Should Roxbury Form A Conservation Commission?

By Amy Bodwell

The Roxbury Planning Board was approached by The New Hampshire State Association of Conservation Commissions to consider forming a Conservation Commission in town. Currently 216 towns have commissions including five towns with fewer than 300 residents. The establishment of a conservation commission was discussed at last year’s town meeting and the town approved the motion, but the proposal was not the warrant. So in March, 2016, we will vote again, this time from an official warrant article. A main focus of a Roxbury Conservation Commission would be to work with the Keene Conservation Commission to look at long-term options for protecting the watershed land. Additionally, the commission would be available to work with landowners on questions about natural resources on their property, easements and other conservation-related issues. The commission would also assist town officials as requested on conservation matters.

Conservation Commissions also help people learn more about natural resources, nature and conservation. There’s an annual meeting of all the (Continued on page 8)

Babbidge Dam to Get A Makeover

By Jim Rousmaniere

A few years ago the City of Keene received word from the state that the two dams that are part of its water supplies in Roxbury must be upgraded. City officials began examining the dams at Babbidge Reservoir and Woodward Pond. They’ve now nearly completed their engineering designs for Babbidge, and they expect to start construction in 2016 and 2017. The Babbidge dam, which holds back about a pond of about 30 acres, was built in 1931 when the expanding city of Keene needed more water than could be provided by Woodward Pond, the original Roxbury water supply that dates to the late 19th century. Babbidge Reservoir, which owes its name to Paul Babbidge, a longtime city Commissioner of Water, Sewers and Drains, takes in water from its own drainage area and also Roaring Brook, which gets its start in Woodward Pond. Most of the water in Babbidge Reservoir enters a subsurface pipe that runs underground beneath Middletown Road and then up a hill where it enters Keene’s water treatment plant. A lesser amount of water in the reservoir falls over a small outflow on the south side of the dam where it enters Roaring Brook.

Babbidge dam is nearly 40 feet high and more than 200 feet left-to-right. The structure is made of earth and has a concrete core that goes down to bedrock. The setting is quite beautiful, being remote and quiet and surrounded by trees about one-third of a mile down a service road from Middletown Road. The dirt road is named after a man named Dakin who, before the dam was built lived in a meadow there.

City officials say that Babbidge’s pristine setting will remain pretty much unchanged after the upgrade is completed since the size of the reservoir and its water level will remain as they are. But there will be a couple of physical changes. It was to discuss those changes and the associated preparatory work and truck traffic that representatives of Keene paid a

(Continued on page 6)
The Animals of Roxbury
Our small town is big on wildlife

By Amy Bodwell

Thanks to a diversity of habitats -- farms, fields, forest, wetlands and ponds and lots of wild places -- Roxbury lays claim to a wide diversity of species. In the interest of having Roxbury better known for all the cool critters, I started asking residents to send pictures and reports of wildlife they have seen and or photographed. I thought it would be fun to share what we have so far.

Dave Shephardson is a wonderful photographer and has shared some great pictures. I’m including a few of them here.

Other wildlife not included here, noted either by tracks, scat (animal poop) or on trail cameras include mammals such as coyote, mink, long-tailed weasel, otter, more bears, more bobcats, porcupine, turkey, red backed vole, white footed mouse, deer mouse, red fox, gray fox, ermine, skunk, fisher, beaver, chipmunk, red and gray squirrel, moose, raccoon, woodchuck, big brown bat, cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, silver haired bat and eastern pipistrelle bat.

