

Richmond Pond Assn. Meeting Minutes – August 8, 2011

Present: Linda Kay, President (Richmond Shores); Dot Walchenbach & Herb Zweig (also Richmond Shores); Carl Foote, Treasurer (Branch Farm); Jack O'Brien (also Branch Farm); Kitty Levitan, Alan Schneit & Jana Pfeiffer (Whitewood); Ken Kelly (independent cottages); Jim McGrath (City of Pittsfield)

Absent: Lakeside Christian Representative; Girl Scouts Representative; Boys and Girls Club Representative; South Pond Representative

Treasurer's Report: Annual RPA dues letters were distributed at the meeting to those associations represented, and will be mailed by Carl to those not present. There are some remaining Richmond Pond t-shirts, and Carl and Jack O'Brien will bring them to Bartlett's to see if more can be sold.

Sewer related concerns & petition: It has been five years since the sewers were installed around the lake, and a number of concerns or issues have since arisen. Since the Richmond Sewer Commission has reportedly not met since the sewers were installed, Linda Kay drafted and shared a letter requesting that the Sewer Commission convene and meet with representatives of the Richmond Pond Association during the month of August, to hear and respond to our concerns. The letter indicated that a list of these concerns could be provided in advance of the meeting. Association representatives were each provided with a copy of the letter, and were asked to gather signatures of their members and forward the letter to Matt Kerwood, Town Administrator, at Richmond Town Hall. If this results in a scheduled meeting, RPA members will be notified.

Weeds: It was noted by several that the lake water level has been low recently, in part due to lack of rain, and weeds have grown back up to the surface in many areas. Jim McGrath suggested that we partner with other lakes and towns to obtain more favorable bids for weed treatment for next summer. He will initiate the bidding process in mid-winter, using such an approach.

Zebra Mussels: Jim McGrath reported that while testing of Richmond Pond and other area lakes has not detected the presence of the zebra mussels (except in Laurel Lake), they have spread further downstream in the Housatonic River, and have also been documented in several lakes in Connecticut. They have not been detected as far north as the Lenoxdale boat launch area. A concern was raised that the MA state response to zebra mussels has disappointingly not been as aggressively proactive as their response to some other invasives. It was suggested that each of the associations remind all of their members to remind their guests to wash their boats before launching them, especially as many of these car-top boats have been on other waters, and they're launched from shores other than the public boat launch ramp, where there are educational signs, certification forms, and a monitor.

Drawdown plans: Jim McGrath reported that a 2-foot lake drawdown is scheduled for this October, the final year of our draw-down permit. The drawdown for 2012 will require a new permit application, and there is RPA interest in seeking a deeper drawdown. Pontoosuc Lake is seeking a permit for a deeper drawdown this fall, so their progress with this will be monitored to see what we may learn from their experience. However, Jim mentioned that a complication for us in seeking a deeper drawdown from the joint Conservation Commission is the suspected presence of the endangered bridled shiner; though annual monitoring efforts over the last several years have not detected any, an 8-year study is required.

Kitty Levitan volunteered to call Matt Kerwood about the application for a deeper drawdown; Jim McGrath offered to assist as needed.

Minutes: In response to a question about how and whether minutes of RPA meetings were being distributed, Carl indicated that since we've been without a secretary, minutes have not been generated. Ken Kelly indicated that since he has just retired, has moved back into the area year-round, and now should be able to attend most meetings, he'd be willing to serve as secretary. This was met with appreciation from the group.

Next meeting: Monday, September 12, at 5:30 pm at Richmond Town Hall. (Monday, October 10 is likely to be RPA's final meeting of the year.)

(Minutes submitted 8/16/11; please provide any corrections to Ken Kelly)

Richmond Pond Association Meeting Minutes – September 12, 2011

Present: Kitty Levitan, vice president (Whitewood); Carl Foote, treasurer (Branch Farm); Jack O'Brien (also Branch Farm); Herb Zweig (Richmond Shores); Ken Kelly, secretary (independent cottages); Holly Stover (of "many hats")

Absent: Linda Kay, president (Richmond Shores); Lakeside Christian Representative; Girl Scouts Representative; Boys and Girls Club Representative; South Pond Representative;

Kitty chaired the meeting, as Linda was unable to attend. Though Jim McGrath (City of Pittsfield) and Matt Kerwood (Richmond Town Administrator) had been invited, they were unable to attend.

