

Lake Chaffee Annual General Summer Meeting

June 28, 2026 – DRAFT Minutes

Date of Meeting: June 28, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. This meeting was held at Pirzl Hall.

Board Members:

Mike Panek (P)	Tom Martin (VP)	Erin Szela (S)	Chris Fyler (T)
Gerald Dufresne (R)	Mary Griffin (R)	Carol Nattus (R)	Seth Kaufman (R)
Phil Silverstein (R)	Lynn Fontaine (R)		
Kay Warren (Alt)			

Public in Attendance: Joe Hall, Carmen Hall, Brittnay DaCruz, Marcelo Monit, Brian Molula, Laurie Parent, Al Tilley, Priscilla Prouty, Linda Roy, Laurie Layton, Eileen Lynch-James, Lisa Pitcock, David Almonte, Marian Vitali, Dirk Kidwell, Ralph Sherman, Cesar Barrios, Bob Guerin, Michael Paine, Lynn Paine, Kathleen Bean, Chas Bean, Lisa Whiteway, Linda Parent, Sharon Apostol, Tina Kelly, Elizabeth Small, Jason Sherman, Jennifer LaFleur, Thomas Ryan, Sylvia Bier, Alma Miranda, Starr Potts, Scott Whelan, Sharon Whelan, and Toni Guerin

- 1. Call to Order:** Reminder on delinquent taxes, you are unable to vote. Over 30 attendees, which need at minimum 20. Mike called the meeting to order at 11:08am. Mike reminded public that you raise your hand and state your name for the minutes, no chatter while others are talking.
- 2. Acceptance of Minutes for August 2025 General Meeting:** No changes, Jerry made the motion to accept the minutes, Tom seconded. Mary abstained. Motion passed.
- 3. Acceptance of Treasurer’s Report:** Voted to accept on June 10th meeting.
- 4. President’s Recap of the Past Year:** Mike stated he would like to take a moment to address the current tone and conversation surrounding Lake Chaffee. It is easy to criticize from the sidelines. It is much harder to volunteer your time, attend meetings, participate in discussions, and help address the challenges facing out community. If you have concerns, questions, or ideas, he encourages you to bring them directly to us. Open communication and constructive dialogue are always welcome. When inaccurate information is repeated often enough, people can begin to accept it as fact. This undermines trust, creates division among neighbors, and distracts from the import work that needs to be done. Before sharing information, he encourages everyone to verify the facts and seek answers from those directly involved. The reality is that the Board is made up of volunteers who dedicate countless hours to addressing issues that affect our community. Residents may not always agree with every decision, and differing opinions are both natural and healthy. However, disagreement should not be mistaken for a lack of commitment or concern. At the end of the day, every Board member and every resident shares a common goal: maintaining and improving Lake Chaffee while

44 preserving the quality of life in our community. We may not always agree on the best
45 path forward, but we should all be committed to treating one another with respect,
46 seeking the truth, and focusing on solutions that benefit the community as a whole.
47

- 48 **5. Presentation of 2026-2027 Proposed Budget** Mike spoke about the proposed budget for
49 the coming year. Noted copies are available when you walked in, online, and there is a
50 large version behind the Board. First column is the current budget for 2025-2026, second
51 column is what occurred this year, and third column is the proposed budget for 2026-
52 2027. Overbudget on road repairs and snow removal. Road repairs are over by \$1,246.06
53 and that does not include the recent repair work that has just occurred. Currently have
54 \$77,000 in all Lake Chaffee accounts. Geese fund will be drawn down. Likely closer to
55 \$62k in all the accounts after all the recent and soon to be completed work is paid for.
56 See Proposed Budget online under the June Annual meeting Budget column. Calculated
57 expenses based on what happened this year. Will not fund the geese removal fund this
58 coming year since it is being done in the current year.

