

TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Public Hearing – Lake Warren Water Quality Improvement

via Modifications to Pine Cliff Road

Unapproved Minutes for Meeting of July 16, 2024 at 5:00 PM

Town Hall, 9 Mechanic Street, Alstead, NH 03602

SELECT BOARD PRESENT: Joel McCarty, Chair, Gordon Kemp, and Matthew Saxton.

STAFF PRESENT:

Name	Position	In Person	Google Meet
Misty Gratacos	Town Administrator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shelley Steuwe	Recording Secretary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prescott Trafton	Road Agent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jesse Moore	Director of Sanitation, EMS & Grounds	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Steve Murrell	Police Chief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Steve Reynolds	Emergency Mgmt Dir	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMUNITY MEMBERS: **In person:** Andy Dickinson, Tricia Bennett, Nicole Fabre, Tra Deyf, Ken Bergeon, Barbara Viegner, Marge Noonan, Ruth Pratt, Dawn Dunton, Robert Quaglin, Jane Quaglin, Tom Dowling, Rosemarie Dowling, Judith Willis, Joe Levesque, Sharon Spaulding, Nathan Perry, Nancy Potkin, Daniel Kurz, Barbara Davis, Robert Bulle, Miranda Spencer, Michelle Roy, Darren Perloyo, Greg Wright, Sally Rothkoff, Greg Bath, Judy Bath, Karen Weldon Mattson, Penny Gendron, Bethany Witten, Kevin Warzecha, Ed Hatch, Bileta Hatch, Chris Hatch, Karyn Kaminski, Russell P, Jerr Putnam, Joyce Campbell, Sharan Lavery, Lisa Tusveld, Rock Wilson, Jerry Blake, Anne Fletcher, Jeanne Brooks, Peter Renzelmar, Moira Lawlor, Annie Hess

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. McCarty called the Public Hearing to order at 6:04 PM and then proceeded with describing the intent of the hearing.

Mr. McCarty: The Selectboard's goal is to make sure we know everything that can be known about a topic before we make a decision. A slideshow presentation and expert opinion will be provided, the hearing audio recording is not public and intended for the accurate recording of meeting minutes only. The minutes, slideshow, and printed resources provided tonight will be made available on the Town website.

Slideshow presentation and subsequent discussion (a list of resource links is provided at the end of this document):

“What’s Working”:

Sarah Webb, Chair, Alstead Conservation Commission:

- The first hearing that she attended was in 2013, and dust, erosion, and widening of the road were discussed. The Conservation Commission (CC) and Lake Warren Preservation Association (LWPA; formerly Lake Warren Association) came together and assisted in the creation of the Watershed Management Plan, which outlined several solutions for slowing the decline in the lake's water quality.
- She walked Pine Cliff Road recently and surveyed the modifications her team had implemented in the area of the “swimming trail” (private property by the dam that the public may use to access the lake). These modifications included planting blueberry bushes, alders, day lilies, irises, and laying down mulch. As a result of their work, the swimming area has improved. Much of the vegetation has continued to grow and the natural buffer has increased. She noted that handouts were available that described how to implement a natural buffer like this.
- Unfortunately, the road continues to widen each time it is grated. Initial studies performed on the road recommended narrowing it via a natural buffer, but this gets wiped away when it is grated.
- There is a property and private road on Pine Cliff Road which dump eroded material into the lake by way of a beach. The LWPA and CC can work with homeowners to remedy this situation.
- There are resources on this topic available to the public, via the [CC website](#), [NHDES website](#), and the [LAKE WARREN Watershed Management Plan \(swrpc.org\)](#).
- Finally, the Town has their own separate responsibilities, but everyone needs to work together.

Public Comment/Questions:

- Not many flowers and bushes are left (in the abovementioned swimming area) due to use of the space.
 - Ms. Webb - The important thing is that it's not dirt and mud. I will make note of replacing the shrubs.
- Is the swimming area public?
 - Ms. Webb - Private property, but available to the public.
 - Need to add signage about access/ownership.