In addition many birds share either full time or summer residency with us: chickadee, phoebe, white and red breast-ed nuthatches, bluejay, cardinal, crows, raven, titmouse, grouse, American bit-tern, ruby throated hummingbird, hermit thrush, veery, red eyed vireo, wood thrush, osprey, junco, black throated green warbler, blue throated warbler, yellow rumped warbler, nighthawk, waterthrush, yellow bellied sapsucker, hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker and pileated woodpecker, white crowned sparrow, chipping sparrow, white throated sparrow, song sparrow and housesparrow, goldfinch, barred owl, bald eagle, ringed kingfisher, great blue heron, snow bunting, evening and rose breasted grosbeaks, redpoll/shar-ished hawk Cooper’s hawk, red tailed hawk, broadwing hawk, tree swallow, scarlet tanager, cedar waxwing and woodcock. The waterfowl include geese, blue-winged teal, common merganser, loon and mallard.

We also have a fair number of herps (reptiles and amphibians) found so far in town. Of the 11 species, four have been noted: red bellied snake, garter snake, milksnake, and ring necked snake. Of the 12 species of salamander and we have documented spotted, eastern newt, (Continued on page 8)
As has been the case in recent years, the Selectmen’s office was busy in 2015. What follows is a brief summary:

**Town Hall improvements:** As is noted elsewhere in this edition, a steeple was placed atop town hall, and a handicapped-accessible bathroom was installed on the main floor. The steeple project accompanied a re-roofing, and it also included an expansion of floor space on the ground floor for added storage and future kitchen facilities that are consistent with standards associated with Red Cross emergency shelters. As a sidelight to the town hall changes, excavation for the project provided fill that was used to expand the town hall parking lot. Separately, a propane furnace replaced the old oil-based heating system. During a summer a tree fell on the roof, puncturing the ceiling of the main hall; the insurance payment was sufficient to allow for a resurfacing of the entire ceiling in that room.

**Office organization:** During much of the year Elaine Moore, a former Westmoreland selectman who had served as administrative assistant in Walpole, provided significant help in bringing fresh order to the files in the selectmen’s office. She also helped set new standards in meeting management by preparing agendas and manifests of bills to be paid.

**Town Hall Rental policy:** The selectmen worked to update town policies regarding public rentals of town hall and also licensing standards for special public events. The work involved research of practices in other communities, a principal finding regarding rentals being the fact that all towns but one in the region require some kind of proof of insurance by renters of town property (the exception is Swanzey, which as a matter of policy does not rent out its facilities). The Town Hall rental policy change proposals, which are subject to voter action at Town Meeting this year, were prompted partly by a notice from Primex, the town’s insurer. The current town hall rental policy was adopted at Town Meeting in 1982. Details of the proposed changes can be found in the latest Town Report.

**Selectman change:** Chip Drogue, who had served the town for many years as selectman, stepped down; Jim Rousmaniere was appointed his replacement, and his name appears on the ballot in March, 2016. The selectmen would like to thank Chip for all his hard work over the years, certainly including his significant role in the celebration of the Town’s bicentennial in 2012.

**School board representative:** Nick Mosher was appointed to represent the town on the Monadnock Regional School Board.

**Old police cruiser:** The town sold its 2003 police cruiser that had been damaged when hit by another vehicle and was subsequently repaired in anticipation of being offered for sale.

**New Department of Revenue Administration financial filing protocols:** The state government department that has responsibility in establishing tax rates installed a new online financial filing system that required significant outlays of time and effort by the selectmen. The introduction of any new software is rarely smooth, and our experience with the new DRA software was no exception.

**Your Selectmen:**
Karen Cota,
Gerry Davis,
Jim Rousmaniere

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_Don’t miss the POTLUCK SUPPER_ immediately before the Town Meeting

**TUESDAY, MARCH 8 at 5 p.m.**

Bring a plate, utensils and a dish to share.
Barbara Neylan

The Roxbury Report had some questions for Barbara Neylan, who recently began creating pottery at the pottery studio at Nye Hill Farm. Here are her answers:

Please recall your first experience with pottery and how you came to be exposed to it.

My love of clay and ceramics began many years ago when I studied under Minnie Negoro at the University Of Connecticut School of Fine Arts.

How did you get back to it?

