Tension Surfaces Regarding Possible Marine Patrol Restructure at CLA Mtg.

By Sarah Opdahl

NEW FAIRFIELD - At the Wednesday, November 18 Candlewood Lake Authority (CLA) meeting the possibility of restructuring the marine patrol to include a purview beyond boating law was addressed. In an update on ongoing work to revise its Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), which expires on December 31, the CLA's Public Safety Chair Mr. Shaun McColgan explained, "we decided to ask the five towns what changes they would like to have done." As a result, he said, "the biggest thing that came out of that was they said they wanted the Lake Patrol to be able to do greater than boating enforcement."

So far, McColgan shared that they have discussed "possibly supplementing the Lake Patrol with certified officers who can do greater than boating enforcement, which the lake patrol officers can't do, such as… going on the islands or going on the boat ramps" but nothing is decided yet. "We are working on drafting a hybrid model," he said. When asked about the potential financial impacts of this move, CLA Executive Director Mr. Mark Howarth said, "we don't know…because we are in the process of meeting with the town leaders to talk to them about the draft outline that we put together and make sure that that is what they were asking us to do. Once we get approval from all the town leaders… we will pull those numbers and add them into the budget." He clarified, "Over the years, we have had certified officers on the lake, but the Police Accountability Act means that we cannot have them anymore."

In the public comment section at the meeting's beginning, New Fairfield's Mr. Bill Rowan, a lake patrol officer, read a statement on behalf of his colleagues. The group expressed feeling excluded from the conversation about the restructure and described what they see as a general breakdown in trust and transparency, saying, "the officers responsible for enforcing boating laws and responding to emergencies have largely been excluded from these discussions. Have there been documented deficiencies, operational failures, or public safety concerns that justify restructuring the current Marine Patrol or changing its responsibilities?" The statement challenges the CLA to "identify them and explain them to the officers and to the public…we are not opposed to improvements in marine law enforcement, but why fundamentally change an organization with 50 years of experience without first publicly identifying the problem you are trying to solve?" They also collectively believe that it is impossible for them to commit to next year's boating season without more clarity.

In other updates, there was a good CLA showing at the North American Lake Management Society annual conference in Kelowna, British Columbia. The CLA "shared information via a well-received poster that was a culmination of about five years worth of data collection, and we were able to put together a very good picture of what happens to water that gets pumped up from the Housatonic at various times of the year into the lake. And I do not think that [this] water work has ever been done before." It was noted that, in general, "cold water pump-ups have a bigger impact on the lake than warm water pump-ups do."

CLA member Mr. Steve Kluge and Director of Ecology Ms. Sofie Licht participated in an all-day workshop learning about internal phosphorus loading and "methods of measuring and evaluating nutrients and nutrient release, particularly from the lake bed, and the effects on blue-green algae." Kluge said, "That's of particular interest to us because we have been finding blue-green algae blooms and persistent blooms a couple years in a row and they seem to be related to climate change." They also learned how best to participate in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Lake Assessment Program, for which they will be collecting new data. The data will "not just [be] looking at the trophic status, but it is looking at the nature of what is in the sediments at the bottom of the lake," Licht said. She shared that they will be "looking more fine-grained at when the lake becomes anoxic, when the hypolimnion becomes anoxic in the summer, how many days that anoxia is going on for. Because the longer the lake bottom is anoxic, the more phosphorus that is being released." Licht and Howarth will meet soon to examine the "nutrient budget as a whole" and consider "how much effort we should be expanding into different areas." She explained that she is in the process of applying for an aquatic invasive species grant for the summers of 2027 and 2028, as well as funds for the Lake Steward Program.

In the Treasurer's Report, Mr. Will Meikle explained "we have completed our fiscal year 26 audit with our external auditor George Sinnamon, and all went well and [it is] fully reconciled. He is very pleased with the progress that we have made in our financial position." Regarding the CLA's finances, he said, "we are right on budget, more than a couple thousand dollars, and no areas of concern. We are four months into the fiscal year, so I think we are in good shape relatively."

Meikle shared, "next month we will be voting on the fiscal year 27/28 budget, and this will go into effect starting next July." He thanked all of the committee chairs who worked closely with him on budget planning. The CLA will vote on the budget in December, though Meikle shared some major highlights, "overall, the budget that we have assembled is a 4% increase in our overall operating expenses and revenues, resulting in a request from the municipalities of a 3% increase year to year. That is about a point and a half higher than we have traditionally asked them in the last few years." He added, "we will be introducing a cost of living increase of 3.5%, much like we have over the last several years to all employees of the CLA" and "we will be incorporating updates to our expending in the areas of professional services, technology, and water testing, which are areas that we do see increases year to year." Finally, he said, "we are introducing a new part-time community engagement coordinator position to help with a number of items in the public awareness area, particularly related to our social media program, our annual fundraising." He explained, "That will be largely offset by reducing our capital requests that we build into the budget."

