



## *Echoes from Our Lake*

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
WALKER LAKESHORES LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION  
DECEMBER 2021  
*VOLUME 154*

### **Happy Holidays**

Happy Holidays to all the Walker Lake residents. I hope that everyone is getting ready for the long winter months ahead and that the pandemic becomes a thing of the past.

I have asked our clubhouse event committee chair to develop some social events to enjoy during the winter months. Although the Ladies' Club will not meet during the winter, our Men's Club will meet. We look forward to seeing more people participate. There are also monthly meetings of the Board of Directors that now allow members in good standing to attend via zoom or in-person at the clubhouse.

We are still looking for volunteers to help with committees that handle the chores of our lake, beaches, road, clubhouse, and tennis court. We are looking to get a team of people that can volunteer to help with spring clean-up around the clubhouse.

One of our big projects that we are planning to work on this coming year is repairs to our dam. We require work to be done by a licensed contractor to repair the emergency water exit pipe that runs from the emergency valve in the dam to the opening and that allows water to move downstream. We are presently awaiting state-mandated engineering studies that deal with the spillway structure and actual water flow capacity that the dam can handle during large rain events.

In addition, the land adjacent to the dam needs some attention: clearing rotten wood, weeds and dead trees. There are presently some fallen trees downstream, too, that need attention.

No — we did not forget that some lakefront landowners want to work on their shorelines. The state requires that permits be issued to the property owners prior to any shoreline work. We'll announce when the lake level will be lowered.

A special year-end thanks to our community members who volunteered their time to:

- ✚ Be members of the Board of Directors;
- ✚ Develop the capability to have the B.O.D meetings via Zoom;
- ✚ Plant and maintain our flower gardens;
- ✚ Install new road signs;
- ✚ Repair emergency lighting in the clubhouse and office;
- ✚ Keep the lake & beaches clean and safe; and
- ✚ Keep our tennis court operational; among many other things.

Best wishes for the New Year, and I hope to meet you at a social event or around our community.

— John Weber

## ***A note from your treasurer...***



Your board adopted the 2022 budget and assessments at its November 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. Budgeted total expenditures of \$388,000 are met through a mix of assessment income and reserve funds, when appropriate.

This is a very strong budget that continues to build on the base we've developed in recent years. It sets us on a path of better planning for future expenditures. It was not adopted without debate, however, and is truly a product of compromise in the spirit of putting community first.

In developing the budget, your Finance Committee had its work cut out for it – from deferred maintenance items coming due, to concerns for community members affected financially by the pandemic and/or on fixed incomes.

It was truly a challenging budget, and it was clear early in the process that some increases in assessments would be necessary to fund the needs.

We knew that...

...the pandemic would have already put additional fiscal pressure on our property owners.

...a one-time infusion of funds (as in 2018 receipts from an insurance claim or 2020 receipts from litigation) was not expected for 2022.

...measures taken over the last few years had only served to nibble around the edges, and our Road issues, in particular, were a much bigger problem than any of those smaller solutions could resolve.

...2021 Road Repairs total \$69,615 of the total road budget. \$22K was spent on tar & chip (T&C), leaving another \$110K worth of T&C bid, but not accomplished, due to limited resources.

...the Road Committee requested \$75,500 for Road Repairs for 2022 (of the total \$122K Road budget), \$30K of which was to be allocated to T&C.

...yet, some of our roads (Lake Shore, East Shore & Cahoonzie from Maple to Birch) are not candidates for T&C, being found in such poor condition that they need to be taken up and completely redone. (A rough estimate of \$150,000 to patch and repave Lake Shore alone would increase significantly with the added need to mill it up and start over.)

...with those conditions in mind, we could double Road Assessments, exhaust those funds on Road Repair, and still have work left to do. The need is far greater than previously understood.

...the board did stretch current resources for roads by directing that our bank line of credit be refinanced in 2022, making another \$19,920 available for Road Repair and bringing the 2022 Road Repair budget up to \$95,420 from the \$75,500 requested by the Road Committee.

...finally, the Ad Hoc Special Road Committee is intended to provide long-term planning for roads, but not in time for the 2022 budget. Surely, they will find that we need more funding.

...beyond roads, our buildings are also ripe for more repairs than we can fund with our current Building Reserve.

...if we don't start in 2022 digging ourselves out from under the pile of deferred maintenance we have, that pile will only grow, compounding the eventual cost.

We knew, in short, that we could not responsibly proceed without an assessment increase.

