

**Lyme Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
October 5, 2015**



MEMBERS PRESENT: Blake Allison (Chair), Tom Colgan, MaryBeth Kiefer (Alternate), Russell Hirschler, Lee Larson (Alternate), James Munroe, Meg Sheehan (Alternate), Ian Smith (Alternate), Jay Smith (Select Board Rep.) and Matt Stevens

PUBLIC: Trisha Shipman and Jeff Valence

Blake called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. He appointed Ian as a full voting member for the night's meeting.

1. Review and Approve Minutes from 2015-09-14

- The minutes were approved unanimously as submitted.

2. Land Protection and Easements

- **Town Forest Easement, Continuing** – **Lee** asked to re-open discussion. He presented a timeline of the Town Forest's history showing how the property was assembled into its current condition. This was followed by discussion about whether to proceed and if so, what should be put before next March's Annual Town Meeting. It was suggested that the Commission submit a warrant article asking Annual Meeting voters whether they approved of the Commission exploring whether to put a Conservation easement on the Town Forest. **Russ** and **Matt** said they would draft a motion to be presented at the Commission's November meeting.

3. Trails and Land Management

- **Chaffee Wildlife Viewing Blind Update** – **Blake** said, and **Russell** confirmed, that work to finish the viewing blind would recommence when Russell and John Taylor finished up a trail project at Norwich's Gile Mountain. Russ said that John was cutting siding prior to installation and that the work should proceed apace once the project was resumed.

4. Project and Application Review

- **O'Hara Dam Restoration Update** – **Blake** reported that Dan O'Hara told him that he had decided not to proceed with a permit application to repair their dam, because the DES Wetlands Bureau would not accept an application without "further endorsements to add to those of the Select Board and the Fire Chief."

5. Outreach and Education

- **Big Rock Outdoor Classroom** – **Lyme School Third Grade Teacher Trisha Shipman** and **Lyme School Principal Jeff Valence** appeared before the Commission to present a proposal to site in the Big Rock Preserve an outdoor classroom for her students. The class would meet there weekly, she said, and it would focus on "teaching students forest ecology, animal science and social skills through journaling." The proposed 800 square foot site would include four wooden benches, a fire pit and temporary shelters for protection during the winter and inclement weather. Commissioners expressed support

Outreach and Education, cont.

for the project but raised concerns about fire safety and public access. It was also asked whether the fire pit might be an “attractive nuisance” and what would become of the shelters when the school year ended. Trisha said those matters would be addressed. It was agreed that she will draft a “Memo of Understanding” to be reviewed at the Commission’s November meeting.

6. Other Business

- **Upper Valley Trails Alliance Dues – Blake** noted that payment of the 2015 dues had been overlooked. He asked the Commission to approve a \$100 appropriation to fulfill that obligation. The measure passed unanimously with Russ, UVTA’s Executive Director, abstaining.
- **Other Appropriations** – The Commission voted to donate \$100 from its budget’s “Education Fund” to the Lyme School in support of the above-cited Big Rock Outdoor Classroom project. Other expenses approved included \$49 to Lee for postage costs he incurred in association with easement monitoring and \$240 from the “Environmental Monitoring” line of the budget for lab costs associated with the annual water testing at Post Pond and Reservoir Pond. The Commission also approved transferring the \$200 in the “Monitoring Fund” to the “Conservation Fund.”
- **Easement Monitoring Administrative Change – Blake** noted that **Lee** had stepped aside from running the Easement Monitoring program and that **James** had agreed to take it over.
- **2016 Budget Request – Blake** reported that the Commission’s 2016 funding request would be due Wednesday, October 7. After some discussion it was agreed to seek \$2100, the same amount that Annual Town Meeting voted for 2015.

7. Publicity

- **Lyme Community and Church News Item – Blake** said that he had missed last month’s deadline and that the piece he had prepared regarding woodland recreation during hunting season would be re-submitted.

8. Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Blake Allison, Secretary *pro tem*

The next Conservation Commission meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Monday, November 2 at the Lyme Center Academy Building.