A few years ago I was introduced to Deb and Anthony Kline at Nye Hill Farm. Deb was building a pottery studio in the barn and she graciously offered me the opportunity to rekindle my passion for pottery there. I was thrilled and jumped right in! There, with its wonderful organic atmosphere, ripe with inspiration, my creativity has had a chance to blossom.

What were you doing in the meantime?

I worked managing our heating business, raised a wonderful son and enjoyed gardening and horseback riding. Although I would have liked to continue with the pottery somehow life just got in the way (good way!).

Do you produce the pottery for sale, or is your production just for friends and family?

Yes I do sell my work. I showed last year as a guest artist at Pipe Dream Studio in Swanzey on Columbus Day weekends Fall Foliage Tour and will be doing it again this year. I’ll be doing Art Walk in Keene this spring and if someone cares to contact me I’d love to show and sell my work from the Studio at Nye Hill Farm. I also have a web site barbaraneylanpottery.com where people can see my work and contact me.

What’s the hardest part about working with clay?

Clay is such an organic medium and it responds so differently every time you work with it. That’s what makes it fun. Some-
Barbara Neylan, Potter

Interviews for Barbara Neylan, the pottery studio at Nye Hill Farm.

Here are her answers:

times it doesn’t care to conform to what I had in mind but often it inspires me in ways I had not envisioned. Also working with clay requires a bit of strength and sometimes it’s challenging in that regard

Do you always work with a wheel?
In addition to working at the wheel I’ve been exploring slab built pieces. I’ve enjoyed making vases which I’ve often sold full of flowers from my gardens. It’s a great avenue for me to connect to my other passion, gardening.

Please say a few words about color and color mixes.
If you look at my work you’ll see that I enjoy working with vibrant color which is not the typical stoneware palate. I been exploring using porcelain, which lends itself to those vibrant colors.

What are you working on now?
Right now I’m working on large vases as well as some covered “butter bowls” but some days I just sit down at the wheel and let the clay direct me, and that inspires my creativity.

Some background: please describe how you came to live in Roxbury.
Back in the late 70’s Mike and I were living in Connecticut. We took a camping vacation up through New Hampshire and down through Vermont looking for a place to settle with a little bit of land that we could afford. Oddly enough we camped at a campground that is now the Granite Gorge Ski Area. We ended up loving the Monadnock Region, found a piece of land in Roxbury, build a small house while we camped on it for the summer, and the rest is history. It was the right decision for sure.
A Building Transformed

In a project inspired by former Selectman Chip Drogue and supported by townspeople, contractor Ryan Lavigne carried out important and beautiful changes to our Town Hall on Middletown Road.