- 59 **a. Discussion of Proposed Budget** Seth asked about the draw from the general
60 fund, which was for the remaining payments for the septic system and the
61 overage from the actuals that occurred this year that were over budget. 55
62 household that are past due on taxes, 31 are the current year only, 15 for the
63 past two years, 4 households that owe three years, and 5 that are 4+ years
64 behind. ~\$37,000 outstanding in taxes which would have helped balance the
65 budget for this year. In June 2025 there was ~\$34,000 due, so while there is some
66 collecting, we are still running behind on past due year after year. Mike
67 understands that \$250/year can be a lot for families, but it is a much lower
68 amount than many other lake communities. Note that the taxes cover half of one
69 line item (insurance—of which there are only 6-7 companies that would be able
70 to provide appropriate coverage), \$31,000 was the cheapest option.
71

- 72 **6. Vote on 2026-2027 Proposed Budget** Mike opened the floor for discussion. Tom makes
73 motion to accept the proposed budget, Kay seconded. All in favor, motion passed.
74

- 75 **7. Vote on Tax Rate** As a municipality, we need to vote on the new tax rates. Mike opened
76 the floor for discussion. Jerry makes the motion increase the taxes to \$250, Seth
77 seconded it. Tom abstained. All approved, motion passed.
78

- 79 **8. Vote on New Ordinances Draft** At the August 17, 2025 meeting, under New Business, it
80 was brought up that there could be potential changes to the LCIA Ordinances.
81 Throughout the year, the board has met and discussed, as well as taken feedback from
82 those in attendance from the monthly board meetings (every second Wednesday
83 throughout the year). Mike specifically noted:
84 Since the September meeting, and throughout all subsequent meetings, the Board has
85 been working on updating the ordinances. We received input through several emails on
86 specific topics, and a number of members also shared concerns and suggestions in
87 person. After reviewing that feedback and working through several drafts, we have

88 arrived at what we believe is the final version of the proposed ordinances. A copy of
89 these proposed ordinances was mailed to every member of the community as part of
90 this year's summer newsletter, and they are now on the agenda for a final vote.
91 We can certainly have discussions and answer questions today. However, I would like to
92 remind everyone that these has been ample time and opportunity for community input
93 on the Board's final draft. The Board believes the proposed ordinances address issues
94 that may not have been relevant when the ordinances were last updated in 2001, and
95 that the revised violation fines are set at a level intended to better deter violations.
96 One of the primary questions I have heard from members concerns enforcement. The
97 Board has discussed this extensively. Going forward, when a violation is documented, a
98 letter describing the violation and any associated fine will be sent to the registered
99 property owner. The owner will then have the opportunity to attend the next monthly
100 meeting or respond by mail regarding the violation. All violations and responses will be
101 documented. If a fine remains unpaid for 90 days or more, the Board may determine
102 that placing a lien on the property is warranted. This is a new enforcement approach
103 that we are implementing to evaluate its effectiveness in reducing violations. Our goal is
104 to encourage compliance through clear accountability and deterrence, rather than
105 relying solely on warning letters and fines.

106 Secondly, I have heard some questions on LCIA ordinances vs. the Town's and who or
107 what takes precedence. Our Charter clearly states the Town prevails if there is a
108 "conflict". A common legal principle is that a more restrictive private rule can often
109 coexist with a less restrictive municipal rule. For example:

110 If Ashford allows a fence and Lake Chaffee prohibits that same fence, there may be a
111 conflict.

112 If Ashford requires something that Lake Chaffee forbids, Ashford's rule controls.

113 If both can be complied with at the same time, there is usually **no conflict**.

114 Mike then opened the floor for discussion.

115 **Mike Paine** asked for the board to speak on how many of the ordinances are new. Mike
116 explained if the numbering for the ordinance was LC 26-#, then that was an ordinance
117 that was updated or is new. LC 01-# would be any original ordinances from the 2001
118 updates. Also asked about retroactive enforcement. Mike noted that if approved, these
119 ordinances would be effective going forward.

120 **Brittnay DaCruz** asked about dock ordinance LC 26-7.2 specifically asking about the 100
121 sq feet dock, Mike noted that if you have a dock that is currently 100 sq feet and these
122 are approved, don't expect a letter telling you to take it down. Brittnay: Can you explain
123 the reasoning behind why 100 sq feet, Mike noted that this is for encroachment on the
124 lake but also noted that this is a case by case

125 **Jason Sherman** Lived on the lake since 1999, by and large he disagrees with ordinances
126 that the Town or State already have in place (outside of environmental ones). One of his
127 issues has been use of the lake after dark, expects to be able to use the lake whenever
128 he wants to as being part of the community. If someone lived on the water, they would
129 be able to use the lake whenever they want. Some people would like to take their dogs
130 to the beach to swim. Notes he is not a repeat offender that causes issues. ATV use, for
131 example, he plows his driveway does that mean he can't back onto the road now while

132 he does that? Mike noted that the lake is never closed, ATV use on your own property is
133 not governed, only those who use them on the Town or LCIA roads are in violation.

