

# The Laconia Daily Sun

**WEEKEND**

SATURDAY, JULY 8, 2023

VOL. 24 NO. 27

LACONIA, N.H.

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## Balancing public, private interests on the Big Lake

Meredith shifts talk of boundary line between town docks, marina into neutral

Goodhue Boat Company's Meredith marina is looking to expand. The town's neighboring docks, shown here just to the right of Goodhue's covered docks, have fallen into disrepair, seen here partially submerged into Lake Winnepesaukee. See story, page 6. (Jon Decker/The Laconia Daily Sun photo)

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**Penny Pitou Travel**  
relocates as founder retires

see page 4

**Just 3 weeks before**  
rookies compete in first triathlon

see page 7



# Meredith pauses major dock rebuild plans, awaits outcome of marina application

By CATHERINE McLAUGHLIN  
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

MEREDITH — The Meredith Selectboard decided to pause pursuit of a boundary line adjustment with a Meredith Neck marina, part of town plans to rehabilitate and improve its public lake access infrastructure, at a meeting last month. The pause waves the marina forward to seek approvals for its own renovation ambitions and drives the town to reevaluate its own improvements.

Amid public disapproval of the adjustment as well as uncertainty about exactly where the boundary line is between the town docks on Lovejoy Sands Road and Goodhue Boat Company, the selectboard hit the brakes at a meeting on June 19.

“What we’re hearing from folks is that there’s a real uncomfortableness about this boundary line adjustment,” Selectboard Chair Jeanie Forrester said at the meeting. “It seems ... the best thing to do right now is to let Goodhue go forward to the planning board.”

Because of the pause, said Town Manager Troy Brown in an interview, the town will refocus on the improvements it can make to that infrastructure and others without boundary line changes, “while we’re waiting to see the outcome of [Goodhue’s] site plan process.”

No longer waiting to update its site plan with a new boundary line, Goodhue, which owns the marina commonly known as Shep Brown’s Boat Basin, is preparing to submit an application to the planning board. Chris Boldt, a longtime attorney for the marina, emphasized in an interview that the current plan is “very, very different” from the one it



The public docks at Lovejoy Landing are in need of repair, a plan the town of Meredith is pressing pause on. (Jon Decker/The Laconia Daily Sun photo)

unsuccessfully submitted in 2021, and said “we’re listening to the abutters and trying to strike a reasonable compromise.”

A booming boating industry in recent years has placed huge demands on lake access and marina capacity. Many have long wait lists and are increasing their valet services, where boats are stored on land and launched ahead of each use for customers. The growth also places demands on public access facilities and poses complicated questions about who can or should be able to use them. As more people, residents and visitors alike, flock to the lake, questions about how to accommodate this growth in

an environmentally sustainable way run up against longtime residents’ protective feelings of the quieter lake experience they have long enjoyed.

Over the last few years, the town developed a plan to restore deteriorating public boat docks and a ramp, to increase and monitor public parking and to better manage storm runoff into the lake at its public boat launch at Lovejoy Landing. To implement that plan, which an engineer presenting to the selectboard emphasized was developed using stakeholder input, the town would need to adjust its boundary line with the neighboring marina.

In talks about an adjustment, according to Brown, “they thought it was best that the town proceed with its project first, and once the lines were adjusted, we would submit our permit and seek approval. Then I think the intent was that Goodhue would start their land use approval process having the lot lines already adjusted.”

At a series of public meetings where the selectboard reviewed and altered the language of the line adjustment agreement, members of the public, many of whom are members of the Meredith Neck and Islands Alliance, or MerNIA, expressed disapproval of the adjustment, describing their concern that it was coupled with Goodhue’s endeavor.

The marina first attempted to expand in 2003 and has tried multiple other times in the decades since. In its opposition to expansion, MerNIA cites the zoning protections and limitations at the site and asserts neither the available on-shore resources like parking nor the lake’s ecology can sustain more traffic.

Referring to the outcry from residents about the agreement both in meetings and through direct communication, the selectboard decided to pause its pursuit of the boundary line change. Instead, Brown said, “I recommend that we refocus our efforts on the other waterfront infrastructure.”

Some issues that would have been repaired by the town’s complete plan for Lovejoy Landing could be addressed in the meantime, though others will have to wait for whenever the town is able to pursue its major build plans, according to Brown.

“It was a high-priority project to build new, but we’re still going to be required to maintain it,” and “take a look at what maintenance can be done as an interim measure,” Brown said.

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**DOCKS** from page 6

to town lots can be tailored to prevent nonresident marina customers from taking spots while still ensuring residents and their guests are not impeded — are one priority. However, “to address runoff at the Shep Brown’s facility, it really needs to be addressed as part of the whole reconstruction project.”

