

# Mastodon Township Public Hearing

## Lake Mary Special Assessment District Meeting Minutes

### Saturday, August 2, 2025

---

*A Public Hearing was held by the Mastodon Township Board to address objections, concerns, and to review the assessment role and proposed cost of the Lake Mary – Lake Improvement Special Assessment District. The public hearing was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Supervisor Chad Skinner.*

Pledge of Allegiance was said.

**PRESENT BY ROLL CALL:** Mike Bjork, Karen Mallon, Chad Skinner, Dave Smith, and Stacey Watters.

**RECORDED PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE:**

Name	Address
Beaudoin, Jackie	217 South Shore Road
Cleary, Fred	157 South Shore Road
Cleary, Nelson	201 South Shore Road
Dalpra, Paul	144 Mary Wood Lane
Gerou, Al	261 South Shore Road
Gerst, Rick	256 Bara Road
Hemphill, Alice	231 South Shore Road
Hemphill, John	231 South Shore Road
Jacobs, Paula	137 Jacobs Drive
Jacobson Burns, Joanne	135 South Shore Road
Kovach, Bill	150 Mary Wood Lane
Kovach, Carol	150 Mary Wood Lane
Kroll, Nick	183 South Shore Road
Marcinak, Gordon	140 Mary Wood Lane
Mitchell, Brian	279 South Shore Road
Mitchell, Stephanie	279 South Shore Road
Schiavo, Gregg	122 Mary Wood Lane
Sider, Denise	269 South Shore Road
Spear, Jen	164 Mary Wood
Swider, Don	269 South Shore Road
Taylor, Mark	180 Mary Wood Lane
Webb, Mike	209 South Shore Road

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Motion by Watters to approve agenda as presented. Support: Smith. Call to vote: All ayes; no nays. Motion carried.

**PUBLIC HEARING OPEN FOR COMMENTS:** Supervisor Skinner called for any interested property owner in attendance that wished to be heard by the Board regarding any matter of the proposed Lake Mary – Lake Improvement Special Assessment make themselves known to the Board, and time was given for any such property owner to be heard in full.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Brian Mitchell – 279 South Shore Road: Mr. Mitchell stated his objection to the special assessment being managed by the township. Mr. Mitchell further stated that Lake Mary is open to the public and believes it is waters of the State of Michigan not just the lake property owners.

Discussion was offered regarding possible grants available to make lake improvements.

John Hemphill – 231 South Shore Road: Mr. Hemphill stated his objection to the special assessment. He further stated that lake access rights are not just for the property owners but the public has rights. He stated that lake improvements should not be a burden on the homeowners. He opposes raising his property taxes to benefit the public.

Discussion by the group was made regarding a state fee for all boaters to use public lakes that could then assist inland lake improvements. Board members advised this is something to take to State Representatives.

Alice Hemphill – 231 South Shore Road: Mrs. Hemphill stated her objection to the special assessment. She indicated that one year ago the costs were substantially lower.

Nick Kroll – 183 South Shore: Mr. Kroll stated his support for the special assessment. He indicated that he is speaking as a property owner but is also representing the Lake Mary Lake Association's membership support of the special assessment. He believes that the Lake Mary Lake Association would be highly unlikely to secure any grants that could be used for lake improvements. He opposes that proposed cost of the assessment and believes because it is so high, some property owners are opposed to the special assessment.

Mallon indicated that the estimated annual costs of the special assessment presented by the township are probably high. However, because this special assessment is new, it is hard for the township to foresee any possible cost that the special assessment could incur on the township. Mallon indicated that to date actual costs to the township are approximately \$1,100.00. These costs include wages for work performed by the clerk, attorney fees, notice and publication fees, and costs to mail notices to property owners. Costs associated with the special assessment is the annual fee set out by Cason which amounts to \$18,585 for year one and increases by 10% each subsequent year, publication and notice fees, administrative costs including supplies and wages.

Mallon also offered that the township must advise property owners of the potential costs of late payments which include interest fees and penalty charges. Mallon further indicated that because any unpaid special assessment on a property tax bill has the same implications that unpaid property taxes have to a potential loss of property, the township must advise property owners in full. Unpaid special assessment costs can lead to a lien on property.

Mark Taylor – 180 Mary Wood Lane: Mr. Taylor cited MCL 324.30914, which states that the township can waive the interest charges.

Paula Jacobs – 137 Jacobs Drive: Mrs. Jacobs asked if the actual costs are lower, what happens to any over paid amounts.

Skinner advised that any balance collected from the special assessment would carry over to the next year, or would be returned to the property owners who paid.

Roy Carlson – 338 Buck Lake Park Road: Mr. Carlson asked if the township contracts with the weed eradication company. (Mr. Carlson is not a property owner at Lake Mary, but interested in the discussions because of a proposed Buck Lake Special Assessment).

Paul Dalpra – 144 Mary Wood Lane: Mr. Dalpra advised that the Lake Mary Association would contract with Cason for weed eradication not the township.

Joanne Jacobson Burns – 135 South Shore Road: Ms. Burns asked if the Lake Mary Lake Associate would have access to the transactions made by the township on behalf of the Lake Mary Lake Improvement Special Assessment District.

Mallon advised that any interested party would have access to these public records.

Al Gerou – 261 South Shore Road: Mr. Gerou stated he had three questions he wanted answers to.

1. Are there delineation maps that show which properties will be affected by the special assessment?
2. What improvements will be included? Will algae control be included?
3. Is there a “boiler proof” letter from the attorney regarding the costs?

Skinner advised that there is a GIS map on the township website that indicate properties around Lake Mary.

Mallon stated that the contract that Lake Mary Lake Association enters into would detail which treatments would be included.

