

Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District (WID)

Governance Structure

Background on WID

WID is a “governmental subdivision of the State and a public body corporate and politic exercising public powers” that maintains and operates the Lake Barcroft Dam and Lake Barcroft’s water resource. State code allows an area within a soil and watershed conservation district such as WID to create a special governmental unit overlying the county government to perform certain governmental functions including to levy tax and borrow money. Its purpose is to promote “the construction of improvements to check erosion, provide drainage, collect sediment or stabilize the runoff of surface water.” WID’s territory includes the lake and dam and specifically defined residential areas in the immediate lake area.

The directors of the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District sit in dual capacities as the governing body of both NVS&WCD and WID. Pursuant to the enabling statute, they appoint three WID trustees, who must be Lake Barcroft property owners and who are charged with the budgeting and operation of WID. The trustees elect a chairperson, treasurer, and secretary/operations advisor from their number and may engage agents and consultants and hire employees as required. The trustees employ a General Manager and a full and part-time staff to conduct the day-to-day operations relating to the dam and the lake

The trustees propose an annual budget and secure approval from NVS&WCD. The Commonwealth of Virginia through the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation board of the Department of Conservation and Recreation must, in turn, also approve the annual budget.

State law provides that the real estate within the boundaries of WID is appraised for WID taxes by Fairfax County, setting the value of each lot identical to its value for Fairfax County real estate taxes. When the WID budget is approved, the tax rate is calculated to meet the income budgeted and is based on the overall assessed value of the approximately 1,000 lots within WID geography. Fairfax County bills each homeowner within the District for WID tax as an addition to their property tax billing, turning the money received over to WID.

The Lake Barcroft Association (the homeowners association) owns the lake, dam, beaches, and certain other common properties through a subsidiary, Barcroft Beach, Inc. (BBI). There is a permanent agreement between BBI and WID, which grants WID sufficient easements and rights in the lake and the dam to perform its public soil and water conservation functions including operation of the dam, silt removal from the bed of the lake and to otherwise manage the physical aspects of the lake.

Thus, WID and the community organizations are conveniently married. WID, a public organization, whose public consists of the residents of the Lake Barcroft community, and LBA/BBI, private organizations with the same constituency, serve different, but complementary, functions and provide for a continuity of management for all aspects of Lake Barcroft.

WID and LBA Agreement Relating to Trustees

Although NVS&WCD by law appoints WID trustees, WID and LBA serve in an advisory capacity and jointly inform NVS&WCD of their recommendation to fill any trustee vacancy. Thus, in practice trustees are selected by the Lake Barcroft community. When a Trustee vacancy exists or is imminent, WID and LBA appoint a trustee nominating committee (committee) to advance a single name to NVS&WCD as the nominee of the Lake Barcroft community to fill the vacancy.

The committee consists of four members, two selected by WID Trustees and two by LBA. The resigning trustee may not sit on the committee but may be called upon by the committee for advice and counsel during its deliberations.

The committee, with the advice of WID trustees, establishes appropriate qualifications to use in selecting a nominee and is not bound by previously established criteria, although it should take them into account. By law, a trustee must be a property owner within WID's boundaries.

The committee announces a search for a trustee to the lake community and solicits qualified applicants from the community. At a minimum, announcements appear in both the LBA newsletter and on the community's LakeLink computer bulletin board and contain a general description of the qualifications sought.

Selection of a final nominee by committee members is by a majority vote of the committee. Upon selection, the approved nominee shall be advanced to WID and LBA and will be recommended jointly by them to NVS&WCD.

Although not in law, the term of a WID Trustee shall be for 5 years. While no absolute term limits can be imposed, the reappointment of a WID Trustee beyond his or her first term will require input from the LBA President.

Current Trustees and other Offices

Current Trustees are Alan Pisarski (Chairman), Jerry Mendenhall (Treasurer—who has announced his pending resignation), and George McLennan (Secretary/Operations Adviser). Interested and capable lake residents also can participate in WID affairs when called upon by the Trustees or the General Manager.