- Resident - The land belongs to the Chase house property (Margaret Perry). They have always felt that it's public and ok with that if there is no increase in liability for them. It can't be called "public", but they don't restrict its use.
 - Ms. Webb - There used to be parking made available to encourage people not to park at the swimming area.
 - Resident - It's ok to park opposite of lake, on the road.
 - Resident - People are parking all over the place, including on the dam.
- Resident - How much of the Watershed Management Plan has been implemented and maintained?
 - Ms. Webb - Unsure of exact figures, but knows of the buffer zone and plantings. Swales were recommended but did not happen (has to happen with what the Town does to the road). Probably 2 or 3 recommendations have been implemented out of a "ton". Many of them are expensive, so they had to "cherry pick" which to do.
- Resident - Was any taxpayer money used for the work that was done on the Chase's private property (swimming area)?
 - Mr. McCarty - No. A grant was received via the Southwest Regional Planning Commission, and the Town incurred some expense in delivering material.
- Resident - Since grating is an issue, are we notified when grating will be done so we can put up barriers to prevent road widening?
 - No
- Resident - Back before the study, in the early years of the LWPA, the studies that were done every summer included things like agricultural fertilizer coming into the lake and sewage. Where does dust from the road rank in terms of the overall pollutants in the lake?
 - Ms. Webb - Unsure, but knows Pine Cliff Road is the worst as far as particulates.

"How Many/How Fast?"

Mr. McCarty, Mr. Trafton, and Chief Murrell review speed data collected from 6/26/24 at 10:00 am - 7/10/24 at 10:00 am by Mr. Trafton and Chief Murrell:

- Asphalt end - the highest speed was 46-50 mph (one vehicle).
- Arbor Way - the highest speed 40-45, but majority in the 6-10 mph range.
- Mr. Trafton - There are about 6 people in a week that are outliers, and we can't tell if they're emergency services or police. The average speed was 26-30 mph, but most are going 25 mph or less. We own the equipment and can take as much data collection as we want
- Chief Murrell - There's an occasional speeder, but there isn't a "speeding problem". The 85% percentile during this study was 27 mph; it was 28 mph in 2021, and 22 mph in 2013. There were almost 1,000 more cars in this study, compared to 2021, and we're not seeing much change in speed.
 - Resident - Maybe the speed limit should be reduced then. Maybe 25 mph is too fast.

- Resident - Cars have been going slower since the signs were put up, and there is less dust.
 - Chief Murell - The sign trailers were not up in the 2021 study (just the small radar box), and we still saw similar speeds in that study.
- Resident - Is there data on volume of traffic?
 - Mr. Trafton - More people go out towards town (Route 123) than towards Gilsum Mine Road. The total number of vehicles was 4,133.
- Resident - Was there an uptick in volume over the previous years' studies?
 - Chief Murrell - They were done at different times of year. In 2021 it was done in October. There was a little over 900 cars difference.
- Resident - These are two points on the road, but the center point where it transitions from dirt to tar feels like an entry to a speedway.
- Resident - People also barrel towards the dam.
- Who controls the speed limit on roads?
 - Mr. Trafton - We tried to lower the speed on Pine Cliff Road before, but 25 mph is the minimum, per State law.

“What Can the Selectboard Do Without Voter Approval?”

Mr. McCarty - Two different lawyers confirmed what the Selectboard has authority to do without voter approval:

- Set seasonal/temporary limits (cannot close public road to commercial traffic),
- Set and enforce a speed limit, (speed cameras/license plate cameras are generally prohibited),
- Set a road to one-way or dead-end as long as every resident can get in and out, and
- Install various undefined traffic calming structures.

