



**Lyme Conservation Commission (LCC)
Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 8 2026 @ 6:00 p.m.
Lyme Center Academy Building and Zoom**

Present: Blake Allison (Chair), Ann Flood (Secretary), Jill Niles, *Matt Stevens (alternate) and John Biglow (Alternate, appointed voting)

Members via Zoom: Sue MacKenzie (Vice Chair) and *Meg Sheehan

Public via Zoom: Jon Leibowitz (CEO and President of Northeast Wilderness Trust (NEWT) (Invited guest) and Barbara Woodard

* Arrival 50 or more minutes past start of meeting

Blake called the meeting into session at 6:02 pm. John was appointed as a full voting member because only three members were present in person at the beginning of the meeting.

1. Review and Approve Minutes from 2026-05-06 Meeting

On a motion by Jill, seconded by Ann, the May minutes as amended and distributed prior to the meeting were approved by a unanimous rollcall vote. Voting members not present at that meeting abstained.

2. Land Protection and Easements

- **Town Forest Conservation Easement** -- Blake introduced our guest, Jon Leibowitz (CEO and President of NEWT) and invited him to present the approach and mission of NEWT as a conservancy trust in general and to describe briefly what it would entail if the LCC asked NEWT to be the trustee for the Lyme Town Forest conservation easement. He began with a short PowerPoint presentation (attached) inviting comments and questions.

Jon said NEWT covers all of the northeast including New York and is headquartered in Montpelier VT. Its Board of Directors includes 15 members from all NE states including Quebec. Its mission is to protect more wilderness and to educate more people about why and how to do so. They are particularly interested in preserving wilderness corridors and also champion the Appalachian Trail. At present only about 25% of the land in the NE is conserved and of that 3% is forever wild.

They are focused on re-wilding lands with a philosophy of letting nature heal and recover without intervention. Their forward look is to re-wild forests so that they have the properties and features of an old forest, including trees of several ages, mounds, drainage, naturally dropped logs, etc. There are no trails, no logging, no structures, etc.

They also conserve some land with features that allow trails etc. because they also support some educational efforts about ecology and preserving forests. Even these lands have restrictions on use including no vehicular (wheeled) use and no horseback riding.



Town Forest Conservation Easement, continued

Where allowed, the public may use the property but only as bushwacking allows, with minimal or no permanent damage to the land. Other restrictions to their properties pertain to hunting, e.g., while prey hunting that is locally permitted and in season may occur on NEWT conserved properties, no predator hunting is ever allowed including bear and type of hunting instruments may be restricted.

They follow the philosophical concept of self-willed land as set forth by Jay Vest, i.e., the land should be free of human domination, control, and management. When questioned about what happens when 'bad things' occur like fires (wild or human-set) tornadoes, floods, pest or plant invasions (natural or non-native), Jon said that by and large, nature is left to heal itself as it may. An exception might be non-native invasive plants but even then how to get rid of them is restricted, E.G., no broad spectrum pesticides.

Jon mentioned several properties that they manage and provided links to three properties in southern NH he discussed:

Binney Hill (New Ipswich) <https://newildernesstrust.org/projects/binney-hill/>

Wildwood (Dublin) <https://newildernesstrust.org/projects/wildwood/>

Children's Woods

(Jaffry) <https://www.townofjaffrey.com/DocumentCenter/View/681/Childrens-Woods-Map--Flyer-PDF>

A question was asked about how NEWT would handle the snowmobile network that goes through the Town Forest. Jon indicated that they worked with other properties that have a grandfathered snowmobile trail. In general, it is not encouraged. The mechanics of their approach are very much like those for federal lands where most do not have trails, but a few do and these are limited to 'muscle-powered' use like snowshoes, X-country skiing and hiking. Mountain bikes are not allowed. Wheelchairs may be okay if there is a trail suitable for them.

The answer to another member question clarified that, while NEWT will work with towns and groups that want part of their land conserved as managed or otherwise not forever wild, NEWT will not take responsibility for the part that is to be managed. The owner must contract with another trust to do that part. He clarified that would mean two conserved pieces, two documents, two organizations to take that approach.

In subsequent discussion by the LCC, Meg proposed that we set up a fairly aggressive schedule to keep the process moving forward, including inviting the Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) to the next meeting in July to provide a similar presentation and Q&A and then invite other potential candidate trusts (if any) in the following months. (One such trust, The Society to Preservation of Forests, is evidently not interested in working with Towns.) Then, when we have heard from each of the potential trust groups, we would discuss the alternative proposals (not necessarily *written* proposals at this point) at the next meeting (Aug?), inviting the public. Then we should vote on which trust(s) and philosophy(ies) to pursue for the Town Forest at the next meeting, i.e., Sept. There was general consensus on this approach and Blake agreed to invite UVLT for July.



