

LAKE WYOLA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Draft Minutes

January 18, 2025, at 9:00 AM

Via Zoom and at the Town Hall

Members present: Catherine Hilton, Walter Tibbetts, Howard Kinder, John Gorey, David Green, Art Keene, Eric Stocker and Mark Rivers. Guests: Tom Siefert, John Kinder, Chief Leonard Czerwonka, and Phil Gilmore, DCR District 9 Fire Warden

1. The minutes from the November 16, 2024, meeting was reviewed, edited, and approved.

2. Wildfire Prevention

At our November meeting Dave Green expressed concerns over potential damage that would be caused by a forest fire on the forest slopes surrounding the lake. Walter noted that due to the proximity of the homes, it will be easy for a fire to spread from house to house.

During the January meeting, Shutesbury's Fire Chief Leonard Czerwonka and DCR District 9 Fire Warden, Phil Gilmore, lead a discussion regarding their concerns and recommendations. The chief noted that:

- At many times there are only 2 firemen on duty.
- If the arriving fire crew makes the assessment that the fire is too large, they will call in mutual aid from the neighboring town including: Leverett, New Salem, Pelham, Erving, Belchertown, Wendell, Montague, South Deerfield, Gill, Warwick, Sunderland and Turners Falls.
- Fortunately, the lake area has a water filling site which can refill many firetrucks; therefore, multiple fill sites are not necessary.
- From the dam, there are three potential evacuation paths; however, at many locations around the lake there is only one path.
- It is important to maintain a clean, fire-resistant area around your house.

Phil Gilmore provided an overview of the "Firewise USA program" (firewise.org), a community-based program where DCR fire staff will provide fire prevention training and home assessments. The Wyola area has several factors that put it at high risk, including high housing density, restricted egress and access, proximity to the forest, and lack of a water supply. The program includes a town-wide, hour-long training program, and if desired, a second presentation to the Lake Wyola Association. Then, a group of firefighters who are trained in home assessment would walk around the community and make recommendations for each home.

Catherine made a motion to advise the Select Board to initiate the Firewise USA program in town and to request a presentation from Phil Gilmore of DCR Forest Fire Control. The motion was unanimously approved.

3. Lake Wyola Stormwater Erosion Task Force

Tom Siefert provided an update of the Task Force activities which at this phase are primarily focused on identifying sources of funding to do an H&H study.

4. Update on Dam Permitting and Repairs Activities

- The Order of Conditions, which is the permit to lower the lake's water level during the winter months to protect the dam from ice damage, was extended through January 2027.
- GZA has sent Chapter 91 Exemption Request. They are expecting to hear from the Chapter 91 office in the near future.
- Funding for GZA to perform the 2025 Phase I inspection and to complete the Dam and Seawall design and repair grant application was approved by the Select Board. The grant is hoped to cover 75% of the design, permitting, and SOW.
- The committee voted to authorize Mark to complete a CPA grant application which, if approved, would pay for 25% of the project. The submission deadline is February 6.
- Howard requested that whenever someone is inspecting the dam, he should be notified so that he can unlock the gate house.

The meeting ended at 10:05 AM

Next meeting is on February 15, 2025