134 **Joe Hall** noted that a letter should have been provided for those who could not attend,
135 so they could vote by proxy, this is in the By-Laws. Advanced noticed was provided by
136 letter.

137 **Al Tilley** is there any ordinances for abandoned properties that are not maintained? He
138 has a large tree that is down on a property next to his that he has not been able to get
139 removed. Mike noted that this would be something he needed to work with the town
140 on.

141 **Elizabeth Small** noted that it seems that there are ordinances but there is potential
142 exceptions. Who can report a violation to the board, how to ensure the report is correct,
143 and that it is done fairly? Mike noted that he receives the majority of these complaints,
144 and usually they come with documentation, pictures, or video, but if it doesn't, he
145 would investigate—or one of the other board members would. Mike noted that a lot of
146 the changes relate to the fines. Many were listed as \$10 for a fee, which is not going to
147 deter people from, for example, riding their ATVs. Mike noted that he has worked with
148 the majority of the board members on various version of Boards, and would stake his
149 and the Board's reputation on the fairness of the Board. Mike encouraged the public to
150 be involved and work together, not to be negative about things. If you do not want to or
151 cannot make it to the meeting, read the minutes online. You can see if you look at the
152 minutes, the Board has worked every month since September 2025 on these ordinances.
153 Mike would like the online bickering and audience snickering to end as it is not helpful or
154 productive.

155 **Mike Paine** would like to speak from what Mike just mentioned, relative to the Facebook
156 page. Noted he made negative comments himself recently and felt it was out of
157 character and personally wrote to Mike. He does appreciate that the Board has worked
158 on these for months, but noted Wednesday at 6:30pm is a bad time for the majority of
159 people in the community and would like there to be potential consideration for another
160 day or time.

161 **Starr Potts** noted this is the largest turnout she has seen in years at this meeting. Would
162 like clarification on the driveway ordinances—Mike noted that there has been no change
163 to that specific ordinance. Tom noted that the purpose of that ordinance is about
164 washouts coming out into the road—this is more for large hills that would spill rocks and
165 such into the road and is not typically an issue for residents with less slanted driveways.

166 **Eileen Lynch-James** commented that everyone speeds on Lakeview Drive, they are not
167 doing 15 mph. Mike noted that he did speak to the town regarding this and had a
168 discussion about moving the speed limit sign closer to Lakeview from where it is
169 currently. Mike also added that if they were coming onto Lakeview off Route 89, that is a
170 town road so there are no ordinances that the LCIA can put in place that would be able
171 to enforce on those roads. New person in charge of Troop C, the Selectwoman is trying
172 to become more friendly with him to see if Ashford, in general, can get more coverage as
173 a whole from the State Police.

174 **Joe Hall** suggested to petition the town for temporary speedbumps to encourage people
175 to slow down. Mike noted again, unfortunately, they are not LCIA roads so there is

176 nothing that we are able to do. The Board is not unsympathetic to that issue, but it is a
177 town issue.

178 **Marian Vitaly** – the fence ordinances, she has a fence that she has had for many years to
179 keep the geese out. Mike noted anything that is pre-existing, it is pre-existing so no need
180 to be concerned.

181 **Carmen Hall** has been coming to the meetings every month and goes to the Wetlands
182 meetings, done research and discussed with DEEP. Carmen mentioned *Caring For Your*
183 *Lakes* is a great book that she references often. Feels she has been singled out by the
184 Board. Reiterated that there should be a way to vote by proxy according to the By-Laws,
185 so there should be no vote.

186 Tom made a motion to vote, Lynn seconded. Public vote: 25 agreed, 4 opposed. 6
187 abstained from voting. Motion passed.

