

**Lyme Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2015**



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

Blake called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He appointed Lee and Meg as full voting members for the night's meeting.

1. Review and Approve Minutes from 2015-08-03

- The minutes were approved unanimously as submitted

2. Land Protection and Easements

- **Town Forest Conservation Easement** – Discussion was re-opened about establishing a conservation easement on the Town Forest. **Lee** reiterated that the primary purpose of an easement was to protecting the Town Forest in perpetuity. The Town Forest was established by a vote at Annual Meeting. Without easement protection, voters could rescind that vote. **Tom** expressed concern about the need for an easement if there was no imminent threat that Annual Town Meeting would vote to disband the Town Forest.

Background was requested on how the Town Forest came into being, and how it reached its current size. What was the voter intent when the Town Forest was created initially? **Lee** and **Matt** volunteered to research those concerns. Discussion of the matter was continued pending the presentation of further information.

3. Trails and Land Management

- **Chaffee Wildlife Viewing Blind Update** – **Blake** reported that Russ and John had cancelled the previously scheduled August 24. They had proposed that a smaller crew be put on the job to finish it. No date to accomplish that had been set, Blake said. Concern was expressed about getting the job finished before the season's end. Blake said he would speak to Russ. It was agreed that putting a town-based volunteer crew on the project should be kept as a "Plan B" for completing the construction.

4. Project and Application Review

- **O'Hara Site Visit** – **Blake** presented a review of the Commission's September 10 visit to the property of Dan and Julie O'Hara at 252 Dartmouth College Hwy. to view a breached dam. The O'Hara's are proposing to repair it and restore the pond that had been there since the dam was first built in the early 1960s. The NH Dept. of Environmental Services (DES) Dam Bureau has endorsed the project, Blake said. The DES Wetlands Bureau contended that the dam had been abandoned and had reservations about inundating the emerging wetland where the pond had been. Both the Select Board and Lyme's Fire Chief Mike Hinsley have endorsed restoring the pond.

The O'Hara's have not yet filed for a permit restore the pond. They have asked the Conservation Commission to endorse the project. In the ensuing discussion there were expressions of support and reservations. Proponents noted the breached dam is polluting the small stream that flows into Grant Brook and that it would continue to deteriorate. They also said a pond would create habitat that would support diverse communities of animal and plant life. At the same time it was noted that the existing wetland had benefits and there was no knowledge of what animal and plant communities were developing.

There was general agreement that more information was needed about the project's scope. It was noted also that the permitting process would produce an inventory of what plant and animal communities might be affected by restoring the pond. Commissioners agreed the O'Hara's should begin the permitting process. That would provide the Commission with an opportunity to better assess the projects impacts.

A motion was made and passed unanimously that the Commission would send a letter to Mr. O'Hara expressing its support for him submitting a permit application to DES, and thanking Mr. O'Hara for involving the Commission early in the process. Blake agreed to draft the letter.

5. Outreach and Education

- **No items submitted.**

6. Other Business

- **Snelling Family Hewes Brook Boat Launch Maintenance -- Blake** noted that as in years past, the Snelling family had mowed and trimmed at the boat launch over the summer months. It has been a tradition, he said, to reimburse them for gas and other materials as an expression of the Commission's appreciation. It was moved and passed unanimously to give them a check for \$100, the same amount as last year.

7. Publicity

- **Lyme Community and Church News Item -- Blake** said he would submit something.

8. Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Blake Allison, Secretary *pro tem*

The Commission's next meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 5 at the Lyme Center Academy Building.