



**Lyme Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
Monday, May 4 at 5:00 p.m.
Lyme Center Academy Building**

Present: Blake Allison (Chair), Meg Sheehan, Ian Smith and Russell Hirschler (Alternate)

Public: Dana Hazen, Jaxon Morgan

Chair Allison called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. He named Russell as a full voting member for the meeting.

Before commencing the business portion of the meeting, Blake presented the document “**A Checklist to Ensure Meetings Are Compliant with The Right-to-Know Law During the State of Emergency.**” (copy attached). Blake explained that because the Lyme Center Academy Building is closed to the public, certain requirements for public meeting access must be met to be in compliance with Governor Sununu’s Executive Order allowing for town boards and committees to meet online.

1. Review and Approve Minutes from 2020-03-02

- On a motion by Russ, seconded by Meg, the March meeting minutes were confirmed unanimously with Russ, Meg, Ian and Blake all voting in the affirmative.

2. Land Protection and Easements

- **No Items Submitted**

3. Trails and Land Management

- **Lyme Biodiversity Working Group (LBWG) Japanese Knotweed Eradication Update** – Meg presented information regarding the LBWG’s plans for the upcoming season. She said efforts would continue to focus on the Big Rock Preserve with special attention to building upon 2019’s work. She said Covid-19 restrictions likely would preclude groups of volunteers for the short term. To compensate, three volunteers have been hired to each work ten hours a week on cutting. Meg said that a survey of last year’s work site indicated that knotweed growth there had slowed while other plant species seem to have gained presence.
- **Town Forest and Big Rock Trail Work Update** – Russ presented an overview of the Upper Valley Trails Alliance’s (UVTa) planned trail work in the Town Forest and the Big Rock Preserve. He first noted that recent relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions will allow construction and maintenance crews to be in the field which means the project can go forward. He said the plan remains to build to two, wet area crossings in the Town Forest and a new trailhead at the Big Rock’s NH Route 10 entrance. According to Russ, total cost of the projects is estimated at \$5,895. A Lyme Foundation grant will provide \$4,895 in funding. The Con Com will provide the balance. Russ said he hopes to begin staging the building materials in the next few weeks.



4. Project and Application Review

- **Bear Hill Conservancy Trust DES Expedited Wetlands Permit Application** – Dana Hazen of Redstart Natural Resource Management requested that the Conservation Commission approve a DES Expedited Wetlands Permit Application he is seeking in conjunction with a stream restoration project planned for Bear Hill Reservation. The program's goal is to improve native brown, brook trout habitat. The program is a joint undertaking of Redstart, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and "Trout Unlimited." Dana said they hope to commence work towards the end of August in low water season. He said the plan is to complete most of the work during the first year. After a brief question and answer session, Commission members unanimously voted to approve the permit with each of the four participating members entering a "Yes" vote.
- **Hewes Brook Bridge Replacement Update** – Blake reported that work began on the replacement project on Monday, the 27th as planned. He said the initial effort is aimed at removing the old decking and abutments. Blake noted that some of the work would have an impact on the adjacent Hewes Brook Car Top Boat Launch and that the property's conservation easement holder Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) had signed off on the project. Blake said discussions are underway regarding how the area will be restored when work has concluded.

5. Outreach and Education

- **"Green Up Day" 2020 Update** – Blake said the idea of a rolling, extended "Green Up Day" seemed to be working. He said volunteer response was good and that while the results of a big, one day impact would not be so striking, it is clear the roads are getting cleaner.
- **UVTA's "Trail Finder" Program** – Russ said that one upside impact of the Covid-19 disruption was a notable uptick in the amount of outdoor activity occurring. He said that the UVTA's "Trail Finder" web page has seen a 145% increase in use. A challenge, he said, is to direct users to some of the less well traveled Upper Valley trails.

6. Other Business

- **Covid-19 and Conservation** – Apropos of his "Trail Finder" report, Russ observed that the public's embrace of outdoor activity involving the region's considerable open space and trails networks was a vindication of all the hard work over the last 50 years that local land conservation and outdoor groups have made to preserve the region's natural resources. He said a challenge ahead for continuing this effort would be the funding availability as state and local municipalities try to restore their fiscal health in a post Covid-19 era. Meg seconded that view.

7. Publicity

- Blake said he will supply an article for the May/June Lyme Community and Church News.



8. Adjournment

Blake adjourned the meeting ending the teleconference call at 6:00 p.m. Both Meg and Russ expressed appreciation to Blake for conducting the meeting and for keeping the Conservation Commission functioning during a very challenging time.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored rectangular background. The signature reads "V. Blake Allison, Secretary" in a cursive script.

Blake Allison, Secretary *pro tem*

If matters of business warrant it, the next meeting of the Lyme Conservation Commission will take place via remote teleconference on Monday, June 1, 2020 beginning at 5:00 p.m.