

Meeting Summary for OLIA Annual Meeting

Aug 30, 2024 06:48 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada) ID: 827 6801 0404

Quick recap

Mark Millspaugh, Board members and Committee Chairs reviewed old business, new business, activities of various committees with in-depth discussion on water quality data from the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment program (CSLAP), Sewer system and maintenance, Ice-Eater policies, and new Oquaga.org website.

Ron Akel and Barbara Marko announced their retirement from the board. All gathered recognized and thanked Ron and Barbara for their many years of service and dedication to the OLIA community.

Next Steps/Follow-ups:

- Mark to prepare cost estimates and submit plans to town for the outlet dredging project.
- Water quality trend analysis to be published on the Oquaga.org website.
- Andrew to provide names of fishing 1tournament winners for publication to the website.
- Board members to continue monitoring town board and planning board meetings regarding short-term rental regulations.
- Lake residents to submit permit applications for 2025 shoreline work as soon as possible.
- Mark will request that Scott Conklin share the septic tank pump-out spreadsheet for potential posting on the website.
- Larry to provide information on hemlock woolly adelgid treatment for publishing on the Oquaga.org website.
- Board to investigate grant opportunities for stormwater management enhancements.
- Board will discuss the request to set a firm date or date range for lake lowering and post outcome on Oquaga.org website.
- Board will investigate placing excess funds in 3-Month high yield CD
- Chris Mowry to set up Zoom meetings for website orientation sessions.

OLIA Summary

Mark Millspaugh opened the 2024 meeting of the Oquaga Lake Association at 7PM. The meeting was attended by 34 households were present meeting the quorum requirements. Mark waived the formal reading of the past meeting minutes, noting they were available online.

Marie presented the [treasurer's report](#), highlighting new expenses including the new website and a donation to the Eastern Broome EMT. Treasurer's report will be uploaded to the website

No new OLIA members were introduced at this year's meeting.

Community-Building Activities and Committee

Mark discussed the activities of various committees, highlighting the need for continued support and local involvement, particularly in attending town board meetings. He also acknowledged challenges with community events over the last few years due to the closure of Scott's and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mark, Molly and others proposed several community-building activities for the upcoming summer. These included a casual event for kids, a game night for teenagers, and a cocktail party for adults, lake cleanup day as well as potentially resurrecting past events like ice cream socials, boat parades.

Mark emphasized the need for additional community support in organizing these events. Please see any of the Committee Chairs or Board Members to get involved.

Water Quality Committee:

Leo Race presented the water quality data from the State Citizen Statewide Lake Assessment program, emphasizing the good water quality in Lake but expressing concerns about nutrient levels. Leo drew trend lines across the data set for the past decade highlighting a decrease in clarity, surface water temperature, and an increase in deep water temperature over the period. He also indicated a trend of decreasing water clarity and increasing algae growth, as well as rising levels of phosphorus and nitrogen. Leo cautioned that if these trends persist, the lake could shift to a mesotrophic state, negatively impacting its water quality.

Leo urged the residents to take preventive measures like not fertilizing lawns to avoid this scenario. He noted that the Board is collaborating with the town to investigate the sewer system infrastructure which is also a source of nutrients. Leo reminded members of the horrible, polluted state of the lake in 1989 and emphasized that we do not want to return to that condition.

Mark discussed the ongoing monitoring of water quality, particularly in relation to the sewer system and the impact of intense rainfall we've been seeing over the last few years. He underscored the need for cooperation from property owners to implement measures to prevent adding nutrients to the lake. For example watering lawns with recirculating lake water using an inexpensive pump. This approach uses the nutrients already in the lake water to enrich soil.

There were questions about opening the dam to manage the water level when large storms are forecasted to better manage the water level. Gary mentioned that we do open the gate in anticipation of weather but in some circumstances this is not advisable. In extremely heavy rainfall the outflow current will be very strong and there is a probability that debris can block the gate open. If this were to occur it would be extremely dangerous for a diver to attempt clearing the gate. The risk then is over-draining the lake.

Fishing Committee:

Kurt Acker shared updates on the stocking program for the lake. Last year we started a "perch pot" to stock the lake where we released 2500 perch. A school of perch were spotted earlier in the year which is encouraging. This spring we released \$2K worth of Brown and rainbow trout. Someone mentioned seeing an Albino trout from last years release.

Andrew Millspaugh provided a report on the Fishing Derby this summer. There were 13 participants. First place was a catfish, which was caught with hot dog bait! Second place was a

15" Bass, and 3rd Place went to an 11 inch trout! We will post the names of winners to the Oquaga.org website.

Membership and Welcome Committee:

Mark discussed the importance of the Membership and Welcome Committee and their role in fostering participation with the association. The goal is to help new owners appreciate the value of the association and work to get them engaged with the community. Another aspect of this group is to help homeowners who have not paid dues understand how they are benefit from the association's efforts. Benefits far exceed the \$100 dues! It would be good to see renewed efforts with this committee.

