

MINUTES FROM A PUBLIC FORUM TO HEAR PUBLIC COMMENT ON PROPOSED LAKE GASTON WEED CONTROL TAX SERVICE DISTRICT HELD BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR THE COUNTY OF WARREN IN THE COUNTY COURTHOUSE ON OCTOBER 25, 2004 AT 6:00 PM.

The Public Forum was called to order by Chairman Ulysses S. Ross. The following Commissioners were present: Clinton G. Alston, Weldon C. Capps, Jr., Janet Humphries, and H.E. Luke Lucas. Others in attendance were Loria D. Williams, County Manager and Susan W. Brown, Finance Officer.

Clerk to the Board, Angelena Kearney-Dunlap read aloud the Notice of Public Forum.

Pete Deschenes, Weed Control Council member, made a brief presentation reviewing Lake Gaston's history and weed control problems. (Presentation on file in Clerk's office.)

County Manager Loria Williams made a brief presentation on Lake Gaston's weed control issues. (Presentation on file in Clerk's office.)

Citizen comments were as follows:

Robert Messier - questioned what area the tax district would include. He's all ready living in a tax district since he moved here. Taxes went up from \$500 to over \$2,000 and there's no added services. Tax the fishers and duck hunters. You're targeting a specific area and the Board is not a good steward. Warren County is trying to cure 1950 ills without planning.

Roland Beauchaine, Economic Development Council Chairman & Member of the Chamber of Commerce - EDC views Lake Gaston as a vital part of Warren County's future growth. As president of Warren County Chamber of Commerce he's in favor of establishing a tax district and his neighbors are in favor also.

Merwin R. Dieckmann, MD - deferred his comment period.

Doc Daugherty - Does not support establishing a tax district. We do not need to spend more money. South Carolina spends less on 32 lakes than we've spent on one lake. Use grass crap, just need a plan of action to do it. Four other counties have weed council's and they use grass carp. Weed Council needs a change in philosophy. How is the Board of Commissioners involved? Taxes are not the issue; the issue is management. You will get a class action law suit if tax district is established, because it is not legal.

Norman Tweed - has lived on the lake for two (2) years, has been a property owner for four (4) years. Not in favor of tax district. There are free boat ramps for the public, need to establish an honor system to receive fees for use of public boat ramps. Noxious weed is distributed to different parts of the lake by boat, therefore, you need to treat the entire lake.

Harrel Johnson - Executive Director of the Roanoke River Basin Association - supports taking care of the lake. Biological and economic health of the lake is important.

June Gibbs - raised several questions: is 49% of Warren County on the Lake? How much was budgeted for weed control? Why isn't the entire funding amount coming from the county's tax dollars. It is not fair.

Chairman Ross opened the floor for additional comments.

Mike Wilburt - \$1.7 million is total cost for all five counties. To think that this is not a county wide problem, is ridiculous. There are other ways to handle this.

George Blake - spoke in opposition to tax district. What if one county does not approve funding, do the other counties have to take up the extra cost? Adopt boat sticker tax.

Pete Deschenes - Weed Council will contact the state of South Carolina to see how they handle weed control. Dominion is a source being pursued.

Ruth Brown - questioned if 49% of lake is owned by Warren County residents? Is it divided evenly?

Commissioner Capps questioned how a draw down would affect the weed problem?

Howard Smith - inquired if there had been an effort to establish local legislation that provides for lake maintenance? Establish an authority to receive budgeted funds. Have we asked our legislative representatives for help?

Commissioner Lucas voiced a concern - what type discussion has Halifax and Northampton counties had that binds all counties together?

Chairman Ross adjourned the public hearing at 7:05 pm.

/s/ Angelena Kearney-Dunlap
Angelena Kearney-Dunlap, Clerk