In an update on equipment and facilities, it was explained that nearly all of the buoys are out of the water, with the exception of two missing buoys, which are likely on either the Brookfield or Danbury shoreline. Possibly adding trackers to the buoys was discussed. The boats and jet skis are out of the water, with the exception of the science boat and the docks are all winterized.

A public awareness report highlighted a recognition ceremony that was held in Sherman "for the three teenagers and the adults that saved three potential drowning victims over the summer," Ms. Joan Archer said, going on to say, "It was a really nice ceremony. Chief Mellis and Pat Callahan and Don Lowe all did a wonderful job speaking. The families were very grateful. Pat Callahan got them a certificate from the state." The Public Awareness Committee is working on the Annual Appeal right now, which has a late November ideal deadline.

The next regular Candlewood Lake Authority meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 9., 7:30pm.

Continued on next column

HOLIDAY GREETING

SEE FORM IN CLASSIFIED SECTION OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

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Help Continue to Support Local Journalism in New Fairfield and Sherman

Obituary

Ann Santariello Azzarito

Ann Santariello Azzarito, 90, was born in the Bronx, New York, to her parents, Daniel and Mary Coviello. She graduated from Aquinas High School in the Bronx and met Arthur E. Azzarito while spending summers at her family's cottage in Putnam Lake. They married in 1956 and built their home in New Fairfield, Connecticut.



Ann Santariello Azzarito

She was a loving mother to Daniel Azzarito, Lara Ward (Will), Lisa Pepino (Rich), and Arthur Azzarito Jr. (Dawn) and was a proud grandmother to LoraAnne, AnneMarie, Daniel, Brandon, Nicole, Rebecca and Sarah, and a great-grandmother to five.

She was a dedicated parishioner of St. Edwards of New Fairfield for 68 years. Ann volunteered as a CCD instructor and Cub Scout Den Mother while her children were young.

She worked for many years at MBI in Danbury and, in her later years, enjoyed working alongside her husband and two sons at the family business, Peerless Power Equipment.

Retirement brought mornings with the "Bakery Buddies" at the Goodie Shop Bakery.

Ann was pre-deceased by her husband Art of 56 years, and her sister, Marie. She will be deeply missed by her sister, Lucille Ferrara, her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and all who knew and loved her.

A funeral service will be held at the Cornell Memorial Home, 247 White Street, Danbury, on Friday, December 11 at noon. Burial in Mountainview Cemetery, New Fairfield, will follow.

The family will receive friends at the funeral home between 10:00am – 12:00pm. on Friday, December 11.

Memorial Contributions in her memory may be made to RVNA, 27 Governor St., Ridgefield, CT 06877.

The family welcomes guests to celebrate Ann's life by wearing something red, her favorite color.

Email your obituaries and other community news to the Town Tribune at editorial@thetowntribune.com

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

AT NEW LIFE UNITED METHODIST

Advent is a time to reflect on the coming birth of Jesus Christ Celebrating God coming to earth as a man in the form of His Son, Jesus, the ULTIMATE Loving Sacrifice and Redemption for *ALL!*

We Welcome and Invite you ALL to
NEW LIFE UMC- "A Church That Loves!"
for a Joyful, Welcoming and Loving experience as
we Celebrate the Birth of OUR Lord and Savior- Jesus Christ!

ADVENT BEGINS Sunday, November 29, 2026

Join us each Sunday in Advent at our 8:30am Communion Service or at our Sunday Worship Service at 10:00am

November 29th- *HOPE* Message – Hope in Humility (God appoints the times for renewal- Open up to God's plan for renewal in your life.)
December 6th- *LOVE* Message – Love Makes a Difference (Jesus came so that things can change for YOU. Prepare for a change in your life in the coming year.)
December 13th- *JOY* Message – Rejoice Always, Pray Without Ceasing, Give Thanks in All Circumstances (Rejoice Always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances – this is God's will to Live out the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.)
December 20th- *PEACE* Message – **The Christmas Concert**
A Celebration of Lessons & Carols composed to include favorite carols & choral selections within a progression of readings that portray the biblical significance of Christmas.

CHRISTMAS EVE, December 24, 2026
5:00pm FAMILY Candle Light Service
7:00pm Communion Candle Light Service

1 Beaver Bog Rd
New Fairfield, CT 06812
newlife-umc.com
(203)746-3725

May you have a Blessed Advent and Christmas.