Water Safety and Boating Committee:

Mark led the discussion covering swimming safety, boat operator certificates, safe boating practices.

There were instances of folks swimming across the lake without a spotter or a swimming buoy. This is an extremely dangerous practice. If a swimmer cramps in the middle of the lake without any safety resources, it could be deadly. Always have a spotter or a swim buoy for safety!

Beginning January 1st New York State requires anyone operating a boat to have a boating safety certificate. Boaters must always carry this certificate with them when operating a boat. The certification course is free and available via Boat US (<https://www.boatus.org/free>).

All motorboat must adhere to lake rules which require operating in a counterclockwise direction. There is a no wake/5MPH rule after sunset and before 10AM in the morning. There were at least two incidents this year. First, a fishing boat (not fishing) running at speed in a clockwise direction. This is dangerous and disorienting for boaters running in the correct direction on the lake. In this instance the operator of a boat towing a skier yelled out to the offending boat and they eventually changed direction. It is important if you see something say something. The second instance was a boat towing a tuber after sunset (it was quite dark). In this case they were violating the no wake rules but most importantly it is extremely dangerous if a tuber/skier goes into the water – it is very difficult to locate someone in the water in the dark. Please make sure renters and family members are aware of and follow the rules.

History Committee:

Mark led the discussion. There is currently no one leading the History Committee if anyone is interested, please let us know. There has generally been strong interest in preserving the history of the lake. Helen Crowley and Ginger McGinnis put together a 2" thick binder of Oquaga History years ago. Barbara Marko has also collected a lot of documents from folks around the lake as well. There has been talk of digitizing this material in the past and it would be great if someone would be interested in undertaking this.

Communications Committee:

Chris Mowry presented the new website, Oquaga.org, which has replaced the old, static website with a community-based platform. The new site allows for better communication and interaction between lake residents and the board, with features such as sending alerts, submitting questions, and publishing news articles. The new website requires homeowners to

register for access to "protected" areas of the site like the Homeowner Directory. Chris offered to set up Zoom meetings for an orientation of the new website for folks who are interested.

There is also a Facebook group for OLIA the plan is for both sites to co-exist - each has a role in improving communication and engagement across the lake community.

Oquaga.org will be the "official" site representing OLIA board communications. As part of having this new platform for communication the plan is to establish a more formal communication committee to establish ground rules for official communication and to get more people involved in engaging with the lake community.

Chris invited interested individuals to participate in a communications committee to monitor and manage the website's content.

Sewer Committee:

Mark discussed the condition and future of the 40-year-old sewer system in the community. He highlighted that the system needs significant repair or even replacement, and that a health assessment is underway, with the results expected by spring. The assessment will evaluate aspects of the sewer system that may be leaking and its impact on water quality.

The current system, which includes a settling tank and a pumping tank, is outdated and in need of modernization. He suggested that the town should consider using more efficient grinder pumps, which are leak-proof and require less maintenance. Mark also mentioned that the town sewer district is facing financial constraints and has been tapping into its reserve fund to cover costs. The town has been proactive in seeking grants. It is important for our community to be involved in decision making.

Questions were raised about the settling tank pump out schedule. Several residents expressed lack of awareness about the need for pump out and were curious if their tanks had ever been pumped out. The sewer district does inspect and pump the tanks, they typically do not inform the homeowners when this occurs. A request was made for the town to provide a document so residents can see when their tank was pumped out.

Old Business:

Ice Eater Use and Management:

Kurt Acker addressed the concerns surrounding the use of ice eaters on the lake, highlighting the potential risks to winter recreation, water quality and animal safety. Kurt highlighted the Ice-Eater policy and that last year the community overwhelmingly approved taking the issue to the town to help with policy enforcement.

The town held a public meeting to understand the issues related to ice-eaters. During the town meeting it was noted that homeowners that participated in the discussion, on both sides of the issue, expressed concern for health and wellbeing of the lake. The town is evaluating options which include requiring permitting, inspections or bans. The timeframe for resolution is unknown.

There was quite a bit of discussion on the topic including where there are a number of ice-eaters in close proximity large bodies of open water occur. There was discussion that

"bubblers" were preferable to ice-eaters due to ability for better proximity control. Leo and Koen emphasized the critical importance of using a thermostat and timer for effective ice management (these devices are inexpensive and available on Amazon). Kurt mentioned how much of a shame it is that folks running them did not work together on solutions before getting to the point of having to get the town involved. He also mentioned not supporting their usage over liability concerns if, God forbid something terrible ever happens as a result of their use.

Lake Lowering:

Mark discussed the lake lowering that will occur in 2025. Homeowners who intend to do dock or shore work need to have appropriate Permits in place with Town, DEC and potentially Army corps of engineers. Get everything in place now in preparation for next year. State agencies are understaffed, planning boards only meet periodically so planning ahead is critical. The lake is typically lowered late October, early November.

