

Town of Land O' Lakes

Annual Town Meeting Minutes

April 21, 2026

I. Call to order

Chairman Dan Balog called the meeting to order at 6pm, confirming that proper notice had been given.

II. Proper Notice Given by the Clerk

Clerk-Treasurer Lynn Jolin confirmed that proper notice had been provided for the meeting.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting participants recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. Approve Minutes from Prior Annual Town Meeting

Chairman Balog explained that all voting would be done by show of hands and that only those who were residents of the town and present at the prior annual meeting could vote on the minutes. Kevin Konnow, who had attended the previous year's meeting on April 15, 2025, made a motion to accept the minutes.

Motion: Kevin Konnow moved to accept the minutes from the April 15, 2025 annual meeting. Mary Ellen Otterpohl seconded the motion. Motion carried by show of hands 9-0.

V. Resolution 2026-03 Authorization To Sell Town Property (Parcels 12-2504 & 12-2508)

Clerk-Treasurer Lynn Jolin read Resolution 2026-03, which would authorize the town board to dispose of two specific parcels of real property: tax parcel numbers 12-2504 and 12-2508. The resolution would grant the town board authority to sell the property for not less than fair market value and upon terms the board deems in the best interest of the town.

A resident raised questions about whether adjacent property owners should have first right of refusal on these parcels and suggested that neighboring property owners might be interested in purchasing the land to extend their properties. Jolin indicated there had been a couple of inquiries from residents who received copies of the resolution and map, but no one had expressed definitive interest in purchasing.

Kevin Konnow provided background on the parcels, explaining that parcel 12-2508 is an alleyway between his business and another property that dead-ends at his house, while parcel 12-2504 is a 20-foot-wide strip that was donated back to the town after a previous owner passed away. He noted the property is essentially unbuildable due to utility easements and its narrow width, with annual taxes of only \$4.20. K. Konnow expressed willingness to reach out to other adjacent property owners to gauge their interest in purchasing portions of the property.

K. Konnow clarified that as the potential buyer, he would cover all closing costs and that no appraisal had been recently conducted. He emphasized this would not be a significant financial transaction and noted that he would abstain from voting due to his potential interest in the property.

Motion: A motion was made to approve Resolution 2026-03 authorizing the town board to sell the specified property. The motion passed with 13 votes in favor, none against, and Kevin Konnow abstaining.

VI. Any Other Business over which the Town Meeting has Jurisdiction

Lynn Klemann expressed concerns about large data center developments and suggested the town should be proactive in developing policies, potentially through resolutions or ordinances, to address these facilities before they become an issue. She noted that as downstate communities reject these developments, they may move north to areas like Land O'Lakes.

Linda Johnson raised the possibility of implementing composting services at the town's waste facility, noting that she generates more recyclable and compostable materials than actual trash. She suggested this could reduce hauling costs. Johnson acknowledged there would be costs involved for additional personnel or equipment but felt it could be cost-effective and progressive.

Johnson also expressed concerns about storage unit proliferation, suggesting the town may be at saturation and noting that while safety requires them on main roads, they create eyesores that detract from the area's natural appeal. She emphasized the importance of maintaining the northwoods character that attracts both residents and tourists.

Regarding winter sidewalk maintenance, Johnson noted safety hazards for pedestrians, explaining that while some property owners maintain their sidewalks, others do not. Chairman Balog acknowledged the challenge of snow removal timing, with the county plowing first, requiring the town to wait before cleaning sidewalks with their equipment.

Johnson inquired about the sanitary district's capacity for additional affordable housing development and was assured that capacity exists for expansion.

The discussion turned to pharmacy benefit manager legislation that had been supported by local residents. Johnson asked whether the town had formally supported the legislation in writing. Kevin Konnow explained he had spoken with representatives multiple times and raised the issue at the recent Towns Association meeting with Senator Ron Johnson's representative, who promised follow-up. The legislation had stalled in the state legislature for three years, with no vote taken this year despite previous consideration.

