BEAR LAKE-LAKE BOARD
SPECIAL ASSESSMENT HEARINGS MEETING
Thursday, September 24, 2026
LAKETON TOWNSHIP HALL

Chairman Paul Pek called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Chairman Paul Pek, Commissioners Barrett and Cook, Members Howell and Panici

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Bear Lake-Lake Board Attorney Kyle O'Meara and City Clerk Taylor Hobby

ROLL
City Clerk Hobby called the roll.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
Commissioner Cook moved to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was supported by Commissioner Panici and carried unanimously.

OVERVIEW OF MEETING PROCESS AND PURPOSE
Board Members introduced themselves. Attorney O'Meara thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He shared that Bear Lake-Lake Board is a separate unit of government that was created to benefit and improve Bear Lake. Funding comes primarily through special assessments. The previous assessment was for five-years and the funds lasted almost nine years.

The proposed method is based on waterfront, condos and commercial. The breakdown would be $524.22 for residential, $262.11 for condos, and $1,048.43 for commercial. These are per-year amounts.

An overview of the agenda was given. There is a public comment time where the audience can comment on items other than the lake improvement project. There are three opportunities at this meeting – two being on the lake improvement project and assessment.

The hearing of practicability is so the board can consider if they should continue to do improvements on the lake or not. The hearing of assessment is to discuss how to split up costs for the assessment. Audience is allowed three minutes to speak. Questions will be written down and addressed after everyone who wishes to give comment has come up.

Mr. O'Meara shared that a PowerPoint presentation which will likely answer a lot of questions the audience may have.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS OTHER THAN LAKE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
None

NEW BUSINESS
BEAR LAKE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Covered by PowerPoint presentation by Chair Pek and Attorney O'Meara.
Chairman Pek shared the purpose of the presentation is to share information on the Bear Lake Improvements.

Mr. O'Meara explained Part 309 of the Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act. Two public hearings must be held, which were noticed.

Chairman Pek shared the special assessment district. This includes properties between Witham Road bridge and Ruddiman Drive bridge over Bear Lake Channel. Chairman Pek then explained the budget and how they projected what would be needed. He explained the cost goes up each year, in 2026 non-treatment increased 5% and treatment increased by 10%.

Chairman Pek explained how Dr. Steinman from GVSU is used as a check and balance when receiving treatment suggestions from PLM. He went on to explain that the previous assessment was for five-years. The funds collected lasted longer than the five-years. This cannot be guaranteed for the proposed assessment.

The process of picking boundaries for the district was explained. There are 245 residential, 37 condo and 2 commercial parcels. Condos receive a reduction due to being shared access as opposed to exclusive. Commercial is charged for the increase in size and/or use. The board took into consideration the quality of access from parcels. One example being the Cedar Ave area. There are many cattails there, however there are options to creat paths and swim areas even with the native plants. Chairman Pek expressed the board put a lot of thought into all aspects prior to bringing forth the proposed assessment.

HEARING OF PRACTICABILITY
Chairman Pek opened the public hearing at 6:45 p.m.

Michael Burns, 1848 Cedar Ave, expressed concerns on his ability to access the lake from his property due to vegetation. He expressed concern for those on set-incomes, who also have limited access.

Michael Bigelow, 540 Glennwood Ave, inquired about the accomplishments that came with the last assessment and where this information can be found.

Deb Shields, 154 N. Bear Lake Rd, acknowledged that the presentation covered why this is costing so much but still finds it hard to grasp. Expressed that the treatment has improved the lake but there are issues such as wake boats and septic systems that have not been addressed. Ms. Shields shared that she does appreciate what the board is doing!

Lynn Dudek, 430 N. Bear Lake Rd, thanked the board for all they do! Expressed that Chairman Pek was very responsive with all her questions. Ms. Dudek inquired on how improvements are measured and if there is a way to get others who are using the lake to get involved.

Justin Wilson, 60 N. Bear Lake Rd, shared that he assisted in getting the Bear Lake-Lake Board put together years ago. Mr. Wilson explained how the process works with PLM in that they observe issues and recommend treatment. He expressed his appreciation for all the board is doing.

Chairman Pek then summarized letters received:

Lynn Dudek, 430 N. Bear Lake Rd, opposition to assessment.

Roy & Britta Portenga, 711 Center Street, submitted letter expressing opposition.

Patricia Rhodea, 122 N. Bear Lake Rd, expressed importance of protecting lake, but opposes assessment. States those on fixed-income should receive a break.

Peter Bruinsma, 1852 Cedar Ave, expressed lake area in front of property is swampy and they oppose the assessment.

Scott Preston, 504 Lake Dr, opposes the assessment.

Chairman Pek closed the public hearing at 7:01 p.m.

Board discussion/answering questions followed.