Babbidge Dam, cont.
(Continued from page 1)
visit to Town Hall on September 15 and made a presentation.
There are no records of the dam ever having failed to perform its functions or otherwise go wrong. “On a day to day basis,” said engineer Shawn Patenaude, “it functions perfectly fine.” There are no records of the Babbidge ever having been overtopped with floodwaters (in 2004, the Woodward Pond dam upstream of Babbidge was overtopped, but to no disastrous effect).
But there are mounting worries that changes in storm patterns resulting in part from climate change will generate new volumes of stormwaters to the point where one day the dam may be overtopped and, in the worst case, collapse and be washed away.
There are just a couple of homes on both sides of Roaring Brook a mile or so downstream of the dam. But engineers expect that if Babbidge were to ever give way there could be significant consequences. One fear: a surge of floodwaters from a dam break could destroy a large earth embankment now in the woods that previously carried railroad traffic over Roaring Brook. If such a thing were to happen, floods could rush into Otter Brook and eventually affect neighborhoods downstream in Swanzey. Another concern: if Babbidge were to suddenly go, the city’s ability to meet the water demands of Keene could be severely compromised, at least for the short term.
The solution to these concerns is a redesign that would enable super-high floodwaters to flow over the dam without damaging the structure.
Engineers hired by Keene have designed a concrete-block spillway about 90 feet wide in the middle of the dam. The physical design would be similar to that of the recently altered Robin Hood dam in Keene in which engineers installed concrete blocks on the dry side of the dam to handle any overflow. The Babbidge design also includes cement parapets about four feet high on the top of the dam that would direct floodwaters to the spillway. There might also be some fencing around the structure, for security purposes, but that’s not settled yet.
Actual work on the Babbidge dam project may start in 2016. If not then, it’ll start in 2017. Residents along Middletown Road will no doubt notice, because the project is expected to involving the trucking in of about 1,000 cubic yards of sand, gravel and topsoil, which translates to at least 100 trips up the road, and then back again, by big 10-wheelers.
The Dakin Road that leads to the reservoir has been upgraded in recent years, so no widening or surface work is expected. But Keene Public Works officials explained that the triangle intersection of the Dakin Road and Middletown Road will likely be cleared of trees and redesigned for truck-safety reasons. There’ll be signage and also a flagger when trucks are moving.
City officials said they’ll be in touch with Roxbury officials, including Road Agent Ken Buffum, when a work schedule is completed.
School Board Report
We have a new superintendent this year in Lisa A. Witte; she was hired by unanimous board vote and supported by many of our teachers and parents. After resources were internally shifted and greater focus placed on addressing disciplinary issues, our principals have reported a dramatic improvement in student behavior and the education environment. Moving forward, we want to assure that these improvements don’t slide, and that we tackle new challenges as they arise.

While district cash flow is examined on a regular basis, academic achievement is touched upon only a handful of times each year by the board. I have been pushing the administration to provide a regularly updated comprehensive report on academic progress in our schools. To me, this is critical to assessing where time, attention, and resources are wasted, and where they could otherwise be put to better use. I want to see equal focus on both what we put into the system and what we get out.

There are considerable politics and differing interests in how committees address issues and work with the larger board to tackle district problems. Most issues don’t involve a simple division of towns against towns, but a much more complex web of personal values, interests, perspectives, and purpose. Some nights can be frustrating, but others leave me proud that such a geographically diverse group holds itself together in common purpose to educate the children of our community.

- Nick Mosher,
Roxbury school board representative

Thank You, Chip!!
For all your time and hard work!!

Roxbury Town Website
During the last year the Roxbury Town Website has made great advances in posting information about the town, including minutes of meetings by the Selectmen and also the Planning Board. Also, the site has carried announcements of public hearings and drafts of proposed regulations. It’s expected that the site will soon post annual Town Reports and also editions of the Roxbury Report. The people responsible for the site are Webmaster Beth Castagna and Site Administrator Josh Hicks. thanks! Here’s the site: http://roxburynh.org/

What’s Happening at Nye Hill Farm
A word from Anthony Kline, owner:
While Nye Hill Farm is a diversified, ecologically viable, and economically sustainable farm, we offer more than fresh, certified organic fruits and vegetables. We have resident potters hand-crafting clay and ceramic ware that is both rustic and artisanal. We have our wool spun into yarn. We are tapping our maple trees and making maple syrup, and in a return to the days of yore, we have brought back to the farm, following in the footsteps of founding farmers such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. We are farmer-brewers and we brew in the same way we farm—with good intentions and honest ingredients. Hands-on in the tradition of the Slow Food movement we passionately embrace.

That movement, with all its rural pleasures, inspires and informs much of what we do here at Nye Hill Farm, including what we’re doing in our brewery. Better meals, better beer, better life.

Roxbury Scholarship Fund Report 2015
The Monadnock Regional High School Class of 2015 Annual Awards
"Citizens of Roxbury Annual Awards" recipients are
Christopher Drogue*
Emily Drogue*
Ben Mallet
Citizens of Roxbury Scholarship Fund Award Members are:
Amy Bodwell, Carol Saunders
Tim Mason
Harold Cooke, Florence Cooke
David Jewett, Cynthia Jewett
Margaret Beauchemin, Roland Beauchemin
Manika K. Stuhlisatz
Helen Mamikoian
Bethany Castagna, Donald Castagna
Christopher and Marie Kaufer of Philadelphia
Carol A. White, Fred A. White
Anyone may donate to the fund at any time. To make a contribution, at any time may donate to, please send your check to the Roxbury Scholarship Fund C/O Carol A White 8 Middleton Road, Roxbury, NH 03431

*Emily Drogue and Christopher Drogue send their sincere appreciation to the people of Roxbury for their recognition.