In order to make income meet the projected expenses, the following assessment increases are required:

- \$40 at each tier for Road;
- \$50 in the Amenity Access Fee; and
- \$10 in membership dues

Lake assessment will be unchanged at \$325.

For some property owners, this will mean an increase overall of \$100 for the year. 2022 assessments will be billed out January 1.

For a more detailed explanation, please see the 2022 Budget Presentation posted on the walkerlake.com website: <https://www.walkerlake.com/general-9>

Feel free to reach out to the office with any questions.

Painful though this is, please recognize the circumstances that we face as a community, and – if you will – please embrace these efforts to get us onto more solid fiscal ground.

Here's to a very Happy and Healthy New Year for all!

— Carol Gillen, Treasurer

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## **A Note From the Road Chair**

As I prepared for and went into the November Board meeting as both the Road Committee Chair and an At-Large Director, I was totally against raising fees for 2022. However, as I listened to the highly detailed report and presentation by our hard-working, non-paid treasurer, Carol Gillen, I came to realize that, without raising assessments, we would have less money to spend on road repairs than we had in each of the past four calendar years.

The reason is that roads got a “boost” in funds in the past several years from several one-time payments to WLLA that Carol explains in her treasurer article and presentation.

While we still have a long way to go, we have made progress since 2018 and we must keep moving forward. Even with the planned increase in 2022 fees, roads will remain severely underfunded, vis-a-vis the need. Without that increase, the progress we've made would grind to a halt – a terrible mistake, given that roads need constant attention.

Please take the time to view and listen to Carol's presentation on the WLLA website.

— Michael DeVita

## Program Committee – Upcoming Events

Back to “Normal.” *Please, don’t* just go back to “normal.” Post-pandemic life can be *so much* better than that...

There's no doubt the Covid-19 pandemic was tough. It turned our world upside down. It disrupted our routines; forced us to stay home; closed schools. Some lost jobs; many were unable to see family and friends; missed celebrating birthdays and holidays with the people we love. It made us confront the fragility of life and pushed us well beyond our limits.

But, amidst our own collective fears and suffering, there’s always a silver lining. We learned to be kind and to care for our neighbor; we learned to slow down and enjoy the time at home with our wife, husband, children, even our beloved, ever faithful and goofy, pets.

We focused more on our physical and mental health. Children played outside again; we dusted off the old board games and sat at the table talking with each other. We learned that we are strong and can handle what life throws at us. We proved to ourselves how resilient we are; we treated each other with compassion.

The time *has* come for WLLA to reopen its doors and enjoy some time together with old friends and get to know some new ones. So mark your calendars ladies and gentlemen, and please join us as we all try to get back to our *best* “Normal.”

### December Event:

We’ve waited all year for a new beginning...

At last...and it’s finally here!

Please join us for a little bubbly and good cheer to toast the  
New Year.

Friday, December 31, 2021

9:00 PM to 1:00 AM

\$20.00 for Members

\$25.00 for Non-Members

We’ll provide the music and a champagne toast; you provide  
the dancing shoes, laughter and other BYOB.

RSVP required: [wlassociation@gmail.com](mailto:wlassociation@gmail.com) or call 570-296-7788



### January Event:

Potluck Dinner Theater

Still unsure about a movie. Any recommendations? Little Miss  
Sunshine, perhaps?

Admit one

Dinner 5:00 PM

Showtime 6:00 PM

Date Saturday, January 22, 2022

Please bring your favorite dish to share; we’ll provide the movie  
and snacks.

Members free

Non-Members \$5.00

RSVP required: [wlassociation@gmail.com](mailto:wlassociation@gmail.com) or call 570-296-7788



**February Event:**

It's Game Time

Eat, Drink, and Watch Football!

Join us for a Super Bowl party!

Sunday, February 13, 2022

BYOB, but we will supply the food and snacks.

5:00 PM doors open

Members free

Non-Members \$5.00

RSVP required: [wlassociation@gmail.com](mailto:wlassociation@gmail.com) or call 570-296-7788



**March Event:**

Paint. Sip. Repeat.

Come on out and join us in this favorite community event. We'll supply the artist, canvas, and snacks.

You supply the Sippings

Saturday, March 19, 2022

7:00 PM

\$20.00 for Members

\$25.00 for Non-Members

RSVP required:

[wlassociation@gmail.com](mailto:wlassociation@gmail.com)

or call 570-296-7788

RSVP early, this one fills up fast!



