



**Lyme Conservation Commission (LCC)
Meeting Minutes
Monday, July 13, 2026 @ 6:00 p.m.
Lyme Center Academy Building and Zoom**

Present: Blake Allison (Chair), Ann Flood (Secretary), Lin Brown, Jill Niles, Matt Stevens (Alternate), Meg Sheehan

Members or public via Zoom: none;

Public in person or via Zoom: Craig Privett – Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) General Manager (Guest)

Blake called the meeting into session at 6:09 pm. Matt was appointed as a full voting member.

1. Review and Approve Minutes from 2026-06-11 Meeting

On a motion by Jill, seconded by Ann, the June minutes were approved by a unanimous rollcall vote; members abstained if they had not attended the full meeting.

2. Land Protection and Easements

- **C. Privett RE UVLT and potential of managing the proposed conservation easement of the Lyme Town Forest**

Blake introduced our guest, Craig Privett, and invited him to present information about the UVLT's experience and mission and other aspects relative to the CC's pending choice of a group to manage the proposed conservation easement of the Town Forest. Craig then offered to provide a copy of the PowerPoint presentation he was using to present. He noted that the UVLT manages 525 properties (~5700 acres with 9 campsites) across 45 towns throughout the Upper Valley. The mission is to promote the health and sustainability of the land and to help ensure the land is resilient and to otherwise conserve natural resources. He noted that UVLT already manages the Trout Brook Forest, the Hewes Brook Car Top Boat Launch conservation area (including the foot access for boats to the Connecticut River) and Big Rock Nature Area for the Town of Lyme.

He emphasized that the UVLT was very enthusiastic about the intent to conserve the Town Forest, regardless of their official involvement in its management. He indicated that it was an important area that already had a robust network of trails, 12 vernal pools and an important water shed area that is important to the community and state.

He estimated, in part because they have just lost a project manager on their staff and have made a significant transition at the top level of management, that is likely to take 12-18 months for them to be able to close on a conservation easement, with the bulk of the work starting toward the end of 2026/beginning of 2027. The preliminary steps before some work would commence include getting approval from their Board of Trustees (next meetings are in Aug and Oct) to make sure the plans are in line with their mission and the staff's availability to carry them out.



C. Privett RE UVLT and potential of managing the proposed conservation easement of the Lyme Town Forest, cont.

He said there are two distinct aspects of the financial costs:

1. The general project costs ~\$10-12K. (These are somewhat variable, depending on whether there are sources of data already done or completed by the CC and actual costs incurred.) These costs include legal costs for recording, site visits, marking boundaries, and gathering other information that will form the basis of determining what and how the monitoring of the property will be carried out, e.g., designating sites of cellar holes and vernal pools. It includes a formal report from the UVLT.
2. Required contribution to the stewardship fund ~\$12-15K. This is based on a formula. The total will be ~\$22-25K total. The time could be expedited (and costs reduced) by providing them with boundaries already marked or if the Town prepares some of the papers, etc.

The CC members then discussed their being able to provide updates on the title and performing some tasks like marking boundary markers and preparing some details of the paperwork.

Other questions included whether hunting or horse-back riding or camping or maple syruping would be allowed. In general these could be allowed if Town says so. Generally, only nonmotorized vehicles are allowed, with the exception of sustainable, low impact vehicles like snowmobiles. Recreational mountain bikes are okay.

The concept of forever wild was brought up, noting that a 2023 Ecological Assessment (Rick Van de Poll, Ph.D., CWS #110) commissioned by the LCC conducted in 2024 recommended that one area of the forest remain forever wild. There would be some flexibility to repair trails or remove invasives. For those areas that are to remain forever wild, at least 100 feet buffer areas would be designated to protect them and at least 200 foot buffer areas to protect vernal ponds.

Craig said UVLT would be open to having different areas within the Forest having different strictness of protection. However, Craig urged that the UVLT recommendation is to have the Conservation Easement provide the basic level of protection (“de minimus”) and that it not be designated as full out forever wild. Instead, the Management Plan (which is more alterable and which governs the next decade’s or so care only) can be the place to be very stringent if desired, e.g., to enact strict standards to store carbon, not cut unless to remove/repair a danger to public use, etc.

When asked how they typically make buffer zones, etc., obvious to the public, Craig said they can use signage, reports, and other ways to protect some regions more than others. He can send examples. When asked about enforcement of violations, he said they generally can report violations to the authorized enforcers of the law and go to court to defend the easement.

Craig said his role as project manager is outreach, helping draft the easement, creating maps, working with landowners, liaison, and guidance about invasive species management. When asked if they ever work with indigenous people or organization, he said that they had particularly when the easement has significant importance to indigenous people, e.g., they were consulted about building a bridge over sacred areas that ultimately resulted in finding a different solution. Several members suggested contacting local groups and Skip Cady who is knowledgeable about sacred indigenous sites locally to learn whether there are any cultural sites within the Town Forest that should be taken into account.



