Minutes of the Saturday, May 16 membership meeting of the

Big Swan Lake Improvement Association of Todd County

President Denny Harder called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. August 2014 meeting minutes were approved on a motion by Mark Brauch and a second by Dave Nickolay. George Brezinka and Jean Harder made motions to approve the Treasurer's report showing a current checking account balance of $4,183.70 and a money market account balance of $42,143.76.

Harder reported Lake Management, Inc. treated 55.8 acres for control of Curlyleaf Pondweed on May 8. Per-acre application cost was $315 for a total of $17,577. Harder expects about $5,580 funding from the DNR again. Steve Richter reported the lake association applied for and expects to receive $8,788 from the county's 2015 Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Plan, which includes 50% cost sharing for lake treatment programs. The plan budgets use of the $162,308 the county will receive this year from the state for AIS prevention. Nearly half that budget involves boat and trailer inspections on county lakes. It also funds zebra mussel monitoring on Big Swan and other lakes.

George Brezinka reviewed a change in the lake's bog permit, limiting removal of bogs up to 64 square feet. Bogs of any size can still be staked along out-of-the-way shorelines. He also reported the state's impaired waters process as part of the Clean Water Act is now scheduled to begin on the lake in 2016. The five-year TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) study will seek sources of the lake's high nutrient levels.

Brezinka discussed a new water quality project on Schwanke Creek, one of the lake's inlets. The Lake Improvement District (LID) expects to provide funding in support of the property owner, as it has for two other livestock-runoff control projects affecting the lake. He also reported 18 best management practices, including several shoreline restoration projects on Big Swan Lake, were installed with help from the $203,158 Swan River Headwaters Clean Water Fund in 2011-2012. A similar county project is expected to begin this year, although cost-share funding with the property owner will be 50/50 rather than the 75/25 split of the previous program.

Betty Richter reported spending $60 for a used loon nesting platform from Maple Lake. Members had authorized her to spend up to $1,000 on such a structure in an effort to improve loon reproduction.

Harder then reviewed the status of the proposed culvert and stop log project on the lake's north-end river outlet. Members at the August 2014 meeting approved funding up to $25,000 to install both culverts and stop logs at two road crossings to balance the lake's high and low water levels, with DNR approval. That agency later denied permits for stop logs, throwing into question the intended meaning of the approved funding proposal.

As a follow up, Harder asked members to approve funding the culvert projects as the DNR did approve those permits for the affected landowners, Frank Becker and the Big Swan Lake Association campground. The DNR believes added culverts will help protect road crossings more than affect the lake's high or low water levels because the old dam sill that remains at the point where the Swan River exits the lake is higher than the culvert levels. Harder referred to a map he had drawn showing the elevations of berms and roads surrounding the river's floodplain, which his measurements show are higher than the sill. He believes this could cause historic high water levels to back up the river, causing it to top the sill level and create lake flooding.

Richter made a motion for members to vote on funding up to $15,000 for additional culverts on the Swan River exiting Big Swan Lake at Erie Drive and Era Circle. After more discussion and a second by Larry Alsleben, members overwhelmingly approved the motion by a show of hands. Brezinka asked Harder to approach the DNR about revising the permit to allow the culverts to be installed 12 or more inches above the river bottom rather than the seven-inch height stipulated in the permits.