

**MINUTES**  
**ARPRD Annual Business Meeting**  
**Amery City Hall, Amery, WI**  
**10:00 a.m. on August 23, 2025**

1. Chairman Roland Peterson welcomed ARPRD residents, including some new residents, and discussed the creation of the Apple River Protection and Rehabilitation District in 1975. In the 1800's a dam was built, creating a 640-acre lake. The goal of the ARPRD is to maintain usable water. The arprd.org website includes a detailed history and additional useful information. The board members were also introduced. Roland called the meeting to order, and the agenda was set.
2. The official notice of the meeting and agenda was posted twice in the Amery Free Press, and the agenda and proposed budget were mailed out and posted on the arprd.org website. The meeting notice was also in the Summer 2025 ARPRD Newsletter, which is on the arprd.org website.
3. It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting.
4. It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the Treasurer's Report. Income to date is \$72,100.28. Expenses to date are \$52,647.85. The current balance is \$21,689.38.
5. It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the Audit Committee Report presented by Derrick Carlson. The committee had access to all bank statements, checks and spreadsheets. Everything balanced perfectly.
6. Reports:
  - a. Harvesting: Harvesting Operations Manager Dave Schleusner reported that the harvesters were taken out in April, and spring maintenance was completed. Both harvesters were in the water early. The Inland harvester went into the lower end below the 46 bridge on May 8<sup>th</sup>, and the Aquarius harvester went into the north end on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Since May 10<sup>th</sup> from the 46 bridge to Amery there have been 467 loads of aquatic plant materials removed, about 3269 tons. It has been another bad year for weeds. 220 loads have been removed from the north end so far. With about four tons per load, that is a total of 1,760,000 pounds. In August alone, 76 loads have been removed from the north end so far. Each time Dave works on one part of the river, he gets phone calls from people on the other part of the river. The weeds grow very quickly, and it has been hard to keep up. Let's hope for a winter with snow and cold so we get better conditions next spring and summer. A resident commented that this is her 11<sup>th</sup> summer on the river, and she has noticed that the water level in the river is consistently lower than it used to be. There is a giant rock near her home, and there used to be less than five inches showing, and now there are seven or eight. The water levels are too low, and it makes it hard to get the harvester in some places. Some repairs have been done, including a drive shaft that was a couple of thousand dollars. A four by four that was around three feet long had gotten wedged into the harvester. It had been floating where the harvester operator was unable to see it. The harvester is off warranty. Dave was able to get the drive shaft for \$1,000 off and did the repair himself. Otherwise, the repair would have been \$5,000. People may not realize it, but there are a lot of dock boards that end up floating in the river. Dave rebuilt two drive motors, and there are two others that are not rebuildable. The new motors are \$700, and it costs \$100 for a rebuilt motor. A starter went, and that was another \$900. Dave did try getting a new battery first. The Inland motor uses vegetable oil, but that does not hold up like hydraulic oil. Dave had to replace one motor. The red truck will need new tires. The game warden said the harvesters had to have registration, but the factory said the harvesters are not registerable. So, the Inland and the Aquarius are not registered. There is no hull ID. The game warden made Balsam Lake pull their harvester out. Dave told them he would put it back in, and Inland is fighting for them. Harvester operators include Dave, Aiden, Isaac, John and Rich. Costs that will need to be part of the 2026 budget include tires that are needed for the 2011 Chevy truck, new brakes, and a hydraulic oil change. A forty-gallon drum of hydraulic oil costs \$2,100. The harvesters can only travel at three and a half miles per hour. By the time you clean the last section of the river, the area where you first started cleaning has considerable weed growth.

The larger harvester has 2000 hours of running time since 2020. It is like a car with 200,000 miles on it. The smaller Aquarius harvester has around 5000 hours on it. It would cost around \$10,000 for a new main motor. They usually last about 6000 hours, and you cannot rebuild them. Roland gave a reminder that the ARPRD has two harvesters, a 2012 Aquarius, and a 2020 Inland, two trucks, two trailers and a conveyor. Prior to ARPRD beginning harvesting there was some spraying, but residents downstream were considering a lawsuit, and then the DNR said we could not do it anymore. Curly leaf pondweed starts up early but dies out in July along with duckweed. As it is dying out Coontail immediately starts up. Roland has a big thank you to Dave from all of us. Without him ARPRD would have to raise taxes to pay for repairs and all the other work he does. A resident brought up a concern about the abandoned properties where people leave in docks that fall apart which results in boards floating in the river. Is that a DNR issue or how can we address it?

