**TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON**

**CONSERVATION-LAKE COMMISSION**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 10, 2015**

**7:00 PM**

**TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Present:**  Peter Zawisza, Joe Carbonell, Irene Curtis, Wesley Jenks, Tom O’Brien, Phil Sissick

**Absent:** Martin Podskoch

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Zawisza at 7:00 p.m.

**Seating of Alternates:**

No alternates

**Approval of Minutes: July 9, 2015**

A motion was made by Ms. Curtis and seconded by Mr. O’Brien to approve the minutes of the August 13, 2015 meeting. Motion passed with a vote of 5-0.

**Communications and Liaison Reports:**

Mr. Sissick stated that the Town Council has moved forward with the Resolution to accept the donation of land on O’Neill Lane. He met with Mr. Maniscalco and State Representative Melissa Ziobron at the parcel to see about potential funding.

Public Works has been working on putting in a bioswale for drainage on S. Wangonk; the work is almost done.

The small upper rain garden at Sears Park is functioning.

**Public Remarks:**

Priscilla Connors of 10 Whittier Road read a proposal for the lake. This was an email that was read into the minutes of the Town Council meeting of Sept. 8, 2015, with a revision. Her communication is attached to these minutes. In summary she is proposing a ban on phosphorous fertilizers and a ban of large motor craft (limiting horsepower to 3 -3.5, or with electric motors) for improvement of the lake.

Judson Landis of 63 Spellman’s Point Road stated that something definitely needs to be done about the lake. The bigger motor boats are not a problem if they stay aware from the shore, props are not a problem. He feels the problem is runoff from roads and lawns. The catch basins were supposed to be cleaned more regularly and they have not been. Too many people are cutting down large trees which creates more runoff. He feels there should be regulation on how far back there is natural vegetation on land around the lake. Rain gardens are fine but more catch basins are needed. He proposes one large public meeting with the Inlands-Wetlands Commission amongst others. He would like to see a list of things that can be done, then see action on that list. Some items may be simple and won’t cost the town money.

Dennis Jenks of Meeks Point Road stated that he supports the last two commenters. He stated that more public were at this meeting based on Barbara Moore’s comments at the Town Council meeting that they should talk to the Conservation-Lake Commission. He proposes a public meeting in a few weeks at the Middle School. He believes the Conservation-Lake Commission will find a lot of active support which will help their cause. The Town Council might see the number of people attending this meeting and take more notice. He states that other local lakes have had to intervene with chemicals which may be a short-term answer. He hopes there is not another health hazard next July.

Susan McFarland of 52 Meeks Point Road thanked the members of the Commission for volunteering their time. She is encouraged about the things she is hearing at public meetings. She is hoping to hear more about the nine point watershed plan that was brought up in the paper in May. She supports going after the cause which she feels is phosphorous loading. She is opposed to a boating ban as many like to waterski, tube, etc. She is interested in concrete actions such as catch basins and rain gardens and is willing to put her money where her mouth is when it comes to the health of the lake.

Roger Abraham of 47 Clark Hill Road dropped off testing samples done by the East Hampton High School Environmental Club, of which he is the advisor. He states that he will email the Commission with results and keep everyone in the loop. He is also interested in hearing a plan for the lake.

Dave Bengston of Spellman Point Road, representative of the Bay Point Club, states that they are willing to hold a meeting at their clubhouse. He recommends having the Town Council and the Conservation-Lake Commission attend together to talk to public as now they are hearing the Town Council say to talk to the CLC and the CLC saying there is no funding. He asks how we can start this process. He would like a contact person to create a public meeting. He further asked about a quote he found from Barbara Moore stating that Bolton Lake was under DEEP control. He asked for an explanation of “DEEP Control” over the lake.

Mr. Carbonell provided an explanation as to the meaning of DEEP Control: the town owns the land around the lake, but the state has control over the water. We have the same well-known limnologist that works with the state on many other lakes who is gathering data on our lake. The DEEP office is a one-person operation, leaving them understaffed. The paperwork for this takes a long time. The state administered a copper sulfate treatment to Bolton Lake which is only a short-term solution. Testing is already showing that they would only be able to administer this to half our lake if at all, which could create another issue. The copper stays in the water after treatment so that could create another long-term problem.