Mallon stated that attorney fees associated with the Lake Mary Lake Improvement Special Assessment District are an unknown at this time. Actual attorney fees exist today for work done, but any further attorney fees are unknown at this particular time. For example, if the special assessment goes through, and if any property owner disputes this the Michigan’s Tax Tribunal, the supervisor is required to represent the township in such a hearing. It would be expected that the supervisor would request that the township’s attorney be present for such a hearing. At this particular time, the township cannot anticipate what costs it will incur in the matter of legal fees. Mallon further stated that this special assessment is a Citizen’s Petition brought before the Mastodon Township Board, and no other property owner in the township other than the Lake Mary property owners who would have a direct benefit to their property value can bear the burden of any cost associated with the Lake Mary Lake Improvement Special Assessment. These costs cannot be paid for through the general fund.

Jackie Beaudoin – 217 South Shore Road: Mrs. Beaudoin asked if this is a per parcel fee, wondering if “you” own 2 (two) parcels then “you” would pay twice? Mrs. Beaudoin also wondered if there were better costs for this work as she remembers in years past the fees were not so high.

Mallon stated that this special assessment district is a per parcel payment structure.

Joanne Jacobson Burns – 135 South Shore Road: Ms. Burns stated that Jackie Beaudoin’s concerns are valued. She advised that she spoke with Lance from Cason, and he stated to her that he agrees the figures are high. She advised that the true costs should be around \$9,600 annually and not \$18,500 as was quoted. She further advised that the actual cost will not be known until the lake survey in August is completed. Ms. Burns also stated her concerns about how quickly the milfoil spreads, and a new spot has been noticed and they want to get ahead of that.

## **BOARD COMMENTS:**

Skinner stated there has been a lot of information shared today. He would like to take a closer look at the costs. He indicated at this time it is unknown how the fees paid by the township for this Special Assessment would be reimbursed if the special assessment does not go through.

Watters stated she has concerns regarding the incoming bills that would need to be paid if there is not enough money collected.

Smith stated he does not like the idea of the township forcing property owners to pay for a service. He further stated that any time the government is involved more costs are incurred. He also stated looking at the numbers here today, some could donate work and money to keep the costs down. He stated he understands that everybody loves the lake and wants it taken care of. He stated he believes it would be better if the Lake Association took care of their lake and not involve the government.

Bjork reminded the group that some of the fees added to the special assessment do not even cover the costs to treat the milfoil. He agreed with Smith that costs increase when the government is involved. He stated that the township is an administrative burden to the lake noting that 40% of the costs are administrative costs. He wondered if the Lake Mary Lake Association could administer the process to treat

the lake thereby keeping costs to the property owners down. He added government bureaucratic layers are not good for the end goal. He stated he agrees with the idea of a special fee to cover lake improvements at the State level.

Mallon stated she had nothing else to offer.

#### **FURTHER PUBLIC OPEN DISCUSSION:**

Nick Kroll – 183 South Shore Road: Advised that at the Lake Association level it is an uphill climb. He stated that after this year, the Lake Association does not have the funds to cover the costs. Not all property owners are paying an equal amount to cover improvement costs. He further stated that there are a number of property owners who do not voluntarily pay for the improvements, so only a fixed percentage of the property owners carry the cost to do the treatment.

Gregg Schaivo – 122 Mary Wood Lane: Wondered if there is a surplus, how does this get paid?

Skinner offered if any over payment made, than those funds would go back to paying property owners.

John Hemphill – 231 South Shore: Asked if additional costs are incurred, who gets billed.

Skinner stated additional costs would go to the Lake Mary property owners. He further stated that he understands that a special assessment is a hard burden for some property owners who would be forced to pay the costs, but he also understands where the lake association is.

Nick Kroll – 183 South Shore Road: Mr. Kroll stated that the lake association did not come to this lightly, but it ran out of funds.

#### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES DECISION:**

Skinner asked for movement on the Lake Mary Lake Improvement Special Assessment.

Bjork and Watters stated that do not want to make a motion to move forward. Mallon agreed.

The matter is tabled until Cason completes its lake survey in late August 2025 so that more accurate costs can be determined.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Carol Kovach – 150 Mary Wood Lane: Stated that the government, the State of Michigan, isn't going to help. The general public doesn't help. A lot of Lake Mary lake residents don't join the lake association, so they don't contribute to the health of the lake. The lake association is out of money, and she agrees with Nick Kroll's statement that the lake association is not taking this lightly.

She further stated that Camp Christine doesn't contribute, Runkle Lake is bad without treatment. She stated it is a small price to pay to keep the lake viable for generations.

The group again discussed state fees for boater particularly a DNR launch fee.

Nick Kroll – 183 South Shore Road: Advised the Board that the Lake Mary association did take a membership vote, and 68% of the property owners approved taking this step towards a special assessment fee.

Denise Swider – 269 South Shore Road: Stated that this has been a 19-year journey to treat the lake. Treatment has always laid on the shoulders of property owners, and not all property owners have done so. In 2023 the lake wasn't treated but should have been.

Skinner called for any further discussion or public comment. Hearing none the Lake Mary Lake Improvement Special Assessment Public Hearing of August 2, 2025 was closed by adjournment.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Motion by Bjork to adjourn the meeting at 11:10 am. Support: Smith. Call to vote. All ayes; no nays. Motion carried. Public Hearing closed at 11:10 am.

*I hereby certify that the minutes contained herein are the approved minutes of the August 2, 2025 Public Hearing on the proposed Lake Mary – Lake Improvement Special Assessment District. Signed herein by the Mastodon Township Clerk, Karen Mallon on this the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, 2025.*

\_\_\_\_\_, Karen Mallon, Clerk