Photo courtesy of Ronya Rabady

## Snow and Winter-Related Reminders



When it comes to roads, part of the winter planning process is looking back and taking history into account. Well, the winter of 2019-20 was one of the mildest winters we had, while the last winter, especially February, was one of the worst. So how do we plan? We plan for the worst, yet hope for the best. The most important thing is to try to be ready for anything mother nature throws at you.

While there is a general plan when it comes to snow fighting and plowing the roads, each storm is inherently different. Type of precipitation, temperatures throughout the storm, expected accumulations, wind speeds, and precipitation per hour all come into play. But the bottom line is to get the roads open as quickly and safely as possible once all the precipitation has ended. The WLLA Board is committed to providing the service to do just that.

Empire State Excavating is no longer in the snowplowing business. I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to RJ Morales for doing such a great job for the past three winters.

In July, on the recommendation of the Road Committee, the WLLA Board awarded Frenchman Excavating a two-year snowplow contract. Frenchman was the contractor before Empire, and they know the community well. Where they fell short was no fault of their own, because in the past, boards that hired the snow contractor only required one plow truck. That changed in 2018 when a new contract was put out to bid requiring two plow trucks in the community.

Frenchman at that time could not guarantee two trucks, and therefore the contract was awarded to Empire. Frenchman now has the equipment and is ready to perform at the level of service expected.

### Salt and Anti-Skid

We will also continue to use the green-colored ClearLane salt on the paved roads. This salt is more environmentally friendly as less salt is needed and we do not have to mix it with anti-skid. As a reminder though, just like any salt product, it can be irritating to dogs with sensitive paws. Make sure you clean the bottoms of their paws after taking your fur baby for a walk especially on wet roads after snow fall. Plain anti-skid will be spread on unpaved roads. We do not use any salt on unpaved roads.



Clean dog's paws after taking for walk on paved road after a winter storm

### Important Winter Notes

First, as a reminder, WLLA regulations stipulate that ATV and snowmobile use is not permitted on any of the roads in WLLA-owned common areas, or on the frozen lake, or dam area.



Next, Frenchman Excavating will start plowing once there is a snow accumulation of 2". That doesn't mean every road gets started when there is 2 inches of snow; it just means they will start plowing in the community. If there is an ice storm, spreading starts as soon as needed.

Make sure the drainage ditches and culvert pipes along the roadway by your property are clean and able to handle the melting snow runoff.

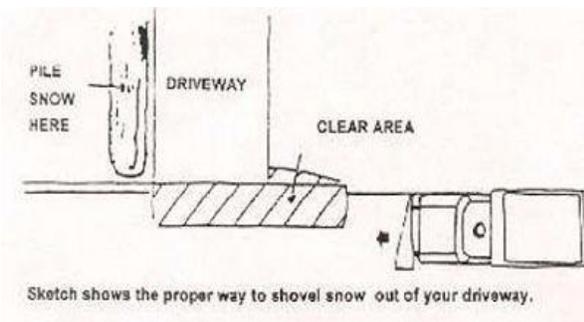
For the safety and convenience of all residents, we ask that you do not blow or shovel the snow from your driveway into the roads themselves. Doing this creates hazards for others using our roads.

Please bring trash and recycling cans back off the road once they are emptied to keep them from being in the way of plowing or, worse, being plowed away entirely in heavier snow.

If you have a plowing issue, please call or e-mail the WLLA office, or you may post your concern on our Friends of Walker Lake Facebook page, which is monitored regularly. While Facebook is not the official way complaints should be filed, we understand that, given limited office hours, when it comes to snow issues posting on Facebook will normally facilitate a quicker response, if warranted.

### Driveway Shoveling Tip

How many times have you shoveled out your driveway only to have the plow come by and leave a pile of snow at the end of your driveway? While it may not eliminate that from happening totally, here is a little tip that can greatly reduce the amount of snow that gets plowed back in front of your driveway.



When you shovel your driveway, clear an area to the right of the driveway as shown in the diagram on the left. This will enable the blade of the plow to empty the snow before it gets to your driveway. Remember the more snow the bigger area is needed for a clear area. It may take you a couple of storms to figure out how much of a clear area you will need.

Enjoy the winter but come on spring!