- b. CBCW Grant: Isaac headed up the Clean Boats Clean Waters team. There must be 200 hours of work in order for ARPRD to get the grant funding. Isaac emailed Dave to confirm that to date 91 boats have been inspected, 165 people were spoken to, and the 200 hours are completed. The CBCW team will boat watch on Labor Day weekend. The decontamination stations are being used. We want people to spray before going into the river. Dave fills the water at least three times a week, checking when he goes by.
  - c. Water Quality: Tom Sheffel reported on the Apple River Flowage water quality. Clarity continues to improve. It was five feet and is now consistently six to seven feet. The DNR has links for lakes on their websites, and many other lakes have less clarity. He checks every third week across from the residence with the plane in the hanger.
  - d. Aquatic Invasive Species: Derrick Carlson gave the AIS report. He has been out three times and taken 45 samples so far this year. He goes to multiple sites. He is especially watching for zebra mussels and eurasian milfoil. Due to a change at Lincoln Landing he has to go further out. He uses sample plates and bricks to check for zebra mussels, and everyone should watch for them when they take their docks out. So far Derrick has not seen either one in the flowage, or any other new to the flowage invasive species.
7. Critical Needs Information Reports for Upcoming ARPRD Consideration:
- a. Equipment Storage and Income: Another concern brought up by Dave is where we park and store the equipment. It deteriorates if it is left outside. Taking good of the equipment can extend its life. The Aquarius 7' cutting head harvester is 13 years old and will need replacement in the not-too-distant future. Down the road Dave would like to see us buy our own land. There is a huge pile of weeds by Lincoln Landing that anyone can take. After a couple of years, the weeds turn into black dirt. After you run them through a separator, they sell for \$24 a yard. ARPRD could be almost self-sufficient if we could start processing and selling this dirt. We would need to buy land and build a shed. We could apply for a grant and/or take out a thirty-year loan. We could keep the weeds on our own land and separate them. There is money to be made in black dirt. The city furnishes fuel to push the weeds up and currently uses it for filling the sides of roads after road work is done. Grass on those sites is growing up gangbusters. One resident said that it has been hard to get manure. Gardens get tremendous after using the two-year-old weeds. The man we rent from for storage recently passed away, and his grandson is continuing to let us use the property for now. If we are able to purchase land in the future, we would need about five acres. An ideal spot would be north of town where gravel is currently being taken out. Rice Lake sells the weeds they harvest to a farmer who fertilizes about 45 acres with them. They get paid for dumping the weeds in his fields and make just a little bit of money. They do not separate the weeds.
  - b. Water Quality Project Planning Grant Consideration: Back in 2013, Jeremy Williamson put together a lake management plan. It deals with water quality. There is a high phosphorus flow from the Apple River into the St. Croix River. The land around our watershed is full of phosphorus. We have touched upon each of the goals in the lake management plan, including putting in 28 buffer strips on the flowage to help reduce nutrient flow into the river from the

