

(4r) If authorized by an annual meeting of a district, the district may appropriate money for the conservation of natural resources or for payment to a bona fide nonprofit organization for the conservation of natural resources within the district or beneficial to the district.

(5) Nothing in this chapter shall limit the authority of the department to establish town sanitary districts under s. 60.72.

*History:* 1973 c. 301; 1975 c. 197; 1977 c. 391; 1983 a. 532 s. 36; 1989 a. 159; 1991 a. 316; 1993 a. 167; 1995 a. 349.

A low bidder under s. 33.22 who is apparently a "responsible" bidder has standing to seek a permanent injunction against the award of a contract to any other bidder. *Aqua-Tech v. Como Lake Protect. & Rehab. Dist.* 71 W (2d) 541, 239 NW (2d) 25.

**33.23 Municipalities may establish district.** (1) The governing body of a municipality may by resolution establish a district if the municipality encompasses within its boundaries all the frontage of the public inland lake within this state. Except as provided under sub. (3), the governing body of the municipality which establishes the district shall perform the function of the board of commissioners. For purposes of this subsection, "district" does not include a restructured district.

(2) Establishment of districts by towns under this section shall conform to the procedures of ss. 33.25 and 33.26 except that the town clerk shall perform the functions of the county clerk and the town board shall perform the functions of the county board and in addition shall hold the hearing.

(3) Districts established by municipalities under this section may adopt the form of governance provided under s. 33.28 by petition to the governing body of the municipality. Upon presentation of a petition conforming to the requirements of s. 8.40 requesting the change and signed by at least 20% of the property owners within the district, the governing body of the municipality shall provide for the necessary election of commissioners. The election shall be held by secret ballot at the next annual or special meeting, whichever occurs first, of the district and the change becomes effective at that time unless a challenge to the results of that election is initiated in circuit court within 14 days after the election. The court shall stay the change pending the decision on the challenge.

*History:* 1973 c. 301; 1975 c. 197; 1977 c. 141, 391; 1981 c. 18, 229; 1989 a. 159, 192, 359; 1995 a. 349.

**33.235 Restructured districts; conversion and merger of town sanitary districts.** (1) In this section:

(a) "Lake" means a lake, reservoir or flowage within the boundaries of the state.

(b) "Lake district" means a public inland lake protection and rehabilitation district that does not include a restructured district.

(1m) A town board by resolution may convert a town sanitary district which encompasses all the frontage of a lake within its boundaries into a restructured district. The town sanitary district commissioners shall serve as the initial board of commissioners until the first annual meeting of the restructured district, at which time the commissioners shall be selected under s. 33.28. Conversion shall not affect any preexisting rights or liabilities of the town sanitary district. All such rights or liabilities shall be assumed automatically by the restructured district.

(2) The commissioners of a town sanitary district that does not encompass all the frontage of a lake within its boundaries may, with approval of the town board, petition under s. 33.25 for the formation of a restructured district to include the territory of the existing sanitary district and any additional frontage on the lake that is deemed appropriate by the commissioners. The commissioners may sign the petition for the landowners in the sanitary district. If necessary to meet the requirements of s. 33.25, signatures of owners of land lying outside the sanitary district shall be obtained. Formation of a restructured district that includes such additional territory shall not affect any preexisting rights or liabilities of the town sanitary district, and all these rights and liabilities shall be assumed automatically by the restructured district. The method by which these rights and liabilities are apportioned

within the restructured district shall be determined by the county board, and set out in the order issued under s. 33.26 (3) forming the restructured district.

(3) A town sanitary district having boundaries coterminous or contiguous to a lake district may merge into the lake district. Merger is effected by approval of an identical merger resolution by a two-thirds vote of the commissioners of the town sanitary district and the lake district, followed by ratification by a majority of those voting at an annual or special meeting of the lake district and a majority of those voting in a referendum of the town sanitary district under s. 60.785 (2). Merger may not become effective unless the town board which created the sanitary district approves the merger. The commissioners of the town sanitary district and the district shall act jointly until the next annual or special meeting, whichever occurs first, of the restructured district at which time the board of the restructured district shall be created subject to the requirements under s. 33.28. Merger does not affect the pre-existing rights or liabilities of the town sanitary district or the lake district. All these rights and liabilities are assumed automatically by the restructured district, but the method of discharging these rights or obligations shall be set out in the merger resolution.

