



Minutes of the 9/17/2024 Meeting

The September meeting of the Lake Housatonic Authority was held in person at the New Haven Rowing Club in Oxford. Simultaneously, the meeting was broadcast live on Zoom.

Members Present

Ames, Scott (Oxford)
Behuniak, Paul (Seymour)
Blanchard, Sandy (Shelton)
Evans, Chris (Shelton)
Fiedler, Andy (Derby)
Olson, Jim (Oxford)
Stahl, Mike (Derby)
Zitnay, David (Derby)

Members Absent

Also present was LHAMP Chief Brian Brainard and LHAMP Asst. Chief Alex Commander.

The Chairman, Mike Stahl, called the meeting to order at 6:31PM

PUBLIC PORTION:

Jim Olson spoke on his own behalf as a member of the public. Jim presented to the board a significant amount of information pertaining to the debris that has been coming over the Stevenson Dam since the flood. This information included copies of the First Light debris management plan, copies of correspondence between Jim and FERC, as well as correspondence between FERC and FirstLight. He also supplied video and photo evidence of what appears to be knowingly and willfully discharging large debris over the dam, rather than removing it. The information presented by Jim was not all of his own. He received information and testimonials from numerous lake residents and included those in his presentation to the board. It is Jim's opinion, as well as many lake residents' opinion, that FirstLight is not following their debris management plan and are not being good stewards of the lake. Jerry Sudimick (a lake resident), in particular, has been very involved. Jim and Jerry, as well as several other residents, have all sent informal complaints to FERC via their hotline. In addition, Jim and Jerry have filed a formal complaint to FERC. FERC in turn has generated docket number P-2576-053 and filed a complaint with FirstLight and asked several questions to FirstLight. Although still in the investigative phase and no formal final determination has been made yet, the FERC investigator has indicated that he felt FirstLight was not following the plan as written.

The board thanked Jim for his presentation and for the information he has gathered. There was general consensus amongst all the board members that they also felt that FirstLight was not following their debris management plan. As such, the Chairman asked the board to make a motion

for the LHA to formally respond to FERC complaint. The board agreed. The motion will appear under the New Business section of these minutes.

No other public was present.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:

The minutes for the August 2024 meeting were presented to the board for approval.

Motion to accept the August 2024 meeting minutes as presented:

Motion: Olson Second: Zitnay Vote: Unanimous

TREASURER'S REPORT:

The Treasurer, Sandy Blanchard, presented the September 2024 report. Funding has been received from the town of Seymour. As noted last meeting, the actual amount is approximately \$700 less than requested. The reduction was due to Seymour not using the 2024 request letter, but using the 2023 request letter, and paying last years requested amount instead. All bills received have been paid in full. A receipt was just submitted by Scott Ames for \$244 for website and email renewals. Dave Zitnay also has a receipt for supplied purchased that will be submitted soon. The invoice for the weed survey is expected by the end of the month. Brian Brainard noted he would be submitting for back pay for administrative hours.

The Treasurer informed the board that the insurance policy would be coming up for renewal soon and should be reviewed. The policy includes liability and property insurance. The liability insurance has a "lay up" provision whereas liability is not covered in the off-season from 10/25/24 through 5/15/2025. The Chairman asked the Treasurer to confirm that it was just the liability portion that was laid up and not the property portion as well. The Treasurer indicated he understood it as just the liability but would follow up and confirm. The property insurance was discussed and it was noted that the vessels, motors, trailers, and fixed radios were covered. However, the dock and portable radios were not. The board unanimously agreed that the docks should be included for a value of \$20,000 and the mobile radios should be included at their current replacement value. The fixed radios were currently insured for \$8,000 and should be increased to their current replacement value as well.

Motion to accept the September 2024 Treasurer's report as presented.

Motion: Behuniak Second: Zitnay Vote: Unanimous

GUEST PRESENTATION:

None scheduled.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

Patrol:

Chief Brian Brainard informed the board of the sudden unexpected death of a LHAMP Officer as well as a separate personnel matter. The Chairman asked that the meeting go into executive session due to the subject matter. He asked that only the LHA board members, LHAMP Chief, and LHAMP Assistant Chief are to be present for the executive session.

Entered executive session 7:00PM

The board discussed and acted on several personnel issues.

Exited executive session 7:24PM

There was no public in attendance so it was not necessary to excuse anyone, and the zoom audio/video was paused for the duration of the executive session. The secretary did keep meeting minutes during the executive session but they will not be included in the public record.

Chief Brainard continued with his patrol report. An additional 3 tickets were issues since the last meeting. He has begun the process of hiring additional officers for next year and will be placing an Indeed ad. A copy of the ad will be given to the Secretary to post on Facebook. Currently there are only 6 officers. It is desired to try to hire a total of 20 officers for next year knowing that several will drop out and others will have scheduling issues. The LHAMP currently has three mobile radios and he would like to add an additional three mobile units so that radios are available for staffing the park boat launch. However, he'd like to find a new radio contractor as the current one has been very difficult to work with. He has reached out to DEEP to find out who their approved contractor is. The new radios are approximately \$2,000 each. He also asked the board to increase the starting pay and to consider a bonus for successfully completing a certain number of scheduled hours. The board agreed it was necessary to retain offices and improve hours worked. It was informally agreed to increase officers starting pay to \$22 hour and boat handlers to \$19 hour. It was also suggested that the pay rate be doubled on holidays and that a bonus plan be put in place. This was all tentatively agreed to by the board but a formal motion and approval would be tabled until the next meeting.

Water Quality:

Scott Ames reported that the August test results were received, and despite the sample being taken just one week after the historic flooding, the results were typical.

Weed abatement:

Jim Olson reported the weed survey would be completed around within the next couple weeks. He is working on an amended permit to allow the treatment of the pond weed in front of Wholand. It will be a challenge as they are a native species, not an invasive species. Overall, he felt the weed abatement program was working well and the lake in general is very healthy.

Vessels and Equipment:

No report at this time.

SPECIAL COMMITTEES:

None at this time

OLD BUSINESS:

Speed Limit Buoy

There was continued discussion on purchasing floating speed limit signs to help enforce the speed limit but no action has been taken yet on procuring them.

Vessel Safety Check Program

There was continued discussion on implementing a program to do voluntary vessel safety checks and issue a sticker. Chief Brainard will look into this further.

NEW BUSINESS:

FERC Complaint to FirstLight Debris Management Plan.

Based on the presentation/discussion with Jim Olson during the public portion as well as research/personal experience of the individual board members, all agreed the LHA needed to take an active role in the formal complaint process.

The Chairman asked for a motion to formally respond to the FERC complaint outlined under docket number P-2576-053 using the FERC eFile system.

Motion: Zitnay Second: Evans Vote: Unanimous

CORRESPONDENCE:

All correspondence received since August was presented to the board.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

The Chairman thanked the New Haven Rowing Club for generously allowing the use of their facility to facilitate easy access by the public to the meeting. The location of future meetings will need to be reviewed and/or possibly returning to zoom meetings only.

AJOURNMENT:

The Chairman asked for a motion to adjourn the September meeting at 7:45PM.

Motion: Zitnay Second: Behuniak Vote: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Ames
Secretary – LHA

These minutes are subject to approval.

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE LAKE HOUSATONIC AUTHORITY IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2024.