

Senator Janae Shamp

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DISTRICT 29



Senate Committees

Military Affairs and Border Security (**Vice Chairman**)
Health and Human Services
Natural Resources

Dear Members of the Board and Mr. Sweeney:

I write with profound dismay and as a formal inquiry into the Maricopa Water District's decision to cancel or refuse to renew the long-term lease for Tiller and Kites Sailing at Pleasant Harbor on Lake Pleasant. This action is not a minor administrative matter. It threatens to extinguish the single most influential sailing facility in Arizona and undermines years of community service, youth development, veteran support, women's sailing excellence, international recognition, and economic activity that have made Lake Pleasant known to sailors worldwide.

Over the past nine years, Tiller and Kites Sailing—an International Yacht Training (IYT) accredited school—has established itself as the premier and, in critical respects, the only facility of its kind in our state. Students travel from across the country specifically because Tiller and Kites is the sole Arizona school offering the coveted European and International sailing accreditations and certifications that open doors to global chartering and professional opportunities. Its distinctive pink J/24 fleet is recognized by sailors far beyond Arizona; mention Lake Pleasant in sailing circles and the immediate response is often “that’s where the pink J/24s are.”

The school's contributions extend far beyond commercial lessons:

- It serves as the operational home for the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, supplying boats, base access, training vessels, and logistical support for new members and ongoing instruction.
- It has actively advanced Women's Sailing. In 2022, one of its Lake Pleasant-based boats won the J/24 Class World Championship women's division in Corpus Christi, Texas.
- It supported and helped grow Sea Scout Ship 3500 by providing boats, training, equipment, and youth sailing opportunities on Lake Pleasant.
- It supplied shore logistics, weather, and navigation routing for Australian Michelle Lee—the only woman to row solo, non-stop, and unassisted across the Pacific Ocean—generating worldwide social media visibility that highlighted Lake Pleasant and Arizona.
- One of its vessels, “Rebel Yell,” was hand-painted by members of a VA art therapy group and publicly presented by then-Peoria Councilwoman Bridget Binsbacher. The cancellation of a stable lease prevented Tiller and Kites from pursuing grants for a planned Veterans Sailing program; that boat is now with a veteran-centric program in Oregon.
- In 2018, Tiller and Kites partnered with the Foundation for Blind Children and trained 15 visually impaired youths over five weeks. These young people learned to sail and raced on Lake Pleasant—an achievement that received strong media coverage and demonstrated the lake's potential for inclusive recreation.
- It has hosted distinctive events, including the first and only 24-hour non-stop sailing challenge, multiple races, and regattas.
- For years it ranked among the top three fundraisers for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Leukemia Cup races at Lake Pleasant.
- It maintained active partnerships with the Arizona Yacht Club and other sailing and social organizations throughout the state.
- It acquired a fleet intended for collaborative winter sailing programs with the Chicago Yacht Club and Seattle Yacht Club, tied to the Cactus League season, and for National J/24 Association winter events at

Lake Pleasant. These are multi-year institutional commitments that cannot be sustained on a month-to-month or precarious lease.

All broader plans to grow and professionalize sailing in Arizona were placed on hold while the District was expected to honor its word and execute proper long-term lease agreements. That did not occur. The result is the loss of grant eligibility, the inability to lock in prestigious partner clubs and national events, the displacement of community programs, and the effective sidelining of a facility that has brought national and international attention to Lake Pleasant and the Maricopa Water District's own property.

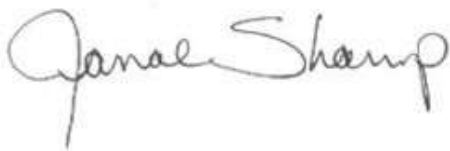
As a State Senator representing District 29—which includes communities directly served by and adjacent to Lake Pleasant and Pleasant Harbor—and as a member of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, I take a strong interest in the responsible stewardship of public and quasi-public resources that generate recreational, educational, and economic value for Arizona residents. Canceling or refusing to renew a lease for an established, community-serving operator that has operated in good faith for years raises serious questions of process, transparency, and priorities. Month-to-month tenancy is incompatible with the capital investment, program development, grant applications, and institutional partnerships required to sustain and expand sailing at this level.

I therefore formally request that the Maricopa Water District Board and management immediately schedule a meeting with the principals of Tiller and Kites Sailing for the express purpose of negotiating and executing a renewed, long-term lease that provides the stability necessary for continued operations and growth. This meeting should occur without delay. I further request a written explanation of the decision-making process that led to the non-renewal or cancellation, including any competing proposals, financial analyses, or policy justifications, so that the public record is clear.

Arizona benefits when unique assets such as Tiller and Kites are allowed to thrive rather than being forced into uncertainty or relocation. The pink boats, the IYT certifications, the Coast Guard Auxiliary support, the youth and veterans programs, the women's championship success, and the international visibility are not easily replaced. I expect the District to act in the best interest of Lake Pleasant users, the surrounding communities, and the broader public by restoring a stable operating foundation for this irreplaceable facility.

Please contact my office promptly to confirm the meeting date and to provide the requested written explanation. I look forward to a constructive resolution that prioritizes continuity of service and the long-term health of sailing on Lake Pleasant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Janae Shamp". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Janae" and last name "Shamp" clearly legible.

Senator Janae Shamp BSN, RN

Former Majority Leader
Arizona State Senate
Legislative District 29
Vice Chair Military Affairs and Border Security Committee
Member of Health and Human Services and
Natural Resources Committees