Patience Anderson of 17 Anderson Way, member of the Town Council, speaking as a resident and concerned citizen for the lake, stated one of the considerations for having a plan to follow is money. At the beginning of the year there was over $150,000 in the budget to develop a nine-point source plan. Through multiple failed budget referendums that amount was whittled down to $67,000. This was taken out of capital and put in the CLC’s operating budget. She hopes that the Commission will use this money to develop a plan that will help get Federal and State funding. She made a passionate plea for STEAP Grant money to be used for the lake but other Town Council members disagreed with her. She is hoping they will create a RFP for a plan with the money in their budget. She stated that it’s not time for more studies, but time for action. Again she would like to see a plan, as they do have the funds and the ability to make one. This will get them support for their budget.

Mario Landro of 1 Day Point Road stated that there is no issue with the size of motor boats on the lake. The bigger issue is boats coming in and out of that lake that could be contaminated. This needs to be addressed at the boat launch by an authority there.

Chairman Zawisza stated that the lake has been closed the past two years because of changes in State regulations. This problem with algae has been going on for years but the public was not aware. You cannot purchase phosphate fertilizers in the State of CT (Mr. Sissick stated that some starter fertilizers are still allowed to have phosphorous). He also stated that it’s a problem of budget to have a person of authority at the boat launch. There is specific training involved and manpower needed.

Donna Jenks of Meeks Point Road suggested a sign at the boat launch that states the rules. She and other members of the public suggested public volunteers at the boat launch asking people where their boats had last been.

Dennis Jenks of Meeks Point Road commented regarding the budget. He stated the Town Council is not putting a lot of attention on the issue. Other people that don’t live on the lake may not even realize that the economic price to all residents if the lake has problems. Education is the key and if all residents don’t know this is truly an economic issue then it needs to be brought up to them.

**Presentation on the Lake by Ehren Meisinger:**

Ehren Meisinger, of 60 N. Maple Street, senior at East Hampton High School and Lifeguard at the lake for the past two years, gave a presentation on the problems of the lake as well as an idea for a possible solution. He talked about runoff, snowblowing into the lake, external and internal loading problems, etc. He brought up past studies that the Town has invested in which all had similar recommendations but haven’t been acted on. He suggests the idea of a floating island biofilm solution and gave an explanation as to how biofilm works in fish tanks. He has the idea of putting floating islands in the lake that could be used to help clean it. In his research he found a company that already has been doing this with success in other lakes, Floating Islands International. The size of the floating islands and how many would be needed for our lake are to be determined. Mr. Meisinger states that these islands do not need to be taken out for the winter, although the plants in them will die. The island itself should withstand freezing.

This led to a general discussion about getting a test island and testing the water directly around it to see its effectiveness.

Mr. Jenks brought up the money needed again, stating that the catch basins alone are a multi-million dollar undertaking. He stated there is no magic bullet to fixing the lake. He is happy to see so many members of the public at the meeting and hopes for their continued support.

Mr. O’Brien reiterated that what the community and Town need is a comprehensive plan with an idea of cost which would be presented to the public because there has to be town approval to move forward.

**Plan Review:**

1. **65 Bay Road – Variance for Deck**

Mr. Carbonell made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jenks, to approve the plan with the suggestion of gravel underneath the deck for proper drainage. Voted 5-0 in favor.

1. **14 Mark Twain Drive – Variance for Deck**

Mr. O’Brien made a motion, seconded by Mr. Carbonell, to approve the plan with the suggestion of appropriate drainage underneath. Voted 5-0 in favor.

1. **33 Spellman Point Road – Construction of New Driveway & Recharge System**

Mr. O’Brien made a motion, seconded by Ms. Curtis, to approve the plan. Voted 5-0. The comment was made that this plan is a model for how things should be done around the lake.

**Old Business:**

1. **Sub-Committee Report on Education:** None
2. **Advisory Panel Update:** The next Advisory Panel meeting will most likely be September 21, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. This is a closed meeting.

**New Business:**

Mr. Jenks stated that he recently visited Lake George and the lake was pristine. He received and reviewed a comprehensive guide, which is more like a book, that is given to everyone in the watershed. They also have a comprehensive website. If putting a boat in Lake George, the boat has to be inspected and stickered and they have a boat washing station. That lake is only 5% developed vs. 95% development on Lake Pocotopaug and yet they still have a problem. Mr. Jenks thinks we should mimic what they have done in terms of a book that can be handed out along with developing a good informational website about what should and should not be done to help the lake. He mentioned that at Lake George you need a permit to cut down a tree and referenced the new development on Rt. 66 in which trees were taken down and everything paved. This will lead to even more runoff into the lake. He talked about everyone starting change with themselves; asking yourself questions about what pesticides you’ve been putting on your property?, are you washing your car in your driveway?, have you been cutting down trees?, etc. The public attending the meeting is a step in the right direction; the more people that continue to support the CLC can educate themselves and their neighbors. His hope is that the public is not just here because the lake is closed, but that they will continue to support the health of the lake all year round and educate their neighbors as well.