(4) Any restructured district shall have all powers granted to districts under this chapter and to town sanitary districts under ch. 60, except the taxation power under s. 60.77 (6) (b). Such powers shall be exercised using the procedures and methods set out in this chapter.

*History:* 1975 c. 197; 1979 c. 299; 1983 a. 532 s. 36; 1989 a. 159; 1995 a. 349.

**33.24 County board may establish district.** (1) Notwithstanding s. 33.01 (3), in this section, "district" does not include a restructured district.

(2) The county board of any county may establish districts within the county if the conditions stated in s. 33.26 are found to exist. Before a district that includes any portion of a city or village may be formed under authority of this section, the city council or village board must have previously approved the inclusion of its territory within the boundaries of a proposed district.

*History:* 1973 c. 301; 1995 a. 349.

**33.25 Petition.** (1) WHO TO MAKE. (a) Before a county board may establish a district under s. 33.235 or 33.24, a petition requesting establishment shall be filed with the county clerk, addressed to the board and signed by persons constituting 51% of the landowners or the owners of 51% of the lands within the proposed district. Governmental subdivisions, other than the state or federal governments, owning lands within the proposed district are eligible to sign such petition. A city council or village or town board may by resolution represent persons owning lands within the proposed district who are within its jurisdiction, and sign for all such landowners.

(b) For a landowner that is a trust, foundation, corporation, association or organization, a petition under par. (a) shall be signed by an official representative, officer or employee who is authorized to do so by that landowner.

(2) CONTENTS. The petition shall set forth:

(a) The proposed name of the district;

(b) The necessity for the proposed district;

(c) That the public health, comfort, convenience, necessity or public welfare will be promoted by the establishment of the district and that the lands to be included therein will be benefited by such establishment; and

(d) The boundaries of the territory to be included in the proposed district.

(3) VERIFICATION, PLAT. The petition shall be verified by one of the petitioners, and shall be accompanied by a plat or sketch indicating the approximate area and boundaries of the district.

(4) PRESUMPTION. Every petition is presumed to have been signed by the persons whose signatures appear thereon, until proved otherwise.

(5) **WITHDRAWING FROM PETITION.** Any landowner who is considered to have signed the petition under sub. (1) may withdraw from the petition if the landowner files a written notice of the withdrawal with the county clerk at least 10 days before the date of the hearing under s. 33.26.

History: 1973 c. 301; 1975 c. 197; 1993 a. 167, 246; 1995 a. 349.

Formal requirements for verifying and withdrawing petition signatures discussed. *Nielsen v. Waukesha County*, 178 W (2d) 498, 504 NW (2d) 621 (Ct. App. 1993).

**33.26 Hearings, time, notice, boundaries, approval, limitations.** (1) Upon receipt of the petition the county board shall arrange a hearing to be held not later than 30 days from the date of presentation of the petition, and shall appoint a committee to conduct the hearing. At the hearing all interested persons may offer objections, criticisms or suggestions as to the necessity of the proposed district as outlined and to the question of whether their property will be benefited by the establishment of such district. Any person wishing to object to the organization of such district may, before the date set for the hearing, file objections to the formation of such district with the county clerk.

(2) Notice announcing the hearing and stating the boundaries of the proposed district shall be published in a paper of general circulation in the county in which the proposed district is located as a class 1 notice, under ch. 985, and shall be mailed by the county board to the last-known address of each landowner within the proposed district.

(3) The committee shall report to the county board within 3 months after the date of the hearing. Within 6 months after the date of the hearing, the board shall issue its order under this subsection. If the board finds, after consideration of the committee's report and any other evidence submitted to the board, that the petition is signed by the requisite owners as provided in s. 33.25, that the proposed district is necessary, that the public health, comfort, convenience, necessity or public welfare will be promoted by the establishment of the district, that the property to be included in the district will be benefited by the establishment thereof, and that formation of the proposed district will not cause or contribute to long-range environmental pollution as defined in s. 299.01 (4), the board, by order, shall declare its findings, shall establish the boundaries and shall declare the district organized and give it a corporate name by which it shall be known. Thereupon the district shall be a body corporate with the powers of a municipal corporation for the purposes of carrying out this chapter. **If the board does not so find, the board, by order, shall declare its findings and deny the petition.**

(5) The department shall be notified in writing of the hearing for the creation of the district at the time the hearing date is set.