“What Can't the Selectboard Do Without Voter Approval (with raised and appropriated funds)”

- Major projects, including road realignment, drainage upgrades, permeable pavement, permanent traffic calming structures,
- Designate it a Class V road as “a road to summer cottages” and thereby end winter maintenance,
- Discontinue Class V road entirely, ending all town maintenance and public right of way, and

Further - The voters of the existing village district could vote to self-tax, for a broad array of reasons, maintenance of roads, employment of police, impoundment of water, protection of water supplies, and more.

- Resident - Making it a one-way is a good idea; less traffic, less road maintenance.

Mrs. Steuwe reviewed the LWPA survey results:

- Phase One - LWPA members
 - Responses received: 77
 - Respondents reside in: 49% seasonal, 51% year-round; 47% live on Pine Cliff Road (could be seasonally or year-round)
 - Most favored solution: Pave, repair, and add drainage (47%)
 - Second favorite: Make Pine Cliff Road a dead-end (21%)
 - Third favorite: Make Pine Cliff Road a one-way (11%)
 - There were over 40 "free text" responses at the end of the survey, most of which:
 - Highlight a desire to combine approaches, rather than use just one
 - Suggest adding speed bumps
- Phase Two - Residents on Pine Cliff Road, Bley Road, Prentice Hill Road, Camp Brook Road, portion of Route 123, portion of Gilsum Mine Road, Peachblow Road, Arbor Way, Eel Rock Road, and Shadow Land Road
 - Responses received: 30
 - Respondents reside in: 17% seasonal, 83% year-round;
 - 40% live on Pine Cliff Road, 23% on Route 123, 20% on Gilsum Mine Road, and 3% each on the remaining roads
 - We changed the method a bit for the second phase and asked respondents to rate **each** of the proposed solutions, rather than choosing one as their preferred option. Ratings included: strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, neutral, somewhat in favor, and strongly in favor. We also removed one of the solutions presented in Phase One, as it involved a piece of property we originally believed to be Town-owned that is actually owned by a resident on Route 123.
 - They strongly favored paving, repairing, and adding drainage, strongly opposed creating a one-way, dead end, and adding a three way stop at Arbor Way, and they were split with the speed bumps
- Phase Three - All residents who received a mailing about the Public Hearing
 - Responses received: 15 as of 4:04pm 7/16
 - Respondents reside in: 87% East Alstead, 7% Alstead Center, 7% "Other"
 - They were about 50/50 on all options except adding the three-way stop at Arbor Way, which they mostly strongly opposed.
- When combining responses from Phases Two and Three (unable to include Phase One due to different solutions proposed and different format for rating solutions):

Solution	Strongly Oppose	Somewhat Oppose	Neutral	Somewhat in Favor	Strongly Favor
Pave, repair, add drainage	22%	13%	9%	20%	36%
Make it one-way	40%	13%	18%	18%	11%
Make it a dead-end	47%	9%	11%	11%	22%
Add speed bumps	31%	9%	22%	20%	18%
Create a 3-way stop at Arbor Way	56%	4%	24%	7%	9%

“2024 Possibilities (from least to most effective and expensive)”

- Speed bumps and humps,
- Temporary traffic calming structures,
- One way (which way?), and
- Dead end (where?).

“2025 Possibilities (from least to most effective and expensive)”

- Improved drainage throughout, especially at Arbor Way intersection,
- Permanent traffic calming structures,
- Permeable pavement, and
- Road realignment/narrowing.
- *Note - NHDES is encouraging the Town to apply for matching funding for any projects that can be shown to improve water quality/reduce cyanobacteria impact*

Public Discussion:

- Dan Kurz -
 - Lake is in "impaired" status per NH DES due to high levels of phosphorous
 - In 2017, the Watershed Management Plan, which was adopted by the town, had a goal to reduce phosphorous levels by 25% over a 10 year span to remove the lake from "impaired" status.
 - This report identified Pine Cliff Road as a major contributor to phosphorous load
 - Per the Lake Management Implementation report in 2022, Pine Cliff Road has accounted for 49 lbs/year of phosphorous, but levels have only been reduced by .27 lbs/year, which is less than 1/10th of 1% of the goal.
 - While soft measures that have been done are appreciated, they have not been effective.
 - The Management plan outlined \$386k in spending over 10 years. At this point, 7 years later, if we were investing in the remediation plan, we would have spent \$270k. I don't know the actual amount spent, but it definitely is not this much.
 - Phase 1 of this plan identified Pine Cliff Road as the first Action Item, yet the town has done next to nothing to address this issue
 - Paving, especially permeable pavement, along with fixing the underlying drainage issues will be extremely expensive, and require voter approval.
 - Turning the road to one way will only solve half of the dust problem, and possibly be hard to enforce
 - I am asking the Selectman to consider temporarily dead ending the road, so that we can study the effects of the reduced traffic and start to reverse the harm to the lake. This will cost next to nothing, and may even save money in the long run with reduced maintenance, grading, and repairs. There is a simple, state maintained alternative route.
 - This plan will require working with the town professionals to figure out how to make this work logistically and keeping the safety of the residents in mind.

Change is scary, but we have other dead end roads in the town with much harder access, and just because something has been a certain way for a long time, is not an excuse to keep the same way when it is at the detriment to our town's natural resources.

- A letter with 24 signatures from Alstead residents who were unable to attend the town hearing supporting this request was submitted to Joel.
 - Mr. Saxton - Are you tying phosphorus to dead-ending the road?
 - Mr. Kurz- Yes, the Management Plan ranked issues (septic is hard to gather); dust and phosphorus load were high on the list and Pine Cliff Road is the biggest contributor (49 lbs per year; 10-year goal set to reduce by 27 lbs per year. Phosphorus comes from the runoff.
- I was born and raised on Pine Cliff Road and have lived there my whole life. The road is in better condition than ever. I'm all for paved and speed bumps, not a dead-end.
- EMS staff opinion on advisability of one way/dead end:
 - Director Reynolds - Closing any road is not acceptable for delivery of EMS - does not recommend.
 - Re: the possibility of adding a gate to create the dead-end:
 - Director Moore - Emergency gates are a possibility. It's up to the taxpayers.
 - Resident (current EMS) - If someone needs services and the open end of the dead-end becomes obstructed (due to downed tree during storm, for example), you remove the one entry point to the road. Creating a dead-end creates a disadvantage that was not otherwise there.
 - Resident (former EMS) - Pine Cliff Road, as it is, is 4.6 miles/7 minutes from 50 Pine Cliff Road to the village. This increases to 7.8 miles/14 minutes if the road is dead-ended. 255 Pine Cliff Road is 5.5 miles/10 minutes to the village, this increases to 6.9 miles/12 minutes if the road is dead-ended.
 - Resident - Not in favor of dead-end; one way reduces the issue of EMS inaccessibility.
 - Resident - If it's one-way and someone is having work done on their house, how are they supposed to get to the house with a trailer? Turn around in someone's driveway?
 - Resident - What about a removable barrier for the dead-end?
 - Mr. McCarty - They are very expensive.
- Mr. Trafton -
 - Re: removable speed bumps - People complain when there are potholes, but when we cater to Lake Warren in terms of grating, then people complain about speeding when the road is smooth. We have to compact soil to get speed bumps in, which is difficult to do. It's easier on paved surfaces.
 - Re: pitching the road to reduce runoff - Water still gets into the lake via the catch basins. To actually drain the water away from the lake, we would need to put a pump station in.
 - Resident - When were the catch basins last maintained?