Deeper lake drawdown – Kitty reported that she had spoken with Matt Kerwood, and he was agreeable to preparing the request for a deeper drawdown for fall 2012. Matt had requested a letter from RPA in support of this request, so Kitty had sent him an email, constituting this request, referring to what had previously been discussed - a preferred 5 foot draw-down starting in fall 2012. After a discussion about draw-down parameters at our meeting, it became clear that a smaller draw-down of 3 to 3.5 feet is likely all that would be possible, in part because of silt built-up near the dam, and the dam's release gate limitations. Regardless of the parameters, Kitty indicated that we do need to engage a lake consultant to assess the situation. It was agreed that both Matt Kerwood and Jim McGrath should be invited to our next meeting; preparing for the drawdown request would be a primary topic, and it would be very helpful to have both of them there. Kitty will invite Matt and Jim.

Meeting with sewer commission – It was mentioned that Linda Kay's 9/6/11 email communication to Matt Kerwood had clarified that the request for a meeting with the Sewer Commission did not come from the RPA as an organization, but from several concerned sewer users. She had cited some of the questions/concerns of users in this email, which she had shared with RPA members. A discussion was held about next steps, and included mention by several of the alarmingly high number of Richmond Pond area sewer users whose pump grinders had cracked or failed, raising concerns about possible improper installations by the initial contractor. The possibility of a 9/28 meeting with the Board of Selectmen was mentioned, and it was noted that if that date – the start of Rosh Hashanah high holidays – was chosen, it would prevent some from attending. But in the interest of expediting movement on this topic, it was agreed not to try and change the date if that date was designated by the Selectmen. (NOTE: After the RPA meeting, Matt Kerwood, communicated an invitation to an open discussion with the Board of Selectmen/Sewer Commission regarding the operation and the finances of the Richmond Sewer System. The meeting will take place **Wednesday, September 28, at 7:00 pm** in Town Hall. Postcards notifying all sewer users of the meeting are being mailed out on 9/15.) At least Linda and Jack plan to attend from RPA.

LAPA-West – The annual workshop of the Lakes and Ponds Association – West will be held **Saturday morning, October 1**, at BCC. The LAPA-West website has details about the organization and the agenda for the workshop at: <http://www.lapa-west.org/> RPA has found them to be very valuable resource. (NOTE: It was discovered after the RPA meeting that our LAPA-West membership had lapsed; Carl has therefore re-submitted our membership information and paid this year's annual association LAPA-West dues of \$100. Holly encouraged RPA members to attend the workshop; at least Ken does plan to attend.)

Treasurer's Report – Carl reported that 44% of RPA dues for this year have been paid. Those whose dues have not yet been received are Whitewood, Branch Farm, Richmond Shores, and Lakeside Christian.

Noise and boat launch concerns – Concerns were raised about noise from a group recently using the Boys and Girls Club Camp, especially their repeated use of air horns. A concern was also raised about the launching of boats from their swimming area rather than from the public boat launch ramp, where there is monitoring for certification of boat treatment for zebra mussels. These concerns should be communicated to the Boys and Girls Club, which was not represented at the meeting.

Weeds – The status of pond weeds was briefly discussed – the stringy ones are up to the top, and are a nuisance in many areas.

T-shirts update – It was reported that Linda has been collaborating with Bartlett's about sales of the remaining t-shirts, and they are almost gone.

Next RPA meeting (and probably our last one of the year) – has been shifted from its originally scheduled Monday, Oct. 10 date to **Tuesday, Oct. 11, 5:30 pm** at Richmond Town Hall, since that Monday is a holiday (Columbus Day).

(Minutes submitted 9/17/11; please provide any corrections to Ken Kelly)

Richmond Pond Association Meeting Minutes – October 11, 2011

Present: Kitty Levitan, vice president (Whitewood); Carl Foote, treasurer (Branch Farm); Ken Kelly, secretary (independent cottages); Jim Mooney (Boys and Girls Club); Matt & Teesie Melillo (Richmond Shores); Holly Stover (of “many hats”),

Guests also attending: Matt Kerwood (Richmond Town Administrator); Jim McGrath (City of Pittsfield)

Absent: Linda Kay, president (Richmond Shores); Jack O'Brien (Branch Farm); Herb Zweig (Richmond Shores); Lakeside Christian Representative; Girl Scouts Representative; South Pond Representative

Kitty chaired the meeting, as Linda was unable to attend; the meeting was held at the church adjacent to Richmond Town Hall.

Lake drawdown & weed treatments – Matt reported that a 2-foot lake drawdown will begin this November 1st. It is being done on a one-year extension of the order of conditions, by the Richmond and Pittsfield Conservation Commissions. It cannot be extended for another year, so we must re-submit, either for a 2 foot draw-down, or a deeper draw-down. As discussed previously, a draw-down of 3 to 3.5 feet is likely all that would be possible, in part because of silt built-up near the dam, and the dam's release gate limitations. Matt also indicated that the lead applicant should be the town, not continue to be the RPA, and he'd be glad to take the lead on both applications, likely contracting with a lake consultant to either prepare or assist with the applications.

