

Special Town Board Meeting Minutes

1-18-2023

John MacLean started the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and made a connection between great Americans and volunteers who show up to do the work. He complimented Cathy Weber and Carl Wolter for their service and always showing up to do the work. He contrasted those compliments with his frustration that Nick Williams sought to cancel the scheduled PITLC meeting on 1/10/2023. John described how on 12/27/22 he read an article in the Lakeland Times which reported that the DNR was allowing local control to help fight AIS. This was news to MacLean and when he received notice on 1/2/23 that the scheduled 1/10/23 PITLC meeting would be cancelled, he pushed back to PITLC to keep the meeting as scheduled because there was much important work to do. He described working from potential ice out dates and publication dates to be in a position to legislate protections for Presque Isle waters. First the PITLC [Presque Isle Town Lakes Committee] was reluctant to agree to meet. Then Committee Chairman Nick Williams cancelled the meeting. MacLean wanted to filter some information he had about boat washes and signage and transfer of invasive species in bilges and live wells. MacLean was then going to take the information he was bouncing off the PITLC to Ordinance Committee. Nick gave instructions to PITLC members to NOT attend the PITLC meeting that MacLean held as scheduled on 1/10/23. MacLean therefore called for this Special Town Meeting to discuss the status of PITLC Chairman and the Committee.

Cathy Weber described working as past Liaison for Town Lakes Committee for a period of time. She described the good work done by the Committee led by Nick Williams and pointed out the good work done by Otto Novak where they brought in over ½ million of grants dollars. She referred people who are interested to go to the website PIWI.US to find the studies that were produced since the Committee's founding. The Committee was set up for monitoring lakes for AIS. Cathy said we need to keep the Committee and keep the Chairman. In 2020 the previous Town Board looked at the idea of hazardous wakes although both the Ordinance Committee and the PITLC worked on figuring out potential solutions. The Hazardous Wake Ordinance was not implemented. The reluctance of the PITLC to engage John's suggestions were in part a problem of trying to stay within the focus of the Committee on AIS and not writing Ordinances. Cathy suggested that this seems a personal problem (addressing John). She talked to John about being the Bigger Man.

John said, "Let me talk about being the Bigger Man. So, when this email chain evolves: (John recounts) Nick admitted, "Well, gee, I was having a hard time hearing on Zoom." So, John said, "I used that to be the bigger man." "Perhaps you (Nick) didn't understand." (John had referred to emails earlier supplied to Cathy and Carl, where Nick had stated that he had not been able to hear well and John hoped that perhaps Nick did not understand that his communication was based on faulty hearing and John hoped Nick might have changed his mind to hold the 1/10 PITLC meeting as scheduled.) John goes on, "Instead he set up a dictatorial path that brings us here today. I don't want this conflict. This conflict doesn't help this Town. It's outrageous what's

in my email stack here. It's not right. It's dysfunctional. And, this Committee needs to be functional. These people want to work hard. Nick Williams told them not to come to the Meeting. Carl, what do you think?"

Carl Wolter said, "I think we should re-organize; I don't think there is any place in a committee or room for insubordination, I think we should have a reevaluation and change the composure. Not today but we should do it at our next Meeting."

Jorja Burke said that only 3 lakes were represented, you can't have a meeting, need a quorum of 7 lakes to have a regular scheduled meeting.

Paul Specht: What does the committee feel about Nicks leadership? If they are behind him as a leader, has he crossed the line?

John asked Paul: "When the leader tells committee members not to go to the meetings, why isn't there push back from the members?"

Carol Phillips: agrees that the committee members should decide, not John, John wouldn't answer questions, ended the zoom meeting. (at the 1/10 /23 PITLC meeting).

John said that he did not cut her off, said for her to call him, her husband has my phone number.

John reminded that if you had a dysfunctional head of the meeting, then John said that he has the right to call a meeting. John said that Nick called the meeting and cancelled it.

Cathy Weber disagreed in the order of having not having a meeting.

Bob Berdan: this small town operates because of the horsepower of the citizens through a group of volunteers, John is sending a bad message, if the town has to take action should not do anything to dissuade people from volunteering their time and efforts to this town. I am embarrassed.

John: Bob, if you are embarrassed, don't be embarrassed for all the people who show up here. Be embarrassed for the people who say they are going to do the work but don't show up.

Eric Benn: Last summer's committee meeting, Nick said he'd step down if someone was willing to take over, no response from the committee to take over, inferred that the committee supports him. The town lakes committee has updates on hazard wakes stats, information status, wasn't clear why the January meeting was more of town meeting verses town lakes committee.

John: there was a gap in my information, and I wanted to filter out the invasive species issues, because I wanted to best inform Bob's committee.

Otto: if we go forward with reorganization, Nick had put a lot of time on the committee.

Rick Schmalzer: I've served on committees in the past, I don't live on a lake, my comment is I can't envision that when the committee serves the town and if John calls a meeting then the committee should meet, if a committee chairman says no, that blows my mind.

Al Drum: I'm not in favor of making any changes in the lake committee, Nick is well supported of all of his members, should not interfere.

Nancy Brandt: committees are appointed by the town chairman; they work at the pleasure of the town board. We have unelected officials trying to run this town instead of taking directions from the Town Board. If the town chairman calls and says I'd like to have a meeting, the whole Committee or portion of the Committee or the Leader of the Committee cannot think that they are so important that they can countermand the town Chairman and the Town Board. The work of the Committee is commendable but it still works under the direction of Town Board.