188

189 **9. Old Business** 1. Geese Removal **At the August Annual meeting from the minutes, a**
190 **member inquired about geese removal which had been done 4 year prior. Mike**
191 **reached out in Spring 2026 on geese removal, quoted \$3,840 and was approved by the**
192 **Board earlier in June. Mike noted to the company at least 60 geese. His wife has**
193 **cleaned up 6 buckets of geese poop just this spring. The same company should be**
194 **taking care of this in the next 10 days. Mike Paine asked if there is a chance to miss the**
195 **molting period, Tom confirmed that the company was here the past week doing a run**
196 **through.** 2. 5-Year Dam Review **Review needs to be done within 2026, company will be**
197 **charging LCIA the exact same as 5 years ago.** 3. Road Repair Update **Mike and Phil**
198 **drove around to review the damage to the roads. Phil notes we have 14 roads that we**
199 **need to cover/maintain, that includes snow removal, road repairs, and ensuring that**
200 **emergency vehicles can get down the roads. \$5,000 in the budget is very limited in**
201 **relation to the cost of the material and labor, this year we are a little over budget but**
202 **got additional work done (roads: Oak Drive, Deerfield, and Union Road from Pine Hill**
203 **over to Route 89). Phil recognizes that the roads are in rougher shape but that they**
204 **addressed the most immediate needs first.** Charles Bean noted that Pine Hill has had so
205 many potholes there that they need to strategically back out and down the road just to
206 get down to the beach. Mike noted that Phil and him will review the roads again. Lisa
207 Whiteway wanted to confirm that each year the Board drives all 14 roads frequently.
208 Mike confirmed that he and Phil do. Also was asked who does the work and Mike noted
209 that an outside company is hired. Jason Sherman asked about if there is a possible an
210 avenue to front the money if all the residents on a road can get together to chip in to fix
211 the road. Requested an estimate on Oak Drive. Mike noted that he did that for his own
212 road a few years ago and would gladly encourage this, in conjunction with the Board. 4.
213 Lake Weeds **New England Aquatics quoted from \$15k to \$20k to do one application to**
214 **remove the weeds. With Board approval and Wetlands approval, a company can do**
215 **lake front properties to remove weeds. Mike noted he believes the hard freeze helped**
216 **reduce the weeds. Noted that two options in relation to the weed removal, that were**
217 **brought up in the June 10, 2026 meeting were misinformation and would not impact**
218 **(lowering the lake worsens the weeds) or would cause more issues (cutting the weeds**
219 **out, will cause them to seed more—please see the new report we received). Also**

220 mentioned in the last meeting was to get on a list for grant for roadwork. Mike did
221 some potential grants. Mike also looked into DEEP grants for invasive weed grants for
222 lakes, ponds, and rivers. If we get a grant, we would need to be prepared to put in at
223 least 25% of the total project cost out of pocket. In the past year that these grants
224 were provided, three local towns received them (Vernon, Coventry, and Windham) but
225 there were 10 total. Please note that the majority of them were for research/outreach.
226 Weed mats/tarps, according to DEEP, are not a good idea. DEEP recommends carefully
227 pulling weeds out fully, anything left behind will re-seed. UConn did have a student
228 report done on Lake Chaffee 15 years ago. From this report, Elodia which is the biggest
229 issue, there were 5 others as well, but none of them are considered invasive. Ben
230 Scoular, who works for New England Aquatics, did a comprehensive study that
231 discusses everything in detail about what weeds are within Lake Chaffee. This will be
232 posted on the website for public to review. Mike would like to extend a big thank you
233 to Ben for investing his time and knowledge in putting the report together, it is
234 EXTREMELY helpful in clarifying most weed questions and misinformation. Mike
235 encouraged everyone to review it as he did not print it because it is very extensive.
236 Mike noted specifics from the report:
237 **Keep mat tarps/bottom blankets in recreational areas only, but that does not seem to**
238 **be the issue in those areas. Any chemical implementation would need to be done very**
239 **particularly to avoid catastrophic impact to oxygen levels and decaying plant material,**
240 **this would impact the ecosystem and kills fish. Tom noted he had used the weed**
241 **blanket in the spring in the past and then pulled it back in in late August but didn't**
242 **move it throughout the year (as it can be a hassle). Tom does one spot each year, but**
243 **noted that the part he did the previous year did not come back the following the year.**
244 Jason Sherman noted that his father lives on a private lake not far away and they treat
245 their lake three times a year, every year. Last year the State dragged its feet providing
246 permits and his father's lake looked exactly like ours. Wanted to note that if we go the
247 chemical route, it is nonstop and costly.
248 Mike Paine read Ben's report and along with this discussion, that there really is not a
249 win. Possible option is grass eating carp, noted in Ben's report—it is expensive, they
250 need to be sterile, and you need to get DEEP approval. Unsure if you can monitor/track
251 them to remove them at a later date. Mike Paine continued that his greatest concern is
252 that there is no path forward and it will get worse. If the residents came together to
253 provide funds for a harvester/other option, as he knows that the LCIA does not have
254 funds to do this, would that be an appropriate discussion to bring to the Board? Mike P.
255 confirmed yes, and also the Inland Wetlands and DEEP should be contacted. But added
256 that the lake is 75 years old and that he feels nature has a way of naturally fixing itself.
257 Eileen Lynch-James brought up potentially getting the lake on a regular schedule for
258 lowering the lake. Mike noted that we will bring this up in one of the Wednesday
259 meetings soon and encouraged all to join.