> How's money spent? Accomplishments from previous assessment?
> Chairman Pek shared that the Lake Management Plan explains what has and has not improved over the years. He explained that GVSU is used as a check and balance to determine if the issues do need to be treated, as a check to PLM.
>
> Commissioner Cook echoed that the management plan holds this information which includes data and success stories.
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> Why not assess the township and city?
> Chairman Pek and Attorney O'Meara shared that it is rare to assess other governments. Chairman Pek shared that both Laketon and North Muskegon put in their shares on the previous assessment as donations, which was not required.
>
> Chairman Pek addressed that the board is continually monitoring the lake and need for treatment. This means there is no set end date.
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> Attorney O'Meara shared that the district cannot be expanded beyond waterfront owners because an assessment is charged to properties that uniquely benefit from the lake.
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> Chairman Pek addressed concerns about wake boats. Sharing information on studies showing they are not good for shallow lakes, however there is nothing that can be done at this time to restrict their use in the lake.

CONSIDER RESOLUTION TO PROCEED WITH IMPROVEMENTS TO BEAR LAKE

Commissioner Cook moved to approve the resolution to proceed with improvements to Bear Lake. The motion was supported by Member Panici and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

HEARING OF ASSESSMENT

Presentation of Assessment Roll
Assessment roll was presented during initial presentation.

Chairman Pek opened the public hearing at 7:28 p.m.

Lance Smeltekop, 330 Waterview Lane, expressed that he is not against what the board is doing. He explained he has a very small parcel where the assessment amount would be greater than his taxes. He does not feel he has the same unique benefit as other property owners.

Greg Vankoevering, 2008 West Ridge Drive, shared he is the Treasurer of the Bay Ridge Condo Association, and this will involve a huge part of their budget and the benefit for the association is low.

Dustin Drumm, 625 Witham Drive, expressed concern over whether their pond area is in the purview of the Bear Lake-Lake Board.

Mike Muskovin, 1525 Glennwood Ave, has been attending meetings over the last few months and appreciates how serious the board has been taking this process. He stated they have put in tremendous consideration, and he thanks them for their work in treating and maintaining the lake.

Jim Holtz, 20145 West Ridge, expressed opposition to the assessment.

Dennis Edwards, 550 Glennwood, stated that he understands the board is doing the best they can. He expressed concerns to keep in mind that people are paying more to live on the lake and this is above and beyond that.

Dennis Kirksey, 1856 Cedar Ave, thanked the board for all their work. Expressed concern over whether there is really a benefit to those in his neighborhood.

Scott Preston, 504 Lake Drive, shared his opposition to the assessment and has reservations on how the board made their decisions.

KC Fowler, 580 Glennwood, has been a lake owner for 20 years and uses the lake a lot. He thanked the board for what they have done to this point. Expressed gratitude for the last assessment lasting 9 years and would like to know that this assessment will last longer than the five years.

Lynn Dudek, 430 N. Bear Lake Rd, asked that if the assessment goes through, she would like them to pay attention to the area of the cutout in the Bear Lake Channel.

J'Nai Closz, 1824 Cedar Ave, shared that she does not feel those on Cedar Ave have the same unique benefit as other waterfront owners as the quality of access is very poor.

Rebecca Injerd, 2010 W Ridge Dr, does not see a list of invasive species on the website, asked if that could be added.

Deb Shields, 154 Bear Lake Rd, inquired about whether the assessment could be put on summer tax bill.

Dan Zydema, 412 Westwind, asked who owns Bear Lake.

Board discussion/answering questions followed.

Can assessment be put on summer tax bill?
Mr. O'Meara has not seen that before. If the board waits, they will not have funds to continue treatment in 2026.

Who owns Bear Lake?
All residents own the bottom to a certain point in the lake. However, as a public lake it cannot be restricted to who can use the water above the bottom.

Cedar Avenue/Bay Ridge
Chairman Pek shared that owners have expressed they do not have waterfront property. The board disagrees. The board deliberated hard on how to proceed in these areas. Research was done and, in front of Cedar Ave homes, cattail treatment can take place, therefore the assessment is valid. Bay Ridge – the board is not sure there is a way to ensure someone could not build on those parcels. Research showed there is ability to access the lake from these properties. Commissioner Barrett shared that in the description there is the ability for a launch for unmotorized watercraft which can be located at the southwest corner of the property.

Chairman Pek shared that there is no way to guarantee that money will last longer than five-years although they are hopeful it will. Commissioner Barrett explained that an assessment is the best route to go as opposed to borrowing money for these treatments as it is more flexible. History shows that the board has always been responsible with the spending and do not spend beyond what is necessary.

CONSIDER RESOLUTION TO CONFIRM BEAR LAKE ASSESSMENT ROLL

Member Panici moved to approve the resolution to confirm the Bear Lake assessment roll. The motion was supported by Member Howell and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Commissioner Cook thanked everyone on the board for their diligent work throughout the process. She also thanked the public for coming and expressing their concerns and/or support.

BOARD COMMENTS

None

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Next meeting: TBD

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Taylor Hobby, City Clerk