3. Trails and Land Management

- **New signage** -- Lin had sent a message to Blake that the State of NH corrections only makes metal signs. Assuming we want wooden signs, we are back to square one, which includes re-engaging with Jim Mason. Sue suggested sending an email to the Lyme Listserv asking for volunteers willing to help build, paint, and install signs for the Town, and Blake agreed to do so.
- **Trail markers** -- Jill ordered some trail markers like those we have. She plans to mark the Ledge Trail and Chaffee Wildlife Sanctuary with them. The nails seemed too fragile to be useful so will order new ones. Matt suggested aluminum nails so they will pop off after tree growth and not harm the tree.
- **Town Forest and Trout Pond Forest Management Plans Revision** -- There was no update on the management plan. Jill met about 1.5 weeks ago with Jim Miller, a volunteer for UVLT who monitors their properties. They monitored the Trout Pond Forest easement, surveying its boundary on foot and traveling around the pond by canoe. Jill said that it went well.
- **Chaffee Paths Maintenance** -- No further information about the path maintenance.
- **“Ledge Trail” View Clearing Update** -- Blake reported that the clearing has been done. There has been no invoice submitted to date. People who have seen it report being happy with the work.
- **Milfoil Project Update** -- Sue reported that no one has reported any milfoil plant to date this year. On June 8 the divers were there to investigate under water as well and saw some plant spikes that could be milfoil. They have a new diver and there is a meeting soon of the Friends of Post Pond to discuss future dives.
- **Biodiversity Group** -- Meg reported that there have been several good workdays, including one last week. After 10 years of effort in the Big Rock Nature Preserve, the knotweed seemed to be gone and so they are working on other invasive species. They got a grant from Lyme Foundation to continue this work.

4. Project and Application Review

- **No Items Submitted**

5. Outreach and Education

- **Nature Areas Virtual Tours Presentations for Commission Web Site** -- Blake said there was not much to add; there is still a need for some photos to use to create a narrative for these ‘tours’ on the webpage.



Outreach and Education, cont.

- **June 6 Town Forest Hike Report Town Forest walk** -- As the LCC representative to the Community Care of Lyme's Community Collaborators Meeting which was meeting at the same time on June 8, Lin Brown, who had led the walk, was unable to report in person tonight. Therefore, Lin asked Jill to report since Jill had participated in the walk. There were six people on the hike, which went well. Lin had prepared a short presentation about the Town Forest (TF) for participants. Lee Larson also gave a short history about TF and pointed out a new cellar hole. Jill reported they also found two downed trees over the trail near the first bridge. they were easy to step over but the trail needs repair. Mark Schiffman took a lot of photos of the cellar holes and placed them on Facebook; these could be available for the Town website.
- **Green Up Day 2026 Review** -- **Blake** reported that CommunityCare of Lyme said about 150 people were out working the roads. The high turnout may have been aided by allowing people to carry out their work throughout the month instead of on one day.

6. Other Business

- **Trout Brook Split Rail Fence Repair** -- There was some discussion of lumber left over from the Chaffee Post Pond bridge work that needs to be cleared as well as the split rail fence at the ballfield Rt.10 pullout needing to be replaced. It is on the State right of way and so is technically not the Town's responsibility.

The lumber issue brought up the concern that we were not sure what the Upper Valley Trails Alliance plans were regarding debris clean up after the new boardwalk is completed. There is nothing in the budget about removal, and it had been left in place after previous repairs. Blake will follow-up the UVTA to see what is intended.

- **Utility Club Bench** -- Matt said he and John had placed the bench in the area where it is intended. However, since it still needs skids added and the marker as well as an area cleared for it, it is off to the side. Matt and John will finish preparing the bench.
- **Conservation Commission Visioning Statement** -- Blake mentioned that John had asked if the LCC has a mission statement. In follow-up, Blake has been looking at several sources to determine what has already been written about the LCC's mission and vision. One source is the Commission Bylaws; other sources are documents like the management plans for the forests and the State's RSA establishing Town conservation commissions. These documents will be distributed as found to aid in the LCC's ability to determine if decisions and projects are in line with the mission and vision, e.g., should plastic be avoided, should damage to plants etc. be avoided; are additions like birdhouses acceptable in wildlife sanctuaries.

As Approved 2026-07-13



7. Adjournment --

Ann moved the meeting be adjourned and Jill seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann Barry Flood".

Ann Barry Flood, Secretary

If matters of business warrant it, the next meeting of the Lyme Conservation Commission will take place in person at the Lyme Center Academy Building and via Zoom conference call on Monday, July 13, beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Note: Jon's PowerPoint presentation is appended via this link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/zqaob844a6zle676fajgb/lymeconservationcomission.pptx?rlkey=u0436zozotw0pa9dymtny6fmw&st=rhl4ksa8&dl=0>

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