--Carol A White and Josh Hicks, Treasurers
A Frightening Night....

A large gathering of youngsters, oldsters and in-be-tweeners celebrated a Halloween Party held at the Roxbury Meeting House, thanks to the hard work of Betty Walker, Karen Schwindt and Marcy McStravick. They happily took on the task of turning the Meeting House into the best Halloween Party ever.

The creepy-feely ghoulish research department required finding out what was in a dozen research boxes by reaching in to feel things like jell-o brains or shaking hands with a gloved skeleton hand filled with candy corn. On top of the research department was a coffin with a very scary scarecrow lying inside. There were many bales of hay about the room with ghosts, ghouls, cob webs and dangling spiders. The bales in the center of the hall served as seats for the story telling, games and various other activities. The old time favorite “apple bobbing” was happily replaced by the more delicious “doughnuts on a string.”

Besides the usual snacks there were hot dog fingers and olives as eye balls - very tasty snacks!

All the children and many adults dressed-up for the party. Several families arrived along with many parents, grandparents and their grandchildren along with several residents. Among the adults, there were the mandatory witches, a ghost or two and a most famous Lady from France. The children delighted everyone with their costumes which included heroes, cartoon favorites and twin astronauts. Nicholas Cage with his motorcycle arrived as Gerry Davis. Dr. Seuss’ Thing 1 and Thing 2 were a little late to the party but had a wonderful time helping with the younger children’s activities.

The children’s favorite part of the event was not all the goodies and candy but playing all the games, making friends, running a never ending game of tag and enjoying the “scary” activities.

Everyone is looking forward to next year’s opportunity to come together and have a good time before winter activities arrive.

-By Carol A White

Roxbury Wildlife, Cont.

(Continued from page 2)

Indigo Bunting

Snow Bunting

both adults and red eft (juvenile) stages, redback, and Northern two lined. These secretive animals are hard to spot so we are likely to have more. Only two of the seven turtles in New Hampshire have been reported, snapping and painted. As yet no cougar/mountain lions have been officially documented, although sightings are more common in the surrounding area. I have seen many photos that look very much like cougars at first but on closer examination have been bobcat. Many people agree that some cougars have wandered into the state (likely males) but no breeding population has been established that we know of.

While we are not home to some of the most endangered species in New Hampshire such as New England cottontail, timber rattlesnake and spotted turtle, we are home to a lot. Enjoy our bountiful wildlife: Take walks, observe, feed birds (in winter) and enjoy what nature has to offer.

If anyone wants to send me photos or names of animals they’ve seen, in addition to those noted in the report, please do so. Send to abbodwell@hughes.net. Photos by Dave Shephardson.

Conservation Commission, Cont.

(continued from page 1)

state conservation commission members held every November. Talks are varied and can range from restoration, education, law, and easements to mapping, wildlife and community engagement. The convention fills up every year, attended by 150 plus commissioners.

Members of proposed commission would be Amy Bodwell, Chair, Alice Funk, Carol Saunders and Michelle Drogue. The plan is to meet quarterly. The commission would establish a mission, add a section on the town website and determine goals for the first year. The state association recommends that all commissions do a natural resource inventory to identify what important resources are located in the town. One job would be to find a grant to help fund an inventory. The commission would also continue to grow the wildlife inventory as residents report sightings of animals on their land (see article regarding wildlife in this issue). We hope to see you at the town meeting. If you want to learn more, please visit www.nhacc.org.