**Public Remarks**

Priscilla Connors of 10 Whittier Road asked why there is reluctance to having an official ban on lawn applications and fertilizers. She suggested organic alternatives.

This led to a general discussion of organic vs. inorganic lawn treatments with Mr. Sissick stating that compost and organic fertilizers contain nitrogen and organic fertilizers can sometimes be worse for the lake because phosphorous cannot be removed from organic fertilizers, which can be leeched into lake. A discussion also occurred around the fact that the CLC has no authority to make rules, bans, or police those rules. It was suggested that if you see your neighbor putting something on their lawn that you should ask them about it and educate them as to why it is harmful to the lake. There is already a state wide ban on phosphorous which supersedes a town ban. Mr. Jenks stated that many people living on the lake pull water from the lake to water their lawn. This water already has the nitrogen and phosphorous in it, so they shouldn’t have to fertilize their lawn at all.

Todd Schrager stated that he believes fertilizers should be banned on the lake. It seems like the town has been lax about doing anything about the lake. Even if a ban is put on fertilizers, but not enforced, it would be a starting point since fertilizers are a major culprit. It does not cost the town any money and makes a strong public statement.

Mr. Jenks reiterated that the public statement should be that if you are a resident of the lake and you care about it, you must be crazy to be using pesticides or fertilizers or doing anything toxic outside.

Judson Landis of Spellman’s Point Road is concerned that the CLC has no authority and wanted to know why. To which Chairman Zawisza stated that it is a State Statute that they be an advisory committee only. Mr. Landis also asked about barley balls and if they are helpful for the lake. A general discussion occurred on how they can decompose and release chemicals if they are left in for too long. Three months was deemed too long to have them in.

Mr. Carbonell stated that he would like all the taxpayers and residents of the lake to know that water is being tested for everyone; not only at Sears Park as was done in the past.

Susan McFarland of 52 Meeks Point Road feels the nine point watershed plan is needed to enable the Town to apply for grants for the lake. She asked if the $67,000 or some portion of it, will be used to put together a group to make the plan.

Chairman Zawisza stated that they identified the items for the budget back in March and that most of that money will be going toward development of a plan; a RFP is coming in the near future. Mr. Carbonell mentioned that they would be shooting for 319 Federal Funding for the lake with the nine point plan. He also asked that the general population ask for STEAP Grant money to go toward the lake at Town meetings. Mr. Jenks stated that if the town applied for a STEAP Grant for the lake we would most likely receive the grant.

Mario Ladano of 1 Day Point Road asked about the arrangement with the car wash that was mentioned in passing earlier in the meeting (in reference to boat washing). He asked why not make it mandatory to show a receipt from the car wash before launching boat?

Mr. Carbonell stated that we would not put a boat wash by the ramp because of that water going into lake, but we are fortunate in East Hampton to have a car wash that accommodate trailers close to the lake that we can send people to before launching their boat.

Stuart Winquist of 11 S. Main Street expressed his support for Mr. Meisinger’s idea of the floating biofilm islands. If this is a viable option it may take a few years to help. He is encouraging the Commission to pursue this idea and ideally would like to see a test island in by next season.

Judson Landis stated that the Homeowner’s Associations around lake would probably be happy to store the islands in the winter and people who would help.

A woman who did not state her name asked about the level of water in the lake and the dam.

Mr. Carbonell stated that the gate on the dam is deteriorating. The dam will be opened around Columbus Day and the gate will be replaced at that time. Also mentioned was the very dry summer we’ve had. It was stated that the dam is privately owned and the Town has no control over its opening.

Priscilla Connors brought up a fine structure for people that don’t follow an ordinance against fertilizers. She stated that she does not understand why it is being said that this will cost money. All she is hearing is that people do not want a ban and she does not understand why.

It was then suggested that further discussion on a ban be directed to the Town Council as the CLC have no authority to create or enforce a ban.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Carbonell made a motion to adjourn that was seconded by Mr. Jenks at 8:43 p.m.. Motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Eliza LoPresti

Recording Secretary