

Rye Conservation Commission June 2026 Rye Civic League Notes

Draft June 2nd Joint Conservation / Select Board Meeting [CLICK HERE](#)

June 2nd Joint Meeting Video Streaming [CLICK HERE](#)

Draft June June 2nd Meeting Minutes [CLICK HERE](#)

June 2nd Meeting Video Streaming [CLICK HERE](#)

Draft June June 11th Meeting Minutes [CLICK HERE](#)

June 11th Meeting Video Streaming [CLICK HERE](#)

Highlights

A motion was made to reconsider the vote to prohibit tick spraying the in Town Forest Orange, Red and White Trails passing unanimously

41 acre 6 lot 701 South Road subdivision. Recommendation that the wetlands and wetland buffer impacts be substantially reduced

June 2nd Joint Select Board Conservation Commission Meeting

Seavey Acres

The premise of the meeting was that Select Board member Tuttle surfaced that one of the areas with trails to be closed at Seavey Acres is actually 2 parcels, one owned via an easement to the RCC, the other directly owned by the town.

After discussion, all agreed the town owned parcels are under the purview and control of the town. According to Chair Wright, the Select Board is not interested in managing trails and wants to maintain the prerogative to potentially put that piece to another use for the town. The Select Board is looking more to manage and maintain their prerogative with respect to the use of the land in the future.

The Seavey area trails on town lands given the proposed closures, will be landlocked anyways.

A former RCC member, Mike Garvan, who has monitored the property, brought up that as they are L-Chip properties they do need to be monitored according to Municipal L-CHIP Properties guidelines

It was highlighted by Kara Campbell, Land Use and Environmental Administrator there are 40 other tax deed parcels owned by the town which should be monitored to insure no infringements.

Tick Spraying in Town Forest

The RCC previously voted unanimously to stop spraying for ticks on a section of Town Forest trails which has been done since 2018. After comments by the town Health Officer, Mosquito Control Commission and spraying contractor it was decided the RCC would discuss at their June 2nd meeting.

Extensive Public Comment

It was pointed out that the Town Forest is not an RCC property but a town property with the easement with the RCCD and the RCC seeded management of the forest

June 2nd Conservation Commission Meeting

Tick Spraying

A motion was made to reconsider its vote to prohibit tick spraying on the Town Forest Orange, Red and White Trails, which passed unanimously.

Trails Update

Trail Closures

The trail closures that have been done so far are the Cedar Run, Yellow and Orange Trails. The bog bridges are being removed by hand and materials will be stored at Goss Farm to be repurposed in other locations. All hardware is intact and available for use.

Members, in teams of two, were assigned a trails area for maintenance

Planning for Trails Stage 2 was outlined

- 1) Trail rerouting (Red Trail at Cedar Run, which runs across private property)
- 2) Trail rerouting (Marden Woods, which is extremely close to the wetland.)
- 3) Parking area maintenance and improvement
- 4) Information collection

Public Comment

Scott Marion, 71 Washington Road, spoke to the RCC about the rules of policy making by starting with clear understanding of what the problem is that is being solved. The RCC may have identified the problem as protecting wildlife. However, what kinds of wildlife are to be protected? He didn't hear any discussion of the tradeoffs involved in protecting various types of wildlife species. Most importantly, he didn't see any survey indicating any wildlife species population numbers. Therefore, how will it be known if the

trail closure plan is working as intended? It won't be known because there is no baseline for the current population level for the various species. He urged the RCC to revisit their decisions until a proper wildlife survey is done to establish clear criteria for success.