260
261 **10. Public Comments** Lynn F. wanted to ensure that Lynn Paine is in the minutes for her
262 lovely photography and Lynn Paine was happy to donate some of her photos to be hung
263 around the Hall. Jason Sherman would like to note that Joe Hall and Carmen Hall

264 brought up the proxy vote question. Others noted that we should have a microphone for
265 this meeting so everyone can hear each other clearly. Lynne Paine wanted to thank Mary
266 and Jerry for all the hours they have put in at the beach this year and how great it looks.
267 Joe Hall brought up recording for meetings. Mike noted that it has been discussed at
268 prior meetings extensively. Toni Guerin stated they have been through 3 presidents and
269 numerous Boards, all she wants everyone to realize is that everyone tries their best.
270 Many Board members have given decades to serving the board/community, do not let
271 personal things come in and cause division. Specifically noted that Tom, Jerry, and Kay
272 have spent decades dedicating their time to the community.
273

274 **11. New Business** 1. Volunteers/Board Members **Mike stated that at the July 19, 2026**
275 **general summer meeting we will vote for board members, some board members have**
276 **terms coming up, President, VP, Sec., Treasurer, are one-year terms, as well as two**
277 **alternates whom have resigned. If anyone is interested in volunteering and being very**
278 **involved, that will occur next month so feel free to join. The minutes are always online**
279 **and posted on the bulletin board, so even if you can not come to the meetings you can**
280 **still be involved if you want to. We have an active volunteer list that Mary maintains**
281 **that you can get online. Mary has a list by the door of all the upcoming activities, see**
282 **listing online. Mary explained how to play the Poker Run which is the next coming**
283 **activity. There is also a 50/50 raffle, she will add more information on the unofficial**
284 **Facebook page. Mary was unable to get to Mother's Beach currently and is looking for**
285 **help with it, she had three personal emergencies that she needed to travel for. Mike**
286 **brought up that the Board has identification stickers available for people's kayaks and**
287 **paddleboards. Ralph Sherman noted that this is a law now in CT for non-registered**
288 **watercraft and that they prefer two phone numbers on the sticker. Lisa Whiteway**
289 **noted that it is for safety purposes as well. Ralph Sherman noted he finally got the**
290 **three days of no rain to get the June water testing done. Main Beach: 4.1/100 ml;**
291 **Mothers Beach: 5.2/100ml; North East Cove: 2/100ml.**
292

293 **12. Correspondence** 1. ATV Crash **Mike received a call of an ATV crash on Lakeview Drive**
294 **that took out a mailbox, the call to the police and accident occurred at 11:30pm. State**
295 **Police showed up about 1:30am. ATV was left on the side of the road, Mike took**
296 **pictures and is aware of who owns it. A letter was sent to the owner to let them know**
297 **they were out of compliance. Jerry noted about the crash that he nearly was hit as he**
298 **was walking to his garage, the ATV had no lights on. 2. Parking at Clubhouse issues**
299 **Mike noted that potential no loitering signs may be put up.**
300

301 **13. Adjournment** Mike thanked everyone for coming and for their input. Jerry made a
302 motion to adjourn, Kay second. Meeting adjourned 12:57pm.
303