

LIBERTY LEDGE SEWATARO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting Held May 21, 2029

Silva Room, Flynn Building 278 Old Sudbury Road

Present by roll call vote: Dave Henkels, Chairman; Granger Atkeson on Zoom, Vice-Chairman; Kay Bell; Jennifer Pincus; Radha Gargeya; Debbie Dineen; Bill Pimentel on Zoom

Also Present: Adam Burney, Sudbury Planning and Development Director

Chairman Henkels called the meeting to order at approximately 7:03pm. A quorum was present.

On a motion by R. Gargeya, 2nd K. Bell, the Minutes of the May 7, 2026 initial meeting of Liberty Ledge Sewataro Advisory Committee (LLSAC) were approved following several typo corrections.

Chairman Henkels reminded all that on May 28, 2026, there will be an Open House to review and discuss the draft Open Space and Recreation Plan update. The meeting will take place at Fairbank Community Center at 7:00pm.

D. Henkels stated that the Committee visited the site on May 19. A quorum was present and the agenda was posted. The purpose of the visit was for the Committee to get an overview of the property and the camp. D. Dineen noted that due to the hot weather the northern part of the site beyond Liberty Lodge was not visited. She noted that it will be important for the Committee members to view the entire site.

J. Pincus stated she was impressed by the maintenance of the site done by the camp. K. Bell added the camp staff on the site visit were very helpful and she was impressed by the safety measures in place, especially relating to the ropes course and the tree care. D. Henkels noted that there were many older trees on the property. G. Atkeson suggested that the Committee's final report should include photographs.

R. Gargeya thanked Camp Director Brody for the cold water on the hot day. He also agreed that it is necessary for the Committee to view the entire site.

Chairman Henkels invited public comments throughout the discussion.

Lewis Glenn, 39 Julian's Way, cautioned the Committee to be careful when formulating recommendations to the Selectmen. She stated some options might involve permanent changes that will not be able to be undone in the future, should the Town wish to do so.

Mark Marchionni, 28 Julian's Way, hoped everyone took time to listen to the birds on the site walk.

K. Bell wondered if the Design Review Board might be a resource to assist with signage at the Senior Center the Council on Aging expressed that they do not know much about the property and would be interested in a tour. She suggested that the Park & Recreation Commission be engaged in discussions, too.

J. Pincus thought the comments from the flash vote survey that occurred when the Town purchased the property indicated that many residents are not aware of the features of this public property. D. Dineen suggested a video of the property could be added to the Town website.

Adam Burney, Planning and Development Director, clarified that the Design Review Board reviews signage submitted for building permits and might be able to offer some insight. They would be