Doug Nelson, 50 Red Mill Lane, noted that in 2014, the Town of Rye with the endorsement of the RCC hired Alex DeLucia from the Appalachian Mountain Club to conduct surveys of the woods, measure the land, measure the tree mass, and look at root systems adjacent to the bog. The marsh land was expanding. That is the sole buffer to hurricanes. In putting up the reel bridge, which was approved by NH DES, it created a narrow channel for humans and wildlife to use, as opposed to the bushwacking and free-for-all that was happening on that trail. The root systems of those trees are remarkably healthier, which can be seen in report photos by the greenery on the trees. He pointed out that every ten feet of buffer of the town woods protects the whole town from a hurricane. All the backland is going to be healthier for it. He noted that the agency was hands-on with thirty volunteers, over the course of the weekends, carrying tamarack into the woods to erect the bog bridges. What is being done by RCC now is not for the greater good of the Town. Coexistence of humans and wildlife on that land is the right thing to do. Referring to the pergola request for a property on Washington Road,

Tom King, 535 Wallis Road, noted that the process failures for that request was talked about at an earlier meeting. The basic issue is that no one on RCC seems to understand conservation easements. The RCC doesn't have the authority to essentially break a conservation easement. With regard to the tick spraying issue, Mr. King continued that the RCC voted to forbid tick spraying without knowing which trail, who owned it, who sprayed, and why they sprayed. The RCC didn't wait to discuss this with the Mosquito Control Commission or the Health Officer. It hasn't even been acknowledged that the RCC doesn't own the entire Red, Orange, and White trail. There was no mention that the Select Board, Cemetery, and Rye Recreation own portions of that trail. Taking a look at these kinds of actions shows what a rush to judgement the RCC does. It certainly isn't following any RCC best management practices. He pointed out that any reasonable approach to trail closure should be predicated by both trail usage data and data on the endanger on the actual flora and fauna, none of which has been provided to the residents.

Lisa Jacobus, 39 Pine Street, commented there are a lot of different ways that humans and wildlife can coexist by maintaining the trails through bog bridges, which is a point made clear in the report. She asked the RCC to reconsider their vote and include the community in the decision.

Joe Cummins, 990 Washington Road, spoke about his right-to-know request he submitted to the RCC.

Mark Josephs, 540 Washington Road, commented that there seems to be unnecessary tension and disrespect to the people of the Town. This is a small town, and everyone looks at what's best for the Town. There shouldn't be personal agendas.

Chair Joyce noted that the RCC had many public meetings and took public comments. **Susan Shepcaro, 45 Recreation Road**, noted that Rachel Stevens' report is based on wildlife only. The trails are used by many people from many towns. For her, that is a problem with the report because it is incomplete. People are going to be there and that is an important part. The Town Forest is for people to walk, ride bikes, cross country ski, etc.

Kathy MacAlpine, 26 Red Mill Lane, commented that the report is good. However, she doesn't see expertise from an ecologist. She doesn't see data or a lot that have been gained by a primary study of the Forest. She doesn't think there is anything concrete in the report. There are general recommendations with a big variety of what can be done.

John Shaw, 110 Locke Road, noted that it's the RCC's job to make a lot of tough decisions with input. It's not the job of the RCC to delegate those decisions to a scientist. There's still information coming forward. Part of the RCC's job is to keep listening and hear new information that comes up while keeping an open mind. That's not being disloyal to the decision that has already been made.

Patrick DeMarco, 961 Washington Road, pointed out that a lot that has been said at this meeting has already been said and ignored for the past two months. He thinks people are opposed to how the RCC has gone about trying to do this. People care about the Town, the trails and the community, and they've been ignored. He encouraged the RCC to reconsider its vote, which no one in the Town wants.

Kate Jarvis, 83 Liberty Commons, noted that her husband was the chair of the Open Space Committee and worked on the Town Forest. It's a disgrace what is going on now to the land that the community loves and paid for.

June 11 Conservation Commission Meeting

The Commission rescinded its no objection vote to a pergola at 1090 Washington Road (Independence Farm) as the structure would not conform to the agricultural uses allowed by the easement.

A proposal to grow vines on a structure appears to be in compliance with the easement's terms.

701 South Road

A six lot subdivision (with 5 new homes) on a 41 acre parcel is being developed. A member commented that it is one of the largest undeveloped blocks of land in Rye and as such is a large habitat. The applicant claimed less than 3000 square feet of wetland disturbance but commission members were skeptical given the new homes, driveways, lawns and septic.