The price tag for the project has also nearly tripled — from \$600,000-\$800,000 when it was first explored, to about \$1.8 million — exceeding Meredith’s capital reserve funds.

“I think it really did cause the town to step back and say, ‘I think we need to take a better look at this and see if there’s a better way that we can accomplish this project,’” Brown said.

“The Select Board should be applauded for taking a measured, cautious, and pragmatic approach,” a June 21 MerNIA newsletter reads. “MerNIA remains very concerned about expansion efforts by Goodhue that will not only have detrimental effects to the physical environment of our residential neighborhood but will also result in further encroachment on the public land and water access for resident taxpayers and their guests.”

In an interview, Boldt said the site plan application Goodhue intends to bring to the planning board takes abutters’ concerns into account and, rather than growing its footprint, will enrich how the space is currently used.

“I’m not sure I view it as an expansion,” Boldt said. “We’re not adding to the number of boats, we’re not adding to the number of slips. We’re trying to do some things that greatly improve that site for the benefit of everybody that uses the town dock, town parking lot and the Goodhue property.”

Specifically, they are not adding buildings to the marina “in the western part of Lot 8A. We listened to the adjacent property owners and we’re putting a parking area there,” Boldt said. “We’re not putting in a great big new showroom.” The plans do include, he said, a new storage building and a “rearrange” of the docks. But improvements, he emphasized, are aimed at improving how space is already utilized.

In interviews at the conclusion of the June 19 selectboard meeting, residents expressed both frustration and approval of the selectboard’s decision to wait.

Christina Touhey, a resident of nearby Soley Lane, said that, while she disapproved of the boundary line adjustment, she felt it was irresponsible of the town to wait for the marina before pursuing its own project.

“It’s just saying, ‘We’re gonna let them go first,’” Touhey said. In the meantime, “docks are not gonna get fixed and they’re gonna continue to disintegrate into a lake. Parking is still going to remain an issue, and dock space is going to remain an issue. So I’m disappointed by that.”

The changes to the town facilities are necessary and worthwhile, Bear Island residents Pam Thompson and Peter Jeffries said. But they are skeptical that improvements to the marina won’t draw a larger customer base to the site.

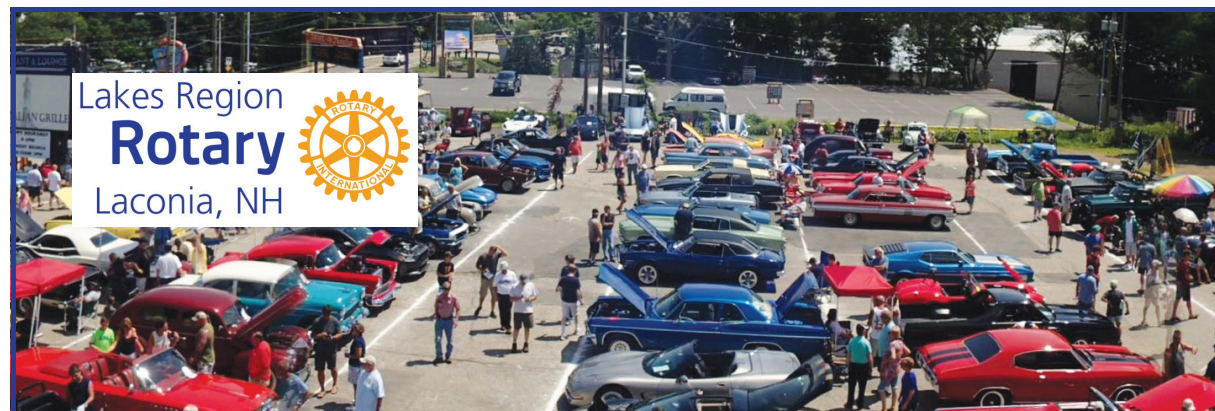
Despite their concerns about the condition of the town’s dock and anger over runoff problems, the two said ensuring any major changes to the area came sustainably was their priority, even if it meant delays.

“I don’t mind my feet getting wet in the dock that’s semi-submerged right now,” Thompson said. Preventing traffic increases in the area and improving water quality, she continued, should be the priority.

“It’s not great, and they could well be improved, but you don’t want to give away the farm, as a word, just to get better docks,” Jeffries agreed.



Meredith Selectboard Chair Jeanie Forrester, center, speaks at a June meeting as Town Manager Troy Brown, left, and selectboard member Lynn Leighton look on. (Catherine McLaughlin/The Laconia Daily Sun photo)



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