(6) In establishing the district, the county board may change the boundaries from those originally proposed. However, lands not originally proposed for inclusion may not be included until a public hearing is held under this section.

(7) Any person aggrieved by the action of the board may petition the circuit court for judicial review. A verified petition shall be presented to the court not more than 30 days after the decision of the board, and shall specify the grounds upon which the appeal is based.

History: 1973 c. 301; 1979 c. 34 s. 2102 (39) (g); 1981 c. 20; 1991 a. 316; 1993 a. 167; 1995 a. 227.

**33.265 Notice, filing and recording requirements.** If a district is created or its boundaries altered, the board of commissioners shall record the authorizing document, including a legal description of the boundary, with the register of deeds in each county where the district is situated, and file the document and legal description with the department of natural resources and the department of revenue.

History: 1981 c. 20; 1993 a. 301.

**33.27 Initial district board of commissioners.** (1) The county board shall, at the time of making the order establishing a district, appoint 3 owners of property within the district, at least

one of whom is a resident of the district, to serve as commissioners until the first annual meeting of the district, and shall also make the appointment required under s. 33.28 (2).

(1m) If no resident is willing to serve as required under sub. (1), the residency requirement shall be waived for the initial district board of commissioners.

(2) Within 30 days following the county board's order establishing the district, the governing body of the town, city or village having the largest portion by valuation within the district shall appoint one of its members to the district board under s. 33.28 (2).

(3) At any time following the making of the order establishing a district, but no later than 60 days following the expiration of time for appeal to the circuit court, or, if appealed, no later than 60 days following the final judgment in any appeal, the district board shall hold an organizational meeting, shall select officers to serve until the first annual meeting, and may commence conducting the affairs of the district.

(4) The board may make an initial assessment of all taxable property within the district to raise funds to pay organizational costs and operate the district until the receipt of the tax voted by the first annual meeting. The manner of making the assessment shall be within the discretion of the board.

History: 1973 c. 301; 1975 c. 197; 1979 c. 299; 1993 a. 167.

**33.28 District board of commissioners.** (1) Management of the affairs of the district shall be delegated to a board of commissioners.

(2) The board of commissioners shall consist of:

(a) One person appointed by the county board who is a member of the county land conservation committee or is nominated by the county land conservation committee and appointed by the county board;

(b) One member of the governing body of the town, village or city within which the largest portion by valuation of the district lies, appointed by the governing body and owning property within the district if possible; and

(c) Three electors or owners of property within the district elected by secret ballot by the qualified electors and property owners within the district, for staggered 3-year terms. At least one of the elected commissioners shall be a resident of the district.

(2m) (a) An annual meeting may permanently increase the number of members of the board of commissioners to be elected under sub. (2) (c) from 3 to 5.

(b) If no resident is willing to be elected as required under sub. (2) (c) for a given term, the residency requirement shall be waived until the end of that term.

(3) Three commissioners shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

(4) The board shall select a chairperson, secretary and treasurer from among its members.

(5) Commissioners shall be paid actual and necessary expenses incurred while conducting business of the district, plus such compensation as may be established by the annual meeting.

(6) The board shall meet at least quarterly, and at other times on the call of the chairperson or the petition of 3 of the members.

(7) If a vacancy occurs in the membership of the board under sub. (2) (a) or (b), the appointing authority shall appoint a person to fill the vacancy. If a vacancy occurs in the membership of the board under sub. (2) (c), the chairperson of the board shall appoint a person to fill the remainder of the unexpired term, subject to approval by a majority vote of the board.

History: 1973 c. 301; 1975 c. 197; 1977 c. 391; 1979 c. 299; 1981 c. 18, 346; 1989 a. 159, 359; 1991 a. 32; 1993 a. 167.

**33.285 Property owning requirements.** Any requirement under s. 33.27 (1) or 33.28 that a person own property within the district to be eligible for membership on the board of commissioners is satisfied if a person is an official representative, officer or