

LFICD Board Meeting
Nov. 7, 2023
Virtual Zoom meeting

Minutes:

1. Call to order: 5:39

Present: Christine Chapline, Judd Markowski, Bob Cluss, Dinah Bain, David Zarowin, Craig Zondag
guests: Tom Vanacore (Bridport), Ben Fisher (Bridport), David Dodge (Cornwall), Raphael Warrick (Cornwall)), Brenden Kensey, 2 anonymous

2. Approve Oct 3 and Oct. 31 minutes:

The minutes from the Oct. 3 and Oct. 31 meetings were approved with 1 clarification.

3. Approve Treasurer's report:

Cash forward: \$98,453.74

Cash received: \$0.78

Total cash for month: \$98,454.52

Total Disbursements: \$15,944.22

Cash on hand: \$82,510.30

Total Accounts payable: \$1,400

Total Accounts receivable: \$41,442.69

Net Current assets: \$122,552.99

The Treasurer's report is approved.

4. Field coordinator's report:

Field Conditions: The month of October recorded approximately 4"-6" of rain. Flooding in the Lemon Fair River valley took place twice. Once with a "high" flood scenario and at the end of the month with a "low" flood scenario. During the high flood, larvae was present after the third day. I collected larvae and reared them. They were all *Ae. vexans*, (floodplain mosquito). Shortly after that, water levels began to recede more rapidly and it appeared that much of the larvae got "grounded" in the mud or grasses and didn't survive. However, adult mosquitoes have remained particularly active through the month. It wasn't until October 31 that we finally had a significant frost to knock down populations. Several frosts have occurred since and we continue to see mosquito populations dwindle. I receive reports from residents that they have an influx of mosquitoes in their homes. Once again, I tell them that the mosquitoes find their way into their homes through bathroom ventilation systems and take refuge from the cold and eventually end up in the house. Another place I've received reports about where folks are finding mosquitoes are in firewood piles. Once again, these areas are less prone to frost and provide refuge for mosquitoes. It is likely we will see mosquitoes through the winter. Fortunately, females are less thirsty for a blood meal but still capable of biting. If you find mosquitoes in your house, do your best to eradicate them.

Wrapping up the 2023 Season: There are still a number of folks I need to reach out to with regard to complaint calls. If possible, I would still like to visit properties and help assess where mosquitoes may be coming from on their properties. Surveying these landscapes may be a little easier without foliage and the presence of adult mosquitoes.

5. Public Budget Presentation

Discussion:

The question of whether or not the LFICD board has the power to treat the floodplain without the consent of the VAA was discussed. David Dodge pointed out that our Larvicide Application Permit, which is issued by the VAA and allows us to aerially treat with approved larvicide products, states: "Applications of any of the products in Condition 2 shall only occur if the conditions set forth in the grant agreement, based on biological assessments for mosquito larvae/pupae populations in which larvae or pupae populations warrant treatment, unless otherwise approved by the Vector Management Program. Prior approval must be sought for each individual application." The board agreed that the terms of the State's Larvicide Application Permit are clear that aerial treatments require prior approval by the VAA.

In the revised draft budget that was agreed to at our Oct. 31 special meeting, we had decided to change the anticipated treatment plan to from 1 potential aerial treatment to 2 aerial treatments during the season. We had also decided to ask the towns to increase their annual contributions from \$6000 to \$12,000. However, in tonight's budget discussion, the Board decided that we are not ready to ask the Select Boards for more money until we have straightened out parameters for aerial treatments with the State VAA, given that our 5-year pesticide application permit does not give us full autonomy to treat and requires us to meet the parameters of the Grant Agreement with the VAAFM (Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets).

A Motion was made to pass the draft budget that was originally presented to the Select Boards in October, which predicts 1 aerial treatment and asks for a \$6,000 contribution from each town.

6 people present voted in favor of the motion to pass the LFICD budget as presented to the Select Boards (including all 5 board members who were present); 3 people present voted against passing the LFICD budget. The 2024 LFICD budget is approved.

6. Discuss getting on Selectboard agendas to discuss raising the town contributions to the LFICD

A meeting with the Select Boards to discuss raising the town contributions is not needed since the budget that was passed is the same as the budget that was originally presented to them and does not raise the town contributions. However, we will still ask to get on Town Select Board agendas to discuss our plans for moving forward next season.