Chairman Balog noted that Vilas County has one of the largest elderly populations in the state, making this issue particularly relevant, but legislators provided no explanation for why the bill wasn't brought to a vote.

Heidi Reuter asked about expanding the town board from three to five members. While acknowledging the current board's good work, they suggested more members could distribute the workload. Jolin asked if the resident would consider running, noting that expanding the board requires people willing to serve. Chris Reuter supported the idea, pointing out that five members would reduce individual workload and noting that even the volunteer library board functions well with seven members. The board agreed to research how other towns with larger boards operate, though they noted such meetings tend to be longer.

VII. Public Input

Roger Larson, representing both himself as a High Lake property owner and the High Fish Trap Association, strongly advocated for adopting a wake ordinance to extend enhanced wake restrictions to High Lake and other border lakes within the town. He emphasized that this would treat High Lake the same as other town lakes and noted the association's board support for such action.

Larson highlighted environmental concerns, particularly regarding four pairs of nesting loons on High Lake. He explained that wake boats threaten nesting sites and juvenile loons and presented written testimony detailing these concerns. The association's loon ranger had also expressed safety concerns for people using kayaks and canoes when wake boats are present.

Helen Schott, a retired attorney and High Fish Trap Association board member, strongly disagreed with waiting for current litigation to conclude, arguing these are nuisance lawsuits that have not succeeded elsewhere. She warned that waiting indefinitely would allow wake boats to operate until it's too late to protect the lake, emphasizing that in America, anyone can file lawsuits and there's never a guarantee against litigation.

Paul Holtan, a permanent lake resident and retired DNR communications specialist, provided detailed environmental testimony. He observed loons and a trumpeter swan on the lake the morning ice went out, noting his personal connection to the trumpeter swan restoration program. He described witnessing visible sediment disturbance and damaged aquatic vegetation after wake boat activity, expressing concern about lead contamination from disturbed sediment affecting eagles and loons.

P. Holtan cited Walter Piper's research showing a 22% decline in loon populations since 1993, with predictions of dramatic increases in decline over the next 20 years. He explained that loons feed by sight underwater and increased water turbidity from any source, including wake boats, harms their feeding ability.

Chairman Balog explained the town had been advised not to act on additional wake enhanced ordinances due to ongoing litigation, with two current potential lawsuits costing significant money. Kevin Konnow emphasized they take the concerns seriously but must ensure proper legal procedures.

Technical details emerged about High Lake being a border lake with portions in Boulder Junction and a small piece in Presque Isle. Paul Holtan confirmed Boulder Junction has adopted a border lake ordinance, but it cannot be enforced until Land O' Lakes also adopts an identical ordinance. He spoke with Presque Isle's chair, who indicated they have border lake arrangements with Winchester but weren't sure about Land O'Lakes due to minimal shared lake area.

The board committed to researching Boulder Junction's ordinance language and potentially contacting Presque Isle to understand their approach. They promised to place the item on May's agenda after gathering more information from other municipalities, emphasizing they aren't dismissing the concerns but need to ensure proper legal procedures given their current litigation challenges.

Linda Johnson asked about planning and beautification committee involvement in celebrating the nation's 250th anniversary, suggesting banners or displays. She was directed to attend the committee's Wednesday meeting at 11 AM.

Johnson also inquired about potential airport-related business development. K. Konnow explained efforts to build a community hangar, that would increase traffic and overnight parking capability, noting active board members pushing the project forward.

Johnson thanked town crew for improved snow plowing on Oak Street during winter, making navigation easier.

VIII. Set Next Annual Town Meeting Date of April 20th, 2027 at 6pm

The next annual town meeting was set for April 20th, 2027 at 6 PM.

IX. Adjournment

Motion: Chairman Balog moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:45pm. Sam Otterpohl seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Balog thanked attendees for their participation, emphasizing that such engagement is what the town needs rather than complaints from the sidelines.

Respectfully Submitted,
/s/Lynn Jolin, Clerk/Treasurer