- Resident - Residents on the lake contribute 8% of the Town's taxes.
- Resident - The environment is the # 1 issue.
- Resident - Many years ago (around 2000) there were two lots available on the lake, and the LWPA Board approached the Town to propose they purchase the lots and to create lake access, but the Selectboard at the time declined due to liability concerns.
- Resident - Some love the lake. Some don't care. There are concerns. The LWPA has done research. Conservation has been involved. Some things won't work due to EMS concerns. So, what do we do? What are we accomplishing by just tossing around ideas?
- Resident - A few years ago KROKA took a piece of conservation land on the lake and put in benches, and it's used by multiple people.
- Chief Murrell - I will never be in favor of anything that restricts traffic flow. If you've ever been pulled over for speeding, chances are you were speeding in front of someone else's house, and they'll speed in front of yours. There's not a speed problem on the road, there's a speed perception problem. We're responsible for all the roads in town and receive lots of complaints. If we put speed bumps on PCR, we'll need to do this everywhere else. Think of your taxes. I'm not a fan of precedent setting, special interest groups, or changing things for a small group. If we pave, speed will increase. People won't adhere to one-way signs and that can increase chances of accidents.
 - Resident - Do you think we have a lot of traffic on Pine Cliff Road?
 - Chief Murrell - Pretty average.
- Resident - The main issue is the quality of the environment, not speeding.
- Mr. McCarty - The cheapest and fastest thing to do is to create a dead-end, but we can't reach agreement that that's what people want to do, and EMS is not in support.
- Resident - Narrowing down our choices, does that mean we're limited to survey suggestions? Why don't we fix it for once and for all with paving and drainage? We pay a lot into taxes for infrastructure for Alstead, it's time for Alstead to invest in the infrastructure on Pine Cliff Road.
 - Mr. McCarty - There's a good deal of interest in linking funding in Concord at NHDES to permeable pavement. NHDOT is clear that it is ultimately cheaper to maintain a paved road than a dirt road (not saying that the lifecycle is less).
 - Resident - What is permeable pavement?
 - Mr. McCarty - Instead of the water running right off the surface, there is a certain level of permeability that allows it to absorb.
- Resident - We're losing the facts about the lake. The water quality is deteriorating, and we will get to a point of no return. Can we wait until 2025? What can we do now? The Selectboard needs to take this seriously enough to take action now.
- Resident - There are members of this town that have absolutely nothing, so we need to keep in mind that this group tonight is privileged when we say the town needs to give back to Lake Warren
 - Resident - We're here for environmental reasons, not social.
- Resident - People around the lake can also do things to reduce traffic in the most troublesome areas.

- Resident - It's a public road and always has been. More people in town should be involved in this discussion, and it should be a town decision, not just the Selectboard.
- Annie Hess, LWPA President - I appreciate what the town administration is able to accomplish. Lisa and I have been working closely with Southwest Regional Planning Commission and NHDES, and over the years every time the environment becomes an issue, there's an agreement that this is true and something needs to be done. It is an asset and part of the town and its history. A lot of folks want to preserve the lake for future generations. The cheap solution would be to reduce traffic, and the LWPA Board advocates for a one-way road rather than a dead-end to reduce dust and traffic. This way everyone shares the inconvenience. The Board has spent a lot of time and energy on this issue, and we're getting frustrated because nothing is being done.
- Resident - We have two choices, long and short term. What can we do to tide us over until March?
- Resident - The Selectboard does not need voter approval to make some of these changes to the road, so it falls on the Selectboard to make a decision. There is a history of inability for the community to reach a consensus and solutions get voted down. Paving will be expensive and likely won't be voted in.
 - Mr. McCarty - The Selectboard will take the feedback and information gathered tonight, publish all the documents shared this evening and the minutes to the Town website by 7/23/24, and will deliberate on this and you will know what we do or do not decide.

There being no further discussion, on a motion made by Mr. McCarty and seconded by Mr. Kemp, the Chair adjourned the public hearing at 8:06 PM.

Resources made available or mentioned during this public hearing:

- [Slideshow Presentation](#)
- [Conservation Committee site](#)
- [NHDES website](#)
- [LAKE WARREN Watershed Management Plan \(swrpc.org\)](#)
- Remaining links to printed resources provided that evening will be added once they are posted to the Town website.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Steuwe

Recording Secretary