C. Privett RE UVLT and potential of managing the proposed conservation easement of the Lyme Town Forest, cont.

There was also a question raised about whether it was appropriate to seek turning the Grade VI Mud Pond Road within the Town Forest into a Class A trail or some other such re-designation.

3. Trails and Land Management

- **New Signage Update**—Blake reported that he had spoken with Ben Hoffer who was recommended by John Biglow. Ben expressed an interest in helping with the signage. We again discussed the rough plans, i.e., attaching 3' x 2' signs to a 6' x 6' gallows-styled post. The signs would have double sided carved letters) so as to be seen from both directions along the road. There is a need to balance having sufficient information (name of area, sponsorship, etc.) and readability.

The suggestion was to include the CC logo or otherwise make the letters big enough to be easily seen when traveling along the road by car or bike or walking. The estimate was that we would need 10 signs (6 properties with 2 entrances for some) at an estimated materials cost of \$200 per sign or \$2000 total. Blake was asked to start with one, e.g., the Town Forest, where there is a clear need for a sign and ask Ben to do a prototype/initial version.

- **Town Forest and Trout Pond Forest Management Plans Revision**
- The CC came to the conclusion that there is no need for a big revision to the Trout Pond Forest Management Plan. Blake said he would submit a draft, based on the current management plan, for consideration at the next meeting.
- **UVTA HS Trails Corps Chaffee Bog Bridge Replacement**

The HS Trails Corp has been working on the bog bridge replacement and is building a new boardwalk over the old logs so that they do not need to be removed. Blake said that UVTA's Russ Hirschler noted that the boardwalk's higher elevation will require either stairs or a ramp to access it. There was some discussion that a ramp is not needed because the trail to the boardwalk will not be all persons accessible anyway, so stairs to the bridge are appropriate.

- **Milfoil Project Update**

Sue is out of town, but Blake and others reported that there continues to be little evidence of milfoil this year. Periodic dives continue to find and remove some plants but it appears to be under control.

- **Lyme Biodiversity Working Group Update**
Meg had no substantial update, but the project continues to move along. Blake suggested trying to mitigate the Japanese knotweed that is moving south from. The property on the corner of N. Thetford Rd. towards the Chaffee Sanctuary's grounds. Meg suggested they investigate and see if they can do something



- **DES Water Quality Assistance Grants**

While there had been some interest in the past to use this opportunity to improve water quality around the Dartmouth ski area, it is a lot of effort to apply for little funding. There was some discussion about applying to build a raingarden but no decision to move forward.

4. Project and Application Review

- **48 N. Thetford Rd. Collins-Hass ZBA Application**

The applicants want to add a 112 sq. foot porch to the front of their home. All of the addition would be in the 100-foot Shoreland Conservation District setback associated with a water course that runs north/south through the property 35 feet from the house. Based on the photos, diagrams and text provided, there was general consensus among the members that the proposed project should be approved without need for a site visit.

Nevertheless, because any additional coverage by a roof concentrates waterfall and risks erosion damage, the CC urges the applicants to seek specific ways to mitigate the rainflow from the new structure, e.g., using gutters with extended downspouts or creating designated drainage areas like rain gardens.

5. Outreach and Education

- **Nature Areas Virtual Tours Presentations for Commission Web Site**

Blake tabled this discussion. He will give Jordan info about the photos and info about Chaffee upgrade

6. Other Business

- **Trout Brook Split Rail Fence Repair**

Dina gave the go-ahead to do it and offered accounts where costs could be charged directly to the Town.

- **Utility Club Bench**

Matt reported that the bench was nearly completely hidden by weeds. It needs to have a place to put it, and the site needs to be maintained. Most likely there should be a small extension of path near the bridge for the bench. Stone can be scavenged from the parking area. Lin will ask the Utility Club to follow-up to make the bench useful, and Lin and Matt will monitor the situation.

- **Conservation Commission Visioning Statement**

Tabled.



- **Collection of Water Samples from Post Pond and Reservoir Pond.**

The annual Voluntary Lake Assessment Program water quality testing is scheduled for late August. Lin reported that Katie Little no longer can do this. Lin said she can help, especially if both tests can be scheduled on the same day. She will follow up and confirm the testing dates which are tentatively scheduled for Aug 27, 9am.

- **Personnel Update**

Blake reported that David Lysy resigned from the CC and thanked him for his service, welcoming him back if future circumstances allow his participation.

7. Adjournment

On a motion by Jill, seconded by Lin, Blake adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

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 via Zoom conference call on Monday, August 10, beginning at 7:00 p.m.