Motion was made that the Conservation Commission recommend that the wetlands and wetland buffer impacts be substantially reduced and the applicant consider having a single access to the back lots, generally in the location of the existing house, where there would be lesser impacts. Vote; 6-0-1 in favor

Trails Update

Seavey Acres and Cedar Run trails.

"Two trails have been closed, as discussed at the last trail meeting. The bog bridges are disassembled and will be carried out sometime next week. Bog bridge materials (long planks and all hardware) will be stored at Goss Farm, unless there are bridges on other properties that need maintenance right away."

Airfield/Whitehorse:

"Treasurer Terhune noted that he has been hesitant to proceed with closing trails based upon communication from some people in town about RCC's authority to close trails. The town attorney was going to address this issue, but he hasn't seen that information yet. At this time, he has paused his work on closing trails. There was discussion about reviewing the deed restrictions for each property to be sure the work being done is appropriate for the easement. Acting Chair Lee agreed to work with Environmental and Land Use Assistant Kara Campbell on reviewing the easements."

An RFP for vernal pools delineation is in process

Goss Farm Update

2 acres of Christmas trees have been planted

Farmers have started their growing season

Farmstand is open and community gardens set up

A member reported that the swallows are no longer trying to access the barn and have started nesting in other areas.

Lawsuit

Acting Chair Lee reported that RCC received notice that the lawsuit commenced by Sally King and Scott Marion has been determined by the judge to be without merit and the case has been dismissed.

57 Park Ridge

An abutter to conservation property is mowing on that property down to the wetlands . Markers put in place in 2021 are missing and were re-installed.

Public Comments

Susan Shepcaro, 45 Recreation Road, spoke about the Purple Martin gourd arrays at Goss Farm. The Farm started with six arrays and was so successful that NH Audubon Society funded a second array of six for a total of twelve active gourds. Purple Martins are currently listed as at threatened species; however, each year the number of fledglings has increased at the Farm. Mrs.

Shepcaro noted that the Purple Martins at the Farm are an integral part of the Seabrook Purple Martin Project under the NH Audubon Seacoast Chapter for Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA). More information about Purple Martins and predator protection can be found on the PMCA website.

Mrs. Shepcaro inquired about a monitoring report to support the claims made in the recent town newsletter article about the barn swallows. She requested that documentation, if it is available.

Referring to dogs on conservation trails, she pointed out that “no dogs allowed” is not enforceable unless a town ordinance is approved at town vote for a specific location. She also pointed out that recent brush piles on the Yellow Trail seem to be creating a hazardous walking situation, which could expose the Town to liability.

Suzanne Barton, 114 Clark Road, spoke about wayward litter and trash on the sides of the roads. She pointed out her concerns with the amount of trash near and in the marshes. She encouraged the RCC to get involved and connect with volunteers for a community wide cleanup.

Ms. Barton elaborated on efforts in other communities who work together to pick up trash in their towns. It was noted that the Select Board initiated the Rye Clean Sweep Committee about a year ago with five seats open on that committee. Anyone who is

interested in serving on the committee is encouraged to reach out to the Town for more information.

Bob McGrath, 6 Rands Lane, commented on recent meetings and how the RCC has been verbally attacked by some residents in the community. He suggested that the Commission take a different approach to the work they are doing by educating people; specifically, regarding the closure of the conservation trails for the protection of the environment and wildlife. He commended the RCC for the work they are doing, but hopes that communication with the public will improve.

Joann Hodgdon, 63 Cable Road, agreed with Bob McGrath's comments. She noted that she no longer goes to the Forest or beach because of the chaos with dogs running off leash. Ms. Hodgdon commented on the recent hearing for the barn swallows. She pointed out that there are two sides to a legal argument; however, nobody was there on behalf of the swallows (plaintiffs). She encouraged the residents to educate themselves and attend more meetings. She expressed concern about the constant legal battles that have recently taken place in Rye.