

Meredith selectboard keeps street near Cattle Landing open to overflow parking

By CATHERINE McLAUGHLIN
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

MEREDITH — The Meredith Selectboard delayed taking any action on new parking restrictions near Cattle Landing public dock, citing a need for a broad plan to address parking issues near public lake access infrastructure throughout the town.

“We need a comprehensive plan before we can move forward,” Selectboard Chair Jeanie Forester said at the regular meeting Monday, adding that, “In the long run, I think that road does need to be looked at.”

The board held a public hearing during the regular meeting Monday afternoon about a proposal to create a no-parking zone on Patricia Drive, a residential street abutting the Cattle Landing public dock lot often used for overflow during the summer months. In public comments, Bear Island residents cautioned the board not to remove the added parking option without addressing the causes driving overflows more broadly.

Bear Island resident Michelle Innes described how cutting the overflow option would acutely impact island residents. Innes said she

works long hours, and when she returns to Cattle Landing to get home for the night, she often finds a full municipal lot — usually both at Cattle and Lovejoy landings, further up Meredith Neck near Goodhue Boat Company — and is forced to park on Patricia Drive. Without that option, she said, “I can’t get home.”

Meredith police had expressed concern that parking along the small shoulder of Patricia Drive is a safety issue, blocking traffic, obstructing visibility at the intersection of Patricia with busy Cattle Landing Road and potentially impeding emergency vehicle access to homes on the street. Some residents also complained that parked cars made it difficult to get in and out of their driveways.

Patricia Drive residents, though, were not united in support of potential parking restrictions at the hearing. Larry Rose told the board that, while he shared some of his neighbors’ concerns, he did not think making his street a no-parking zone would eradicate the safety issues.

Whether on Patricia Drive or another place, overflow from parking lots designated for lake access will end up somewhere, Rose said. “People aren’t going to stay home because they can’t park there. They’re gonna go

find somewhere else. And I think that might be a safety concern there.”

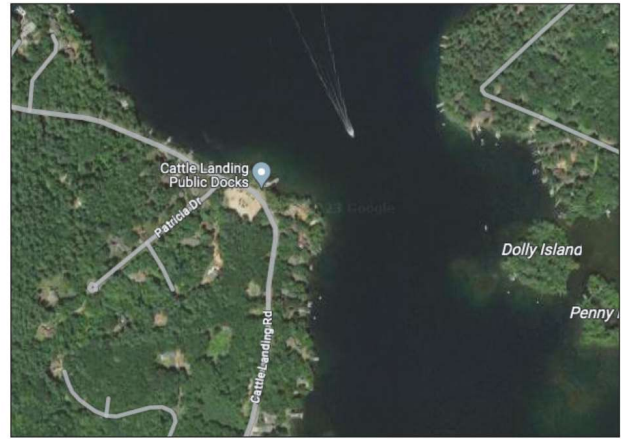
Bear Islander Bette Higley shared her perspective. “My biggest fear,” she said, “is that we’re essentially playing whack-a-mole.”

At the close of the hearing, selectboard members agreed the problems driving the demand for overflow — use of the municipal lots by non-residents and an overall shortage of municipal lakefront parking — should be addressed by a comprehensive parking plan, which they tasked Town Manager Troy Brown with drawing up, before closing the release valve of an overflow option.

At the same time, emergency vehicle access and intersection visibility remained a concern.

Cars parked along Patricia Drive, like elsewhere in town, can be ticketed if they are too close to a stop sign or too far out into the road, Lt. Phil McLaughlin of MPD said at the meeting. McLaughlin said he knew of fewer than 50 tickets being issued near Cattle Landing in his more than two decades at the department.

If parking supply and access issues are solved at Cattle Landing, board member Mike Pelczar posited, overflow use of Patricia Drive may end up being minimal anyway.



In this screenshot from Google Maps, the Cattle Landing parking lot is shown marked with a gray map pin, adjacent to Patricia Drive in Meredith.

The board reached a consensus for police to ensure town regulations about intersection and line of traffic safety are enforced while a parking plan is developed. No motion was made on the proposal to ban parking on Patricia Drive.

Municipalities across the Lakes Region increasingly are grappling with questions about who can use town resources to access lakes and whether each town’s infrastructure is sufficient to meet demand.

This question of parking had been put off in the spring because of another waterfront

infrastructure debate, Brown noted, and then left aside until the end of summer.

Innes criticized the board for that delay during the hearing.

“Everyone in the summer over at the island was kind of waiting for this meeting, and it never came,” Innes said, noting she is in the area year-round. “Now that 70% of the people on the island have gone home, now we’re having a meeting.”

Discussion of issues that affect summer residents should happen during the summer, Innes said, “so that they can speak for themselves.”

Colebrook man charged in incident that resulted in wayward boat, capsized Marine Patrol vessel

By ADAM DRAPCHO
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

GILFORD — Marine Patrol shared this week an arrest in connection with an incident this summer involving a runaway watercraft and a capsized Marine Patrol boat.

Craig F. Devlin, 50, of Colebrook, was arrested Saturday and has been charged with careless and negligent operation of a boat as well as conduct after an accident.

The charges are related to a dangerous situation that developed around 10:30 p.m. on July 19, when an emergency call was placed to report a person in the water and yelling for help in the area of Round Island. Responding Marine Patrol officers found the scene of a boating crash, with two people in the water and no one in their boat, which was at that moment running erratically on the lake. The boat had apparently struck a rock.

The victims of the crash were rescued from the water, and then transferred to a Gilford Fire Rescue boat. Both victims

were taken to Concord Hospital-Laconia for treatment of non-life-threatening injuries.

After transporting the crash victims, the two responding Marine Patrol officers turned their attention to the unoccupied and running boat. They attempted to cause the boat to stall by throwing a line in its path, with the hope that it would become tangled in the propeller. A first attempt failed, and during the second attempt, the wandering boat suddenly changed direction and struck the stern of the Marine Patrol boat, causing it to capsize.

The two officers were thrown overboard, and for a moment were trapped under the upturned hull of their boat, which was being dragged by the unmanned boat. Both officers managed to escape the ordeal without serious injury.

The stray boat was finally brought to heel by two good Samaritans, who helped the Marine Patrol officers out of the water and then boarded the boat, slowed because of its contact with the Marine Patrol boat, and shut off its motor.



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