7. Future direction of the LFICD: tabled to the January meeting.

8. New business:

Craig has contacted VAAFM (Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets) requesting a meeting with them to discuss the season and treatment parameters, but has received no response yet. Bob will follow up with the VAA to set a date.

Judd would like to initiate a Feasibility study on other treatment options, including the purchase of more backpack sprayers to treat small areas from the ground.

9. Next meeting: Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2024. 5:30 pm, Virtual Zoom meeting.

Below is a letter received from Tom Vanacore, which is attached at his request. It does NOT express the views of the LFICD Board of Supervisors.

Christine, and the Board of Supervisors of the LFICD.

I am sorely disappointed at the inability of the LFICD Supervisory board to craft any meaningful strategy through the budgetary process to address the foreseeable need to aggressively treat for mosquito in the 2024 season. Without the budget allocation for 2-3 widespread aerial treatment events there is no argument to be made to any authority or to any citizen that the District plans to conduct their business in any way except for the status quo. The status quo has been ineffective in controlling the breeding populations within the District's borders. Keep in mind mosquitoes do not respect territorial boundaries. What breeds within the LF can easily cross over to other watersheds outside of the District and breeding populations beyond the LF District can arrive in the LF within a matter of days on the prevailing winds. Prepare for the worst.

While I understand the Board is grappling with a seemingly intractable problem where the State is concerned, this cannot be an excuse to maintain the status quo. It appears the administrative stipulations of the grant funding mechanism and the requirements of permitting have robbed the District of the very purpose of its existence, that is to operate as an autonomous political entity governing its own affairs. I do not see the current Strategy as a winning one at any level. The Board had the right idea going into the meeting, to allocate for at least two treatment events, to describe to the public and to the selectboard of the member towns your clear intentions in the form of a resolution to utilize the available funding and the available material for treatment. But then you adopted the losing proposition, to avoid having to explain an increase in the budget. Yet this is the very thing that is indisputably required to deal with the inevitable situation based on the clear indications from 2023 field surveying and data combined with the very real potential for inclement weather in 2024. What happened? In the near term I do not expect anything good to come of this strategy. At the same time I do not see any clear long term strategy communicated in any formal resolution or action by the Board. You are currently and effectively dead in the water.

If an aviation sector is required, and Craig Zondag in his role as Field Coordinator has determined that a heavy lift drone and support for this capacity is needed, I suggest this strategy needs to be spelled out in writing and lobbying for its procurement must begin in

earnest through every means possible. Relying on the State to provide for this service in the absence of legislative reform at the State and Federal level is magical thinking. At present the use of heavy lift drones for Agriculture and the permitting for the same is part of ongoing negotiations within the Farm Bill, a process that goes on only every 5 years at the federal level. It is unclear what the outcome may be but I would suggest getting in touch with your State legislators and the Federal representatives in Congress to do everything possible to bring about the policy and financial support for this local capacity. But it won't happen between now and next April.

I'm sorry for presenting an opposing or critical view. I know you all are doing your very best with a tough situation, but this is no longer a question of an entitlement. This is a public health and safety requirement and for better or worse the LFICD is the first line of defense. Adopting a budget that on its face falls well short of fulfilling the mission of the District is a recipe for failure.

I do not adhere to the position of the former Chair that the State has been supportive of the local efforts. To the contrary. Mr. Dodge is well aware of the willful undermining of the local capacities to call for aerial application through the grant allocation by raising the thresholds for treatment to well outside of and above the numerical norms for Best Management. These thresholds were raised to prohibitive measures with little objection from the Charman himself. He has once again convinced the Board of Supervisors to adopt a budget insufficient to the task in order to avoid dealing with any controversy at the local level while at the same time claiming the District will need to notify the State of its plans before adopting any budget except one that preserves the Status quo. That is ridiculous on its face and I am surprised the Supervisory board unanimously adopted this position. Going to the State with hat in hand will never bring about the necessary structural reforms to rebuild the local capacities. Something else is needed. In the absence of a clear strategy to control the Mosquito through clear communications and direct actions by the elected and appointed governance of the LFICD I will recommend to the Selectboards of the member towns that the District be disbanded altogether. Maintaining the District in its current incapacity is enabling the State to pretend it has a working policy on vector management. The District will either fulfill its mission or it must be dismantled in order to build a more effective mechanism in its place.

I ask that this communication be attached to the minutes of the November 7 meeting.

Respectfully Yours.

Thomas Vanacore
Founding Member LFICD
