. The Comptroller's Office oversees the process. The Town cannot spend money for the formation of a district until a resolution is passed, which is subjected to a permissive referendum. An engineer needs to prepare a map, plan and report to be reviewed by attorneys. Then the engineer prepares a final map, plan and report to be filled with the Town Clerk. The Town Board will then hold a public hearing. If the Board chooses to move forward they would pass a resolution forming the district subjected to permissive referendum. Only property owners vote. If you have two properties you only get one vote. If there are two property owners they both will get one vote.

**Supervisor Leggett presented a power point presentation, which include the following:**

**Purpose of Meeting:** The purpose of the meeting is to hear the concerns and ideas of Friends Lake Property Owners in regard to the creation of an Aquatic Plant Control District.

**Friends Lake Property Owner Questions:**

**Question:** Does the Town have experience in the areas of prevention and abatement of invasive aquatic species?

**Answer:** Yes

**Question:** How large will the District's Fund Balance be allowed to grow to?

**Answer:** The purpose of the District is to be able to combat invasive aquatic species when they become present in Friends Lake. The goal will be to accrue a sufficient amount to carry out initial remediation work in order to keep the infestation at a controllable level.

**Question:** Will the Town seek to purchase property on Friends Lake to establish a beach or public boat launch?

**Answer:** The Town of Chester has no plans to establish public access on Friends Lake.

**Question:** When is the best time to determine an access point into the lake for the abatement vendors and contractors if abatement is ever needed?

**Answer:** Access to the lake for management purposes will need to be established as part of the process in the formation of the District.

**Question:** Can money from the taxes collected for the District be used by the Town for purposes other than what the District is created for or allowed to do by NYS law?

**Answer:** No

**Question:** Who decides the amount of the budget for the District and how it is to be spent?

**Answer:** The Town Board of Chester is ultimately responsible for deciding and managing the budget of the District. The Town Board listens to the taxpayers and their concerns and takes their ideas into consideration when developing budget priorities.

**Question:** Do you have a sense of what is the approximate cost to hire a team of divers to hand harvest for a week and how much of an area can they typically cover?

**Answer:** In 2016, a 3 person diving team cost \$7,480 per week. The amount they harvest depends upon the time of year and density of growth. This year, in Schroon Lake, a 4 week program provides sufficient control but in Loon Lake a 10 week program is needed to get growth to a manageable level.

**Question:** What are the ways property can be taxed to fund the District budget? When does it need to be decided which method will be used?

**Answer:** There are two ways: ad valorem and benefit (flat rate). The method to be used will be determined during the process of District formation.

**Public Comment:**

Tony Taverni spoke on behalf Friends Lake Property Owners Association, asked the bench marks set by the Town Board would stay in place. The bench marks being 50% of property owners and 50% of the assessed value. The FLPOA has spent a lot of time, energy and money on the map, plan and report. Who is in charge? Who is accountable?

Al Muench, member of the FLPOA, remarked the FLPOA has maintained the dam from dues paying members. 45% of the property owners are not members of FLPOA.

Tom Parent spoke in favor of the formation of a tax district. A flat fee is equal to everyone using the lake. The water quality is important to everyone. It doesn't matter the value of your property.

Bruce France spoke about surveying the lake to find invasive species. The key is constant surveillance, training and education. A flat tax is regressive and a tax rate is progressive.

Michelle Blair spoke in favor of the formation of a tax district and its importance of being proactive, not reactive. Michelle is in favor of a flat tax because everyone enjoys the lake equally.

Jim Smiley thanked the lake association for maintaining the lake and spoke in favor of a flat tax. Everyone enjoys the lake. A cap should be set on the amount of money.

Frank Cappabianca, FLPOA President, stated the number of properties owned by members of FLPOA represent about 60% of the total number of properties to be included in the district. Of that 60% two thirds are in favor the creation of a tax district. If you look at the total number of

property owners (351 properties) involved over 50% are in favor. This represents over 60% of the assessed value.

David Kadish said we know invasive species exist and we need a financial mechanism to share in the cost of this problem. David asked that the Town does not delay in the formation of the district.

Steve Reznitsky is in favor of the district. It creates a reserve that is fair.

Harry Disch is in favor of the Town establishing a tax district. Harry asked that a steering committee be formed of FLPOA members and nonmembers.

John Daly is on the dam committee and a FLPOA member spoke in favor of the district. He feels this would get the nonmembers to become more involved.

John Duffy asked if the FLPOA paid for the map, plan and report up front would it be reimbursed? Mr. Hafner replied that no reimbursements could be made. John is in favor of the district. He believes property owners on the lake use the lake more than lake rights owners.

Thomas Kingsly asked for a moment of silence for the Dallas police officers. Thomas asked if the district could be run by a commission like a fire district. Mr. Hafner said no. He is in favor of a flat tax.

John Asiello said all it takes is carelessness to have species.

Linda Muench does not want to see the district not be formed because Loon Lake Park District needs money to fight the invasive species they already have. Linda asked if the fund could be used for any invasive species. Mr. Hafner answered, any plant.

Richard Sweeny asked if the money could only be used to combat invasive species? Mr. Hafner replied, aquatic plants inside the district. Richard asked if dead people could vote? Mr. Hafner stated, dead people cannot vote.

John Pellettier is in favor of the district. To spend a few dollars a year to protect the value of our lake, ad valorem is reasonable. John asked if there an advisory committee about how the funds are set up? How is the Town going to have access to the lake?

Judy Mooney supports a flat tax. The lake is the lake to everyone. It is hard to judge how much the lake means to each individual. She is not aware of a property losing its value due to invasive species.

Tom Flatley wants to see it done. Once the fund is setup the amount of tax can be adjusted yearly.

Mary VanLeuvan stated the best people to protect the lake are the home owners. Mary asked how many votes do you get? Mr. Hafner replied, if your name is on multiple properties, you get

one vote. If you are a corporation you get one vote. If multiple names are on a parcel, each person gets a vote.

Robert DeLuke, past FLPOA, strongly endorsed forming the district.

Larry Estel spoke about community. Larry asked if the zoning and planning boards will have an impact on the district? Friends Lake is a special place!

Supervisor Leggett thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 8:46 pm.

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