Davis Grant, WID General Manager, manages the day-to-day operations of the staff in support of the dam, its systems, and the lake. A paid staff performs the majority of the day-today work, and several consultants and contractors provide specialized external support.

Trustee General Responsibilities

Trustees have overall responsibility for the activities of WID. Their primary efforts are invested in:

- Oversight of staff, operations, dam functions, and lake environment
- Ensuring LBWID's compliance with all State and Federal laws & regulations.
- Ensuring proper operation & maintenance of the Dam and compliance with all regulations established by the Virginia Division of Dam Safety.
- Oversight on all fiscal/financial matters (budgets, tax rates, operations expenses, capital plans and expenses, cash management, investments, and audits).

- Preparing and presenting annual budget for approval by the NVS&WCD and the Virginia Soil and Water Board
- Oversight of contract development and implementation.
- Representing the LBWID at meetings, including public relations on lake and dam related issues within and outside the lake community.
- Communication with the residents of Lake Barcroft to keep them informed of LBWID's initiatives and challenges (Newsletter articles and community meetings/events)
- Oversight of coordination and cooperation with the Lake Barcroft Association
- Oversight of coordination and cooperation with the political and administrative authorities of Commonwealth of Virginia, Fairfax County, City of Alexandria, and the Federal Government
- Monitoring relevant environmental issues and opportunities within the entire Lake Barcroft watershed.

Trustees meet regularly with the General Manager to stay in touch with WID operations and other emerging issues. Normal daily operations are well under control and typically require only general oversight by the trustees.

The time commitment for trustees is approximately 12 hours per month for ordinary business and another 20 hours annually for budget preparation. Also, they spend whatever time is necessary for special projects or problems as they arise. This can be a few hours from time to time or serious added time working on anything from storm and safety issues to capital planning to preparing policy manuals to designing equipment. Trustees have chosen to lend their special talents and experience to WID in addition to their typical oversight functions.

WID Trustee Board Structure

As a group, trustees have a wide range of abilities and experience of importance to WID. For example, currently the WID trustees contribute in the following capacities:

For the Chair: CEO - acts as a spokesperson and takes the lead with diplomatic initiatives (within and outside of the Lake Barcroft community)

For the Treasurer: CFO - acts as financial coordinator, works closely with the LBWID General Manger, LBWID's accountant, financial auditor and LBWID's banking/investment institution.

Secretary/Operations Advisor - fulfills the limited responsibility of secretary (mostly recording meeting minutes), and more significantly, acts as day-to-day operations advisor to the LBWID General Manager.

Collectively the LBWID Trustees work closely together, and with the General Manager, to establish a practical consensus on all aspects of LBWID's responsibilities and mission. At times this requires lengthy discussions and compromise.

General Qualifications for WID Trustees

These are the skills and personal qualities considered necessary for LBWID Trustees to possess to properly fulfill their responsibilities. Serving on the Board of Trustees is a major commitment that should not be undertaken lightly (As is fully demonstrated by the current WID Board.).

Personal Qualities

- Works effectively and efficiently in a team atmosphere
- Brings no personal agenda to the job and is open minded to differing opinions

Skills – Strategic Thinking & Decision Making

- Fact-based, logical, and rational approach to decision making
- Ability to make informed decisions efficiently and act in a timely manner
- Ability to analyze and contribute to long-term planning and establishing milestones

Skills – Communications

- Ability to articulate ideas, opinions, rationales, and comments in a clear, concise, logical, and professional manner (written and verbal)
- Ability to interact with other board members in a group setting and in a professional manner., both contributing to discussions, and valuing the contributions of all members.
- Comfortable speaking in public

Skills – Technical, Financial and Analytical

- Ability to understand and evaluate management, engineering, and accounting & financial concepts/strategies.
- Proficient with computer application such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, email, internet, etc.

Other Attributes

- Available during regular business hours and for an average of one day per week
- Comfortable with large budgets and million-dollar projects