— Michael DeVita — WLLA Road Chair

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## Michael DeVita – A Leader Who’s Led

When Michael DeVita’s older sons, Michael, and Nicholas, were both in Catholic high schools and the family was living in New Jersey, Michael and his wife, Nancy, realized they could not afford to both keep the boys in private schools and continue living in high-property-tax New Jersey. So, they moved to an apartment in Matamoras while looking for a permanent home in Pennsylvania. But before they found that apartment, they had been looking for months for “the right place.”

“How are you going to know it’s the right place?” Michael’s mother asked him. Michael, a man who, at 12, “accepted Christ” watching a Billy Graham crusade and hasn’t wavered in his devotion since, told his mom he believed God had a plan for him and, when he came upon the right place, he’d know it.

As temporary quarters, the 2nd floor Matamoras apartment would have been just right; “it offered everything we needed,” said Michael. The landlord said they could move in, “*but....* you’ve got to get along with the guy downstairs.” A few days later, when Michael arrived to clean the place, the “guy downstairs,” a “motorcycle dude” who had ridden with the Pagans, an outlaw motorcycle club, was sitting on the porch step.

Michael always wears, hidden beneath his shirt, a Christ charm his sister Lisa gave him, but that day it had somehow slipped outside. Spying it, the dude asked, “Do me a favor: pray for me.”

For eight months thereafter, until he and his family moved to Walker Lake in 2000, Michael counseled with the “guy downstairs,” helping him deal with addiction and get onto solid ground. God, indeed, had a plan.

That strain of service has run through Michael’s life since he was a teenager. A mix of religion – he attended Catholic school through 6th grade – and the influence of his dad, who was an active community volunteer and served on town boards when Michael was growing up, explains in part where that spirit of service came from.

The spirit animated Michael’s career with the NJDOT, which we’ll get to in a minute, but also explains his service on the Walker Lake Board of Directors, where he has the professionally logical, but personally thankless, responsibility of Roads Committee chair.

It may also explain the way Michael thinks about his third son, Vinny, 30, a “special needs” person: “He was given to us because we could take care of him,” Michael explained; “we” being himself and Nancy, a pharmacy technician, who has been his wife for nearly 40 years.

Vinny, who, in church, plays air guitar, “worships the way he is moved by the Spirit,” Michael reports, and “wins people over” with his smile and positive attitude. He’s also active in the Special Olympics, for which Michael is a coach.

Michael, Michael and Nancy’s eldest son, is general manager at the Utica Applebee’s while living in Little Falls, NY. Their middle son, Nicholas, who lives in Middletown, is one of the leading harness horse trainers at Yonkers Raceway. When they were young, Michael did what many parents do, drove them around delivering newspapers, all the while using their involuntary captivity to deliver “little lectures,”

of which he is now, thirty-something years later, occasionally reminded in the kind of good-natured jest that conveys appreciation.

Michael and Nancy also, gratefully, have a 3-year-old granddaughter, Emily.

Michael DeVita, who grew up in Garfield, NJ and, as previously noted, became a devout Christian at a young age, says he “never worried about what people thought about me.” As a high school freshman, he’d occasionally wear his Boy Scout uniform to school, even though his mom cautioned him that the other kids might “pick on him.” He didn’t care, he says.

What he cared about then – as now – is being the best he could be at whatever it was and being a “good team player.” More about that in a minute.



Michael DeVita making a face that only a child (in this case, granddaughter Emily) could love.

Following his own drummer, he read books like The Power of Positive Thinking by the Rev. Norman Vincent Peale, gravitated toward community organizations for adults (Garfield Special Police; Jaycees), and sought or welcomed leadership roles. Though his father died young (at 47) of cancer, Michael says he “was always blessed with someone in my life as a good mentor.”

His father, a crew supervisor with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (DOT), had, in more ways than one, paved the way for Michael in his own career with the NJ DOT. His dad, he said, was a “visionary,” a man ahead of his time, who had ideas about how things should be done that were not accepted at the time. Michael, in his time with the DOT, was able to implement many of those ideas. He also, he said, learned by observing others; in many cases learning “what not to do.” “I’d see some bosses just create their own problems.”

At the peak of his career, as an Area Supervisor with 6 to 8 highway maintenance crews reporting to him, Michael’s portfolio at DOT was vast and incredibly important. For 5 years he supervised a shift of the DOT Northern Emergency Operations Center (NEOC), an area that stretched from the Delaware to the Hudson and from High Point in the north to Interstate 78 in the south, which meant it covered all the critical highways: I-80, I-287, US-17, US-46, US-206, NJ-23, leading to New York City, the nation’s commercial and financial center. In the NEOC, Michael would oversee and manage workers during both manmade and natural disasters. In major snowstorms, Michael would oversee the work of upwards of 1,100 pieces of snow equipment and personnel.