folks living directly on the river. Jeremy is now in a new position, and he and Roland have been talking since last September. The Apple River has better clarity, but phosphorus is still high even with the buffer strips and harvesting. The removal of weeds reduces the nutrient load somewhat, but there is still a lot coming in. Beaver Brook and Fox Creek flow into the Apple River and contribute a significant load. We could not go straight to an implementation grant. Alex at the DNR said there would need to be a plan developed first. Aquatic invasive species and aquatic plants were the top two goals of the lake management plan. Some people were confusing duckweed which is harmless with algal blooms. The phosphorus pollution is driving the excessive coontail growth. It is not a rooted plant and pulls its nutrition from the water column. We looked back at the report. Beaver Brook is really large, going all the way to Clayton. Fox Creek is smaller but still contributes a lot. There is a ton of agriculture in the area. One suggestion from the DNR was an educational program for the farmers, but that would likely not go over well or get us anywhere. The planning would not need a lot of spending on chemistry; we could use data from the USGS for Fox Creek and Beaver Brook information. There is a program called SPARROW. Roland and Jeremy met with Eric at Polk County. The county would be willing to share ACPF data. Geographic data could be leveraged. Grass to the waterway and manure pits were discussed. How could farmers be approached? Most farmers are doing an awesome job, but agriculture is still one of the biggest contributors of phosphorus and other nutrients. Right now, they are rewriting the management plan for the St. Croix River which was from 1999. How can nutrients and sediments be reduced to improve water quality? Jeremy had a Tinkerbell moment when thinking about it. There is LiDAR data available showing elevation. He could do a 3D analysis to see where tributaries are cut off from their traditional flood plain. The plan would include selecting manmade or natural areas where the floodplain has been cut off. He can get information from the Restorable Wetland Index. Restorable wetlands line right up with the channels of those creeks. It could be leveraged with the SPARROW model. A plan could be made to restore wetlands, possibly breaching a levee, creating an area where water can settle and be cleaned out prior to going back into the creek. We could partner with the county. The plan could use modelling from other rivers. If you move water into something the nitrogen goes from ten mg per gallon to two mg per gallon. Jeremy is aware that cost is a concern. Alex at the DNR says there are a couple of ways we could do it. Fox Creek and Beaver Brook could be done in phases with a grant totaling \$50,000. There would be a match with 67% they pay and 33% we pay. Or we could pick one tributary, maybe Beaver Brook, and select where we could actually work with people. That would be \$10,000 to \$20,000 with a grant. The state standard for the flowage is 40; earlier samples were over 100. A concern was brought up that reducing the phosphorus would be hard because we have water coming in from everywhere and the soil is high in phosphorus. Another resident questioned if there are specific properties that we would be looking at. It seems that the FSA, Farm Service Association, would have to do work with that, not ARPRD. The overland flow may contribute less than the tributaries that flow through ag land. The first part of the project would be to request a planning grant to make specific plans to reduce nutrient flows. The plan has to be approved by the DNR. The current thing to do would be to create a plan. We would go to farmers and ask them to restore wetlands. We need to have the plan to get the grant, and after that go to the farmers and say we have a grant to do this. The Lake Management Plan has to be updated to apply for grants. In a previous discussion it was confirmed that the bulk of the goals from the 2013 plan have been addressed. It would be \$25,000-\$27,000 to do the plan. There would be a grant requested. There would not be any price overruns since Jeremy's company would eat any additional cost. The first item would be basically updating the Lake Management Plan. There are two plans; for this it would be the Lake Management Plan, not the Aquatic Plant Management Plan that has to be updated every five years. A resident stated that this is not our problem to solve, it has to go back to the farmers. It should be the county or the state that is addressing the problem, not the ARPRD. She is all about protecting the environment, but this is outside of our area of responsibility. A concern about derelict

properties was also brought up. Residents also expressed concerns about the cost of the water quality improvement project. It was pointed out that grants would reduce our costs for projects to reduce the nitrogen and phosphorus going into the river. A resident asked if there are any requirements the farmers are not following. The farmers are not in violation of laws. In 2010 a law was passed that the county cannot require farmers to make any such changes unless they pay for it. Fran Duncanson Polk County representative advised that the current Polk County Board does not have appetite for enforcing any rules on farmers. The staff do the best they can with the resources they are allotted. It was determined that the water quality project discussion would be tabled at this time due to concerns about planning and implementation costs and responsibility.

8. The action items were as follows:
  - a. By unanimous ballot, Roland Peterson was elected as Chair for the ARPRD Board of Commissioners term for 2026, 2027 and 2028.
  - b. Approval to apply for the 2026 Harvesting Permit was moved, seconded and carried.
  - c. It was moved, seconded, and carried to apply for the Clean Boats Clean Waters grant for 2026.
  - d. It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the proposed 2026 Budget including the \$10,000 tax increase adopted in 2022 with the provision that it be reviewed annually.
9. Concerns: One concern was that the water level is too low. One possible reason is that water cannot be held back if the water level is too low downstream. There was a question about why the water level would be low when there had been sufficient rain.
10. Positive Point: Go, Brewers!
11. Roland Peterson thanked all who have helped the ARPRD, including Dave and the Weed Harvesting Operation Team, the Clean Boats Clean Waters Inspection Team, other board members, and the ARPRD residents for their continuing support.
12. The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kitty Miller, Secretary