

Current lake level readings unreliable

WHITE BEAR LAKE — There will be no official lake level entered into the White Bear Lake Conservation District minutes this month. The board member responsible for the lake quality committee report said the lake level reader installed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) near Manitou Island is unreliable in the winter.

The reading posted on the DNR's lake level website was 921.88 feet on Jan. 17, said Mike Parenteau. "There's no stick anymore (to measure the lake), so we get lake level on the website. The reading is 8 inches lower than last month. That is not right. I checked with county readers and others and they said during the winter, the reader is not reliable, so there's no report."

In other business at the district's monthly meeting, board members approved dock applications for the VFW, Hickory Street Dock Association, Fletcher Driscoll and the city of Birchwood. Dock applications for Commercial Bay residents Tally's Dockside and Sampair Companies (Acqua) were put off until February. The dock utilization committee wants the two parties to reapply for dock permits while some historical fact finding is conducted.

A motion was also passed to finally settle the monthslong Harrod and Mahoney dock placement dispute in Birchwood.

Auditor Jim Eichten with MMKR reported on his evaluation of the district's finances. The district is required to have an audit conducted every five years. Eichten had no findings, an outcome he said was "great." He did question the district's \$178,000 in end-of-year reserves, noting the fund balance as a percentage of expenditures was 213 percent. "That's a lot for a district your size, and covers two years of operating expenditures," Eichten said. "As an auditor, I won't tell you what it should be, but you should have parameters as to why you need that much in reserves."

Acting Chairman Bryan DeSmet said the board was in the process of developing a fund balance policy.

Parenteau asked Eichten if any fund balance is OK, with good reasons. He said "yes." Parenteau added that the board is "judicious in our spending."

Debra Neutkens