

# ROGERS LAKE AUTHORITY

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MAY 9, 2012

A meeting of the Rogers Lake Authority (RLA) was convened at the Rogers Lake Clubhouse at 7:30 pm on May 9, 2012. The following members were present: Robert Recor and Richard Smith, and Tom Baehr of Old Lyme and Secretary Liz Sunshine. Members absent: Tom Mondelci, Mike Sicord and Dennis Overfield.

There were approximately 15 attendees residents and special guests:

Guest Speakers included: Bonnie Reemsnyder, Old Lyme 1st selectwoman, Tim Griswold who is heading the dam project, George James of the Conservation Commission, Ellie Czarnowski of the Flood and Erosion Control and (grant writer), Lily Twining of Yale University, and Steve Gephard of CT DEEP/Inland Fisheries Division.

The meeting was called to order at approx 7:34 pm.

The Chairman noted that we did not have a quorum and recommended we table normal business to the June meeting and allow our guest speakers to have the floor.

**Bonnie Reemsnyder** introduced herself and the team assembled to work on the long awaited dam repair. She introduced Tim Griswold who has been working closely with the dam repair project for a number of years and has agreed to head up the completion of the repair to the dam. With the repairs to the dam finally on the threshold Bonnie stated that **now** is the time for the creation of a fish ladder into Rogers Lake. This project has been simultaneously studied for years back, and has the support of the Connecticut River Watershed Council as well as the CT DEEP/Inland Fisheries Division. Selectwoman Reemsnyder explained that it would cost much less to get the two projects done at the same time in the same space, same equipment, this would mean only one draw down of the lake water level to accomplish both jobs. She introduced the guest speakers each to speak to their area of expertise.

**Tim Griswold**, spoke about the history and statistics of the lake, explaining that Rogers Lake is approx 250 acres large, having 14,766 linear foot of frontage and that 13,009 feet of that frontage is privately owned and only 823 feet is owned by the town of Old Lyme. Tim explained that the dam was on the property owned by Old Lyme and thereby the cost has fallen to the town of Old Lyme to repair it. Tim discussed the evolution in the plans for repair of the dam and its different phases of financial feasibility since its inception in 2003. In 2011 we received approval for a STEAP (small town economic assistance program) grant in the amount of \$229,750. This grant would be used in conjunction with \$70,000 pledged by the town, and there is a possibility of receiving an additional grant of \$60,000 from the Connecticut River Watershed Council for the building of a fish ladder in conjunction with the dam repairs. These anticipated funds and the estimates for repairs, plus engineering costs and completion of the fish ladder are nearly equal. Tim stated that permitting time and the time required for the engendered drawings to be completed would not allow for the construction process to begin until the summer of 2013. Tim noted that the dam had been classified as a "class B hazard dam" this means that it is not going to fail but needs improvement. He wanted to clarify that we would be repairing the structural issues with the dam not replacing the dam.

*Recorded 5/23/12  
Allen H. Coffey TC*

**Ellie Czarnowski** - of the Flood and Erosion Control board spoke to the (CRWC) grant application, stating;

The CT River Watershed Council(CRWC) located in Greenfield MA and Middletown, CT has submitted a grant application for a fish ladder plus a fish counter to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation on April 23rd. The CRWC has been working with other communities throughout the CT River watershed for many years on fish passage projects and has made commitments to the Town of Old Lyme to support the installation of the fish ladder. The grant will cover the cost of installing the fish ladder as well as a fish counter.

The CT DEEP staff will be assisting with this project by installing the fish counter. The CT River Watershed Council has also obtained a grant from the Hartford Community Foundation which will fund signage at the project site.

Announcement of the grant application is expected in September of 2012. If approved the next steps are for the parties to work together to repair the dam and install the fish ladder working with the engineering firm of Nathan L. Jacobson & Associates of Chester, CT.

Jacqueline Talbot is the CRWC's steward and she will be managing the project once the funding is in place.

**Steve Gephard** - of the CT DEEP/Inland Fisheries Division, gave an overview of the proposed fish way and some information about the targeted species, the Alewife. For information about the proposed fish way, please see the attached copy of the PowerPoint presentation given during this meeting. The following is a bit of information he shared regarding the fish itself.

The target species is the Alewife fish originally native to Rogers Lake. The Alewife is a fish that starts its life in fresh water and then migrates to the sea. Once it becomes sexually mature, it finds its way up river back to the fresh water ponds to spawn. They are a good eating fish for everything except humans, as they are small and boney. The Alewife like ponded water to spawn vs. the fast moving water of a stream. They are a "protected fish" as there is an order prohibiting their harvest during running season. They do not die after spawning like the salmon, they swim back out to the ocean again.

Steve addressed some of the concerns of Alewife introduction into the ecosystem of the lake as follows:

There would not be a significant increase in phosphorus and nitrogen because the little fish export nitrogen and the big fish import it, they almost balance themselves out. They will be monitoring the lake for any eco changes after the introduction. There may be a slight increase in phosphorus levels but it is a different kind of phosphorus than that used in chemical fertilizer. This natural phosphorus adheres to sediment and does not disburse into the water like the other.

The presence of the Alewife will have no effect either way on the weed population in the lake.

Their presence will affect the other fish in the lake. The Alewife is a feeder fish. Other fish eat it and become bigger and more plentiful. There will be an increase in fishing birds as well, such as the Osprey and the Bald Eagle.

The fish ladder is checked on daily by his department and the number of fish passing into the lake are counted. Should ever be "enough Alewife" (approaching the maximum number the lake can comfortably sustain) they will close the ladder.

Steve explained that due to the design of the fish way, the water going down it is not fast moving so it will not cause any strong suction issues or the loss of any wanted fish in the lake.

He did state that in all the fish ways that they maintain that there is a close relationship with the land owner and he addresses any issue (clogged, blocked by branches) immediately. He has never been asked to close a ladder. His goal is to maintain a close relationship ensure the stability of the lake. The ladder would only be open during the running season from April to July and only if there is enough water in the lake to sustain it.

In his experience, these fish seem to attract more interest in the lake; Scientists studying the remigration of the fish, birds and therefore birdwatchers, bigger fish, hence happy fishermen.

**Lily Twining** - Was available to answer any questions regarding her study on the Alewife fish done in conjunction with Dr. David Post at Yale University.

**Bonnie Reemsnyder** - Closed by thanking our speakers and reminding all residents that the money would need to be appropriated by a town vote. There will be a town meeting on May 21, 2012 at 7:30 to vote on the annual town budget. At that meeting there will also be a call to vote to appropriate \$290,000 for the dam repair and fish ladder installation. Of this \$290,000.00 in anticipated cost for the repair and construction of the fish ladder, the STEAP grant (already approved) would cover \$229,750.00 and the CRWC if approved in September would be an additional \$60,000 for this project. Selectwoman Reemsnyder urged all to get out to vote for this referendum.

The RLA Chairman, Richard Smith thanked our guest speakers and adjourned the meeting at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted



Elizabeth Sunshine  
Secretary for RLA  
elizabethsunshine@sbcglobal.net