Colleen Gorrilla: your position on firing Nick might be a little dramatic and drastic, would you consider giving him a notice of insubordination? Compromise by saying by writing a letter? Giving him another chance?

Larry Gorrilla: I've been involved since the inception, been approved by Jack Harrison, I was involved in the first grant study and got first grant, to date the reports have been made on 31 lakes, 2 rivers and we have kept AIS out of lakes, Nick has been instrumental in getting stuff done, talk with Nick and work out differences and maybe redesign the committee, Nick has been instrumental in getting stuff done.

Peggy Weissiner I see both sides of the issue, I took minutes at the meeting and read emails that were sent to John, great things have been done under Nick's leadership, I also see that our elected town chairman John has a very big heart, and he who sees that a Sea Change is coming that you can legislate about AIS at the local level. The town chairman has the legal authority, we could not have one committee in this town and no public input on a whole range of issues if that was his choice, that was the problem of the last administration. There is room for some thought on John's part, there is misunderstanding from the DNR part and room for ordinances, the issue is aquatic invasive species, Nick did send the agenda to committee but put a strait jacket on John, maybe John and Nick should get together.

Dave Bogen: according to statutes, the town chairman doesn't have authority to "fire" Nick, the board needs to decide, you can't fire volunteers, issue is with Nick and John, board should not be involved.

Otto: Peggy mentioned about a lot of money spent, we have spent \$150,000 for study of lakes, value over 1 million,

Dick Logan: My point of view, I'd echo that John should get together with Nick, Nick has done a lot of good things for the lake committee (so I've heard), I live in Winchester, and we are fighting stuff in the water,

John: part of the problem is accountability, I like the committee, there is a flaw if we need 7 members to hold a meeting. The committee should be in the position to be able to always meet and move.

Carl Watras: the more lakes you have on the committee, the more the better, as chairman of the municipal ordinance committee, we work with a liaison and I work with Carl Wolter and work on amicable relations, where a level of discussing differences, Nick sounds like a personality conflict.

John: I have publicly apologized twice to you Carl (Watras). Can you imagine getting a phone call from Nick. There are many methods of communication, we should be using them all. When the lines of communication are down, we have a problem.

Richard Phillips: Nick is a fabulous leader. It was never made clear to me you had the had the authority to call a meeting about an Ordinance, you are making a case of invasive species, you are a politician, you aren't always going to get along, your response should be to make a case.

Carol Phillips: I was cut off, the zoom closed, I want the record straight, I was not allowed to make my point, we all make mistakes, you make mistakes about cutting people off, we need to move on.

Dave Vote: Nick has been very careful on working on AIS, I think what happened on this case, politics were involved, Nick didn't think PITLC should get involved in that, what is the purpose of the committee.

Cathy: What is the purpose of PITLC? Online there a narrative of the committee.

Emma: because I have a full job here so I'm not involved a lot, I've learned a lot of volunteer and freedom. The mistakes that Companies or organizations often make are to hire fast but delay on firing decisions when company and employees are no longer on the same page or going to the same direction.

Judy Ruch: I think what we have here is very personal, has been blown way out of proportion, you haven't been here since day 1. I don't know what the motivation was, I think for you to ask the board to hire or fire a board member, it doesn't put the board or you into a very good light, let the committee do its work.

Ann Milne: I look at this at a political perspective, rather than fire Nick, replace yourself as liaison with either Cathy or Carl, to disassemble this committee does not seem like a wise decision.

Nancy Brandt: I read the emails I looked at the emails, the tone of his emails was snarky for a Committee Chairman to talk to the Town Chairman that way. I think Nick owes John an apology. There have been some misconceptions in the past, State law allows only the town chairman to set an agenda; the idea we've always done it will keep on doing it is wrong. I do believe that some the of comments regarding the power of the Town Chairman have been in error. I don't know how this gets resolved. John's concern about AIS is why he asked PITLC to be involved with their opinions in helping the Ordinance Committee to make a decision about a law.

Rick Schmalzer: there are a lot of opinions of personality conflict without knowing the stream of emails, I have seen the emails. Nancy is not far off with her comments, Colleen made a good suggestion about a potential solution is a letter of insubordination, I believe it would be totally appropriate. In conjunction with issuing that, having another town supervisor as liaison going forward might be better.

Linda Novak: I can understand that you feel disrespected, who has not made a mistake? Maybe he hasn't had enough time to apologize, write him up, we are all volunteers here.

Carl Wolter: when I said maybe we should call for a reorganization, I did not think to get rid of them. But some comments have been made that an apology should be made to you, John, I think that is in line.

John: Nick, do you want to make an apology?

Nick: I firmly believe that the Committee is not to be involved with Ordinance, strictly about AIS and so forth. I will be perfectly willing to talk about signage and boat wash station. It seemed as if John, you were being inflexible as far as taking opinions from other people, and that was probably my error, and I'm sorry for it. Protect our lakes, next meeting is Feb. 14th, I contact others in the county about boat washes, so far on our watch there has been no AIS, it scares me that people are coming in from Trout Lake into Crab Lake, our job is to educate people, the meeting wasn't supposed to talk about ordinances.

John: Nick, let's meet for lunch!

John: Let's talk about a succession to the leadership of this committee at another meeting.

[These minutes were taken and submitted by Kim Prott.]