Matt Kerwood and Jim McGrath both provided helpful perspectives on background and logical next steps. Following extensive discussion, it was agreed that two next steps are:

1. Matt and Jim will reach out to Ken Wagner, who has the expertise to serve as a lake consultant, to schedule a joint conference call consult with him in the very near future that will include one or more members of RPA and Holly as a representative from the Richmond Conservation Commission. Some of the data that will be needed we already have - Carl will update the data from the lake water chemistry studies and provide that to Matt and Jim. Kitty has related data that she will provide. There is also the weed mapping study by Lycott, and Matt has the pre- and post-weed treatment study results, older studies, and prior correspondence with Natural Heritage. That will also need to be collected and provided for Ken Wagner's review. Related action item – It was moved, seconded, and approved to commit up to \$1,000 in RPA funds to pay Ken Wagner for this consultation. Parameters of the sought future draw-downs, and subsequent next steps, including a determination of who should take the lead, will be based upon the recommendations that result from this consultation.
2. Matt will reach out to Natural Heritage to solicit their expectations, as they will be a key player in determining the parameters and data that will need to be provided in support of the draw-down application, given that Richmond Pond has habitat for the endangered bridled shiner (though recent studies have not documented any in Richmond Pond).

In anticipation of additional costs for studies that may be needed, or costs related to a lake consultant's preparation of the weed treatment application (which must be approved, contract awarded, and treatment

applied by late spring) and the draw-down application for fall 2012 and beyond, Matt was asked how much the Town of Richmond budget might be able to support with regard to such costs. He indicated that he may be able to free up close to \$10,000, from several related sources already designated for Richmond Pond.

An Additional RPA Meeting - Since there will likely be additional input needed from RPA relating to the preparation of the two applications discussed above, an additional RPA meeting will be held **Monday, November 14, at 5:30 pm**, at Richmond Town Hall.

LAPA-West – Ken reported on his attendance at the annual workshop of the Lakes and Ponds Association – West on October 1 at BCC. State Senator Ben Downing provided an update on the status of zebra mussels and the related pending aquatic invasive species bill, **Senate Bill 1904**, which has been passed by the Senate and is awaiting action by House Ways & Means. He encouraged folks to communicate with their House representatives and the four local candidates for the House, to indicate your support for the bill. The bill includes penalties for violations. He indicated it could pass late this fall or spring 2012. His remarks were well-summarized in the 10/7/11 Berkshire Eagle page A5 article by Lewis Cuyler. Ken attended excellent sessions on native and non-native aquatic plant identification, and on hand-pulling of invasives, focusing on the Center Pond Weed Project. The LAPA-West website has details about the organization and the workshop at:

Treasurer's Report – Carl reported that this year's dues have still not yet been received from Whitewood, Richmond Shores, and Lakeside Christian. There will be reach-outs to all three. He reported that the current balance of the treasury was about \$23,000, so he recommended that we not conduct a fund-raising effort (beyond dues) this year.

Addition to Email List - Teesie Melillo asked that Steve Patterson, president of Richmond Shores Civic Assn., be added to the email distribution list for minutes and meeting announcements; his email is:
Ken will add him to the list.

Secretary's note re Sewer System - While it was not discussed at today's RPA meeting, at least 35 persons attended the discussion with users of the Richmond sewer system that occurred at the 9/28/11 meeting of the Richmond Board of Selectmen. Matt Kerwood shared a detailed PowerPoint presentation at that meeting that included the history and scope of the project and related finances, and he responded to many questions. Tom Grizzi shared perspectives on groundwater inflow problems, grinder pump failures and related repairs. Jack O'Brien pointed out that 6 of the 10 grinder pump installations at Branch Farm have needed repair. Tom Grizzi has evaluated each failure and clarified that the containers are leaking most likely due to bad connections at the container going to the individual cottages.

The general audience pointed out there is about \$100,000 plus interest sitting in a town fund that could be used for different projects. Matt Kerwood explained the financial structure; basically the users on abatement are paying on a 30 year contract. The town has secured a 40 year funding contract, so they have established the 30 year payment program to fund the 40 year note. Any savings along the line are currently being held to cover such items as capital repairs and delinquent accounts. Currently 27 of 142 connections are delinquent on payments.

There was a commitment made by the Selectmen for follow up study and follow up communications to sewer users.

(Minutes submitted 10/18/11; please provide any corrections to Ken Kelly)