A request was made to establish a hard date for lake lowering so that homeowners could provide their contractors with a specific start date. It was noted that weather has a significant impact on drainage rate and this is a volunteer effort. The Board will discuss and post an response on the Oquaga.org website.

A request was made to lower the lake through the entire winter instead of for just one month. The primary issue with this is that the lake is spring fed and there is a risk that by waiting too long the lake will not fill to its capacity.

There have been requests to lower the lake every year for the entire winter. This is not possible due to the deed restrictions.

Rental Properties:

The topic of short-term rentals has been brought up during the last few years. There is no issue with homeowners who want to rent their properties. We do want homeowners who rent to manage their properties and tenants appropriately. In general, what we want to avoid is corporate ownership of properties where the sole intent is short term rentals.

The Town of Sanford is looking into short term rental laws. We believe they are looking at issues like registering tenants and ensuring that owners are nearby and can be reached. If you have an interest in this topic you should get engaged with the Town/Planning board.

New Business:

Dam Maintenance and Outlet Dredging:

The lake outlet needs to be dredged due to build up of sediment. The town has been notified and we are in the process of getting permits in place. There is a reasonable amount of planning and expense that goes into this project. The expense is unknown at this point but we have funds in reserve to cover any anticipated expenses. Mark M is contributing his time and expertise to help us through the permitting process (at no charge to OLIA).

Tree Protection and Removal:

Mark reminded folks of the issue with Ash trees (Ash bores). They will all succumb to the disease and die. It is far less expensive to remove the trees before they are dead because crews can climb and de-limb the trees. Once they are dead they require a crane be brought in for removal.

Mark also brought up the Hemlock woolly adelgid infestation. Most of the Hemlock trees around the lake are infested. If not treated the trees will eventually succumb and die. Larry Tremonti has effectively treated several of his hemlock trees using a treatment, which injects insecticide into the trunk, and is approved for use near water. We will post information on Oquaga.org for those interested.

Remembrances: Doris Scott and Gail Schneider passed this year. Please see additional information on oquaga.org.

Election of Board Members:

Kurt Acker, Lil DePietro, Marie Davenport, Koen Gieskes whose terms expired this year agreed to continue for a new term and were nominated.

Ron Akel and Barbara Marko announced their retirement from the board. Ron and Barbara have served for many years on the board and were recognized by the membership for their dedication and service. Their departures created two openings on the board. Dave Paparoski and Chris Mowry were nominated to fill the vacancies.

A motion to accept the board slate was made and seconded and approved by the membership.

OLIA Meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

OLIA Board of Directors Meeting to appoint officers:

Attending: Marie D, Gary H, Mark M, Koen G, Kurt A, Paul H, Leo R, Chris M, Dave P, Molly M

Absent: Lil D,

As required by the By-Laws, the Board of Directors met following the general meeting for the appointment of Officers which resulted in the following appointments:

- Mark as President
 - Gary as Vice President
 - Marie as Treasurer
 - Chris as Secretary
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**Oquaga Lake Improvement Association
Annual Membership Meeting
August 30, 2024**

Sign-In Sheet

Name	Address
Nilsen & Hoff	46 Hanson Rd
Sharon Laing	56 Hanson
Tremonti	70 Hanson
C. Rotella	271 Oquaga
Brad & Jan Farrell	731 Oquaga Lake Rd
Radine ^{& Paul} Hoffmann	104 Hanson Rd
Ross + Lil DeLuca	767 OLR
HANS GIESKES	719 OLR
KOEN GIESKES	48 HANSON RD.
Jeri FIDLER	80 Hanson Rd
Carol Kuschel	12 Hanson Rd

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Name	Address
Mark Millsbaugh	437 Oquaga Lake Rd
Kathleen Millsbaugh	"
Marie Davenport (Schneiders)	42 Nanson Rd
John Martynik	713 Oquaga Lake Rd.
NANCY + Tim KANI	791 1/2 OLR
Alma + Mick McHugh	493 Oquaga Lake Rd.
Chris + Kerry May	495 Oquaga Lake Rd
Ron Aker	531 Oquaga Lake Rd
Phyllis Baker for Barbara Marko	799 OLR
Ron + Lupu	725 OLR
KAREN + DAVID	5 HANSON

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Name	Address
Sean + Bucky O'Loughlin	735 OLR
Mara + Chris Greece	717 AD
ALICE MARTIN	100 HANSON RD.
George Wells	461 Oquaga Lake Road
KURT + BARB ACKER	711 OLR
Jason Brown	459 - Oquaga Lake Rd
Gary Holmge	675 Oquaga Lake
Jai + Matthew Maguire	667 Oquaga Lake Rd
Linda Hamilton	57 Hanson Rd
Jamie Szenher	
Peggy Ruhnke	58 Hanson Rd.

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Sign-In Sheet

Name	Address
Kevin Ruhnke	58 Hanson Rd.
Dave Paproski	789 Oquaga Lake Rd
Kieran Schneider	761 OLA