

BOROUGH OF MOUNTAIN LAKES, NJ
LAKES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monthly Meeting Minutes – Quick Notes
Minutes for May 6, 2025 at 7:30 PM - Zoom

1. Call to Order

A monthly meeting of the Lakes Management Advisory Committee was held on May 6, 2025 on Zoom teleconference. It began at 7:30 PM and was presided over by chairperson Derek Jackson.

2. Attendees

Voting Members in attendance: Debra Dewing, Andy Hilton, Derek Jackson, Wayne Roth

Non-voting Members in attendance: Mitchell Stern (Borough Manager), Kelsey Dages (Student Representative)

Members not in attendance: Alpesh Amin, Lucien Foster, Jason Miner, Nikki Riley, Mike Russo, Chris Cannon (Borough Council Liaison), Bob Schindler (Tigris Lake Management), Jackie Bay (Environment Commission Liaison), Billy Barrett (Student Representative), Jack Buckley (Student Representative), Scott Miniter (Student Representative)

Guests in attendance: None

3. Approval of Minutes

Given an insufficient quorum, the approval of the prior meeting's minutes was deferred to the next month.

4. Borough Management Report

Report was presented by Mitchell Stern.

For several years, the Borough has been aware of the “wet spot” on the dam between Birchwood and Crystal Lakes. The wet area is along the lower third of the slope decline to Crystal Lake. While it has been noted on inspection reports, it had never been a cause for alarm.

Over the last year, the Birchwood Lake water level was lower than we would have expected given the rain events and relative levels of the other lakes. With the history and symptoms observed at Birchwood, Mitchell was concerned that there may be something wrong and requested an inspector take a closer look at the dam and wet spot.

In accordance with normal procedures, this winter we had an inspection of the borough's dams. The initial observation from the engineer was that the Birchwood wet spot may have expanded and/or had more moisture than prior observations. This is an indication of a potentially ongoing water seepage. The DEP has been notified. Given these factors, the engineer recommended a piezometer be installed to detect and measure the flow of water as it moves through the earth. This will better inform the severity of the situation and appropriate next steps.

The Highlands Grant will not be decided until the summer. As a contingency we have 50% of the cost for an advisor for a study built into the 2025 budget. The remaining cost will be in future years because the scope and cost will be spread over multiple years.

5. Old Business

Member Wayne Roth asked whether there a stocking plan for Sunset. It was noted that in the Fall and early Winter, this conversation came up and it was determined that stocking the lake in 2025 would not be appropriate because there is environmental healing required to make the lake hospitable for sustained aquatic life. There is a need for some of the plant growth that formed on the lake bed to die, dissolve and/or be removed from the lake. There is a tentative plan to do that in the Fall using a hydro-rake. While it cannot be committed to right now, there is a possibility that the first generation of stocking could happen in 2026 if the lake environment settles and is appropriate to do so. Money would need to be set aside in the budget for that.

6. New Business

Member Wayne Roth will be attending the Garden Club Plant Sale this weekend as a representative of the Lakes Committee. Wayne will socialize some general best practice content based on prior communication campaigns. He will also ask general question.

The discussion of community communication at the Garden Club event prompted Andy Hilton to highlight the need to communicate the critical importance of our lakes' health and the seemingly dire state they are in. Andy noted that with the study starting later this year, it seems like an appropriate time to again highlight what we have learned to date, how this potentially impacts the environment, community's culture and individuals financially. Given the sediment build up and council consideration for future strategy for preservation of the lakes, we should probably paint a picture of what it means to residents in the future. There was broad agreement of this point. Mitchell Stern noted that we will likely get more attention by communicating the potential impact to tax bills. Mitchell shared that every \$1M of spend would approximately result in each household paying about \$700 additional. Obviously given there is no defined scope, it is unclear how many millions would be required and over what period.

Kelsey Dages suggested we use short but informative social media campaigns featuring stories, tips etc to communicate the impact and opportunities for residents to help. Mitchell mentioned that the Borough limits its social media to Facebook. The committee could create its own "Friends of Mountain Lakes" group to share information.

7. Announcements

Next meeting June 3, 2025

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM