

Town of Phelps
Special Town Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 13, 2026

Phelps Town Hall

Present: Chairman – Steve Doyen, Town Board Supervisors – Maureen Robinson, Jeremy Ryan, Steve Waier and Mary Ann (Mak) Holcomb. Also Present: Clerk/Treasurer – Sheryl J Ward, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer – Kathleen R Ray, and 24 citizens

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Chairman Doyen called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.
2. **Roll Call/Quorum Call:** A quorum of Phelps Town Board members was present.
3. **Pledge of Allegiance:** Recited
4. **Verification of Public Notice by Town Board:** Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Ray verified the agenda was posted at the Phelps Town Hall/Community Center, Phelps Post Office, Phelps Convenience Center, Town Website, and emailed to the Vilas County News Review May 11, 2026.
5. **Correspondence and Communications:** None

Discussion/Action on the Following Agenda Items (Public Comment will be Allowed on Each Agenda Item):

6. **Discussion/Action on possible Wake Boat Ordinance:** Doyen read in the record an email received from Drew and Kathleen Tempesta who are unable to attend. The Tempesta's expressed that they are in favor of passing an ordinance to ban wake boats on shallow lakes.

Quita Shehan addressed the Board speaking personally with her knowledge in her position at the Land/Water Conservation Department for Vilas County. Quita stated wake boating has a negative impact on water quality which, in turn, has a negative impact on property values.

Dave Selby addressed the Board and asked the Board to weigh in on all aspects of the issue and how each decision impacts the outcome before voting.

Chairman Doyen expressed his concern with enacting more laws. He also expressed concern with the fact that not all Town's have an ordinance, so will wake boats end up in Phelps if we don't have an ordinance. Over the years we have had many different interest groups wanting the Town to enact ordinances. Where will it stop? I am not in favor of this. Doyen believes the State should be controlling activities on public waters.

Mark Maciolek stated that the State of Wisconsin conveyed that authority to the Town for local control, and he believes it is the Town Board duty to approve the wishes of the people.

Mike Schindler asked if wake boat users know where they are on the lake and the depths they are operating in? Yes, wake boats have depth finders per citizen that was present.

Maribeth Park stated she lives on Kentuck Lake and the deepest part of the lake is 40' and it is a very small area. The rest of the lake is 10', 15', and 20' and we have a wake boat issue. The Lakes Committee spent a lot of time and money getting the milfoil issue under control and now we are seeing issues with this problem again due to wake boat use.

Robert Young addressed the Board and asked who would be enforcing an ordinance if passed? Chairman Doyen stated we have no enforcement.

Scott Gudowicz stated it would be a disservice to the Town of Phelps to not do anything. They don't drain the ballast completely; they winterize them with antifreeze and that will end up in the lakes.

Supervisor Waier stated he would like to see the Town pursue an Ordinance. In reviewing the Manitowish Waters Ordinance model, I would change boating to be greater than 300' from shore and at greater than 20' of depth. Also review by our attorney before we could pass anything.

Supervisor Holcomb stated she would like to see a survey of all landowners on their respective lakes to get their opinions on this matter. Answer: Kentuck Lake conducted a survey, more specific to wake surfing and a majority were in favor of an Ordinance addressing wake surfing. North & South Twin Lakes also conducted a survey, and their results were 2/3 of those who responded to the survey were in favor of an Ordinance. The survey did not go into specifics as to what the ordinance should say.

Jeff Meessmann is with Last Wilderness Alliance and stated the Alliance will help the town create an Ordinance to protect the lakes. They will do the preliminary work, send it to the DNR, you can then take it to your attorney to review before you pass anything.

Supervisor Ryan objected to Jeff Meessmann's speech. Ryan stated the Board is here to represent the people of Phelps, not special interest groups. I am only interested in the Town of Phelps and our lakes. Ryan stated a year ago when this was brought up he asked the Lakes Associations to post signs at the boat landings stating whatever language they wanted to bring awareness to this issue. Was this ever done? I think we should try this first and see how it works before we just jump into an Ordinance that we can't enforce.

Steve Kessler from Last Wilderness Alliance addressed the Board to state that if the Town is waiting for the State to take responsibility with this but that isn't going to happen. The towns have the power to regulate this activity on your lakes.

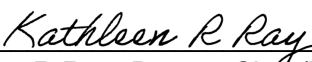
Jay Whitman stated he agrees with Supervisor Waier that the Town should pursue an Ordinance. There can be a compromise to allow wake boats but use them responsibly. Whitman stated he does not believe it is the landowners we have to worry about, but the visitors and Airbnb renters that have no regard for the lakes.

Supervisor Robinson stated she believes an Ordinance with Best Practice Measures would be effective.

Chairman Doyen recommended to Table this meeting and create an Ordinance to discuss at another Special Town Board Meeting.

Permission was given to the Lakes Committee to move forward by drafting an Ordinance taking into consideration the depth of water, distance from the shoreline and which lakes these should or shouldn't operate on and bring that back to the Board.

7. Adjournment at 6:04 p.m.


Kathleen R Ray, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer

Minutes are subject to approval at the next Regular Town Board meeting