Michael didn't care about being liked on the job, he cared about being respected. He cared about his crews and their well-being, and he cared about his supervisors, giving them wide scope to do the work the way they thought best, given the uniqueness of each set of circumstances. "I'm a 'bottom line' guy," Michael says, "I care about results."

His demonstrated mastery has led to his being – in "retirement" – called back by commissioners and assistant commissioners of the Department on a consulting assignment in development of training programs for DOT technicians.

From the writer's perspective, Michael has brought that same dedication to excellence, that same willingness to call things as he sees them, rather than saying things that will make him liked, to his responsibilities as a trustee of the Walker Lakeshores Landowners Association. As demonstrated by his August PowerPoint and oral presentation to the Board and community concerning road repair and replacement options, he handles his job and treats the Board as if WLLA were a Fortune 500 company...that is to say, respectfully. Such professionalism may not, literally, pave all our roads, but it does, figuratively, lift all our boats.

— Bob Fisher

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## Walker Lake Access vs Use

Walker Lake is a private lake but that does not mean that those using it do not have to follow Pennsylvania fishing and boating regulations. In fact, Walker Lake's control ends at the shoreline and the lake itself is regulated by the Commonwealth. To fish, boat or paddleboard you need to observe the same rules as for most other bodies of water in the State.

- Anyone 16 years or older is required to have a fishing license. Trout are not found in the lake and if one did show up it could not live a full season; therefore, a trout stamp is not required.
- An adult is not required to have a license to assist someone 15 years or younger, as long as the child stays within arms-reach, is actively involved and the adult does not set the hook and then hands off the fishing rod.
- A Coast Guard-approved wearable life jacket or personal flotation device is required for each occupant of all types of boats. The rules do not say it, but since a wearable life jacket or personal flotation device is required on a paddleboard, it makes sense to wear it.
- Children 12 years of age and under must wear a life jacket in any boat or paddleboard under 20 feet in length and in all canoes and kayaks.
- All boaters are required by law to wear life jackets on boats under 16 feet in length during the cold weather months of November through April when cold water shock can cause a fatality.
- Motorboats, both electric and gas, must be registered. Registration is not required for non-motorized craft if only used on Walker Lake.

For more detailed information please see the Pennsylvania Fishing Summary/ Boating Handbook available at most sportsman retail stores and on-line (<http://164.156.124.84/bookboat.htm>).

— Chet Dawson

## Greetings from Your New Editor, Bill Mays

In the 30+ years of living at Walker Lake I've grown to love and respect all that the area offers: the quietude, the inspiration, the natural beauty. Over the years I've volunteered in several ways: trash picker-upper, tennis court cleaner, and, once, I presented a music concert in the clubhouse as a fundraiser for WLLA. My wife, Judy Kirtley, has served on the Board.

My latest volunteer work will be assuming the editorship, in March 2022, of the newsletter. Bob Fisher has done a great job, has given me encouraging suggestions, and will be passing it on to me.

I look forward to continuing the many different areas of focus in the newsletters, as well as incorporating some new ideas: restaurant reviews, notification of upcoming art and music events, interviews with current residents (and past "alumni") who have interesting history or stories to share.

Toward that end I welcome suggestions from you WLLA denizens, and hope all of you might become more engaged in your newsletter, in attending general meetings (and voting!), and helping promote a sense of goodwill in the community.



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## The Ornaments on Our Community Tree



Down in the basement of my old childhood home was a large, rectangular straw basket that only my dad was strong enough to carry – once a year at Christmastime – up the cellar stairs.

It might have been a jewelry box, because, when its cover was removed in the light of day, its contents of shiny and ancient ornaments, colored lights and tinsel, shown like gems – gems we children were allowed, carefully, to hang on the lower branches of the awaiting, aromatic tree.

Over the last several years, as your editor, I've collected some ornaments of my own. They are our Walker Lake friends and neighbors who have been featured from time to time on these pages.

We could have featured almost any one of you and found your story to be interesting, your character to be good, your intentions to be honorable.

The folks we featured were – like – a random sampling. But, like a good sample, they speak of the diverse talents, the gifts we all have to give, the spirit of goodwill and brotherhood that is there, all around us; part of the great gift of life. They and the rest of you are ornaments of this community, as precious as those I once hung on the family tree.

— Bob Fisher

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