CRYSTAL FALLS—Although assured it has “absolute indemnification” concerning Stambaugh Township’s Chicaugon Lake permit ordinance, the Iron County Board of Commissioners is getting pulled into the issue anyway.

At the board’s Aug. 14 bi-monthly meeting, Chairman Wayne Wales said he had been contacted by a representative from the DNR service office in Marquette who had concerns about the county’s liability with ticketing violators of the ordinance, and also with the “poison” in the lake from the chemical treatment applied to kill the milfoil.

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Additionally, Wales said he had been told by Pentoga Park manager Pat Hingos that there was an issue with campers. Commissioner Bev Camp said she has received calls saying the campers are being “harassed” because of people walking through the campgrounds checking for stickers.

Attorney Steve Polich, addressing the board to update it on the ordinance, said that several tickets have been issued, and the cases may go before the magistrate. In some cases, he said, the violator just pays for the sticker and the violation is dismissed. Others, he said, want to go to district court with the cases.

Wales asked Polich about the DNR’s concern with poison in the lake.

“Are you sure you’re not creating another problem?” he asked.

Polich said it was interesting that the DNR had contacted Wales about an issue that was the responsibility of the DEQ.

“The DEQ is responsible for water quality,” he said. “The DEQ has permitted it (treatment).” They have a special division for issuing permits, and the process is renewed annually.

“Apparently the DNR isn’t listening to the DEQ,” Polich said.

Commissioner Rosalie King agreed, saying the DNR isn’t doing anything about the milfoil, “but now it’s telling us what’s right and wrong.”

Iron County Prosecuting Attorney Melissa Powell noted that some form of toxins are found in all fish in the United States, and the DEQ is monitoring what is considered an “allowable amount.”

King then brought up her concern with what some boaters have called the “offensive” sign at the landing telling boaters to stay out of buoyed-off areas.

“It sounds like they’re being told to keep off the lake,” she said.

“I think it’s offensive that people are going around, checking trailers,” added Camp.

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Stambaugh Township Supervisor Gene Pellizzaro said he was the person issuing tickets.

“No one was walking through the park,” he said. “I’m the chief enforcer of township ordinances, and I’ve put the tickets on the vehicles.”

Civil Counsel Steve Tinti reminded the commissioners that all the county was responsible for was allowing the township to put up a sign and the pay pipe.

“That’s all we’ve done, is to authorize that Stambaugh Township can erect a sign on county property.

“You have absolute indemnification,” Tinti added. “You’re putting out more and more tentacles, and enmeshing yourselves in the issue.

"Do not get involved in the implementation of the ordinance, don't become the policing agency."

Wales said he felt concerns were involving the county park.

Lake property owner John Archocosky noted that treatment has eliminated about 17 acres of the milfoil, much of which is occurring at or near the boat landing and the beach.

"That's also an impact to the park," he said, "in that it's kept the beach open."

"There may be a short-term impact on the park," added Polich, "but in the long term, without treatment, there will be no business at all at the park."

He explained that $11,000 had been raised so far for the treatment, with 66 percent coming from the riparian owners; 23 percent from lake users purchasing seasonal or three-year permits, and 11 percent raised from day permits.

"That's the good news," he said. "Please stick with us and cooperate."

in other business:

--Kevin Pascoe of Anderson, Tackman and Company, auditors for the county, made his report to the board. The net assets of the county, he said, were $1.6 million; a $691,000 increase from last year. The net assets represent the equity, or worth of the county, he explained. The general fund realized $4.7 million in revenue and $4.6 million in expenses.

"It looked to be a good, positive year," he said.

Internal control continues to be a weakness, however, Pascoe said. Issues include the co-mingling of cash, which results in the treasurer being unable to balance accounts.

"This has been an issue over the years," Pascoe said, and involves several different departments.

Other areas of weakness are monthly reconciliations, which are not done in a timely manner; outstanding checks, issuing manual checks that don't get recorded properly, deficit balances, and some disbursements which lack board approval.

"I know you're working to fix these issues," he said. "All in all, it was a positive year, financially."

The board approved the audit.

--The board approved increasing its contract for services to the Northwoods Animal Shelter by $250 per month for the remainder of the year, and look at increasing it next year.

--Equalization Director Joan Mussatto announced the winner of the plat book cover photo contest. Sue Strahan was the winner, with prize money donated by the commissioners.

--The board approved the agreement between the county and Caspian over disbursement of it TIF, ending the litigation.

--The board approved a three-year lease for the park concession.

--Lisa Masnova was appointed as the new Freedom of Information Act coordinator.

--Cynthia Ricker was hired as accounting clerk for the Construction Code Office.

--The board approved authorizing the renewal of viter-approved telephone surcharge for 911. It will be placed on the November general election ballot.

Have a comment? E-mail your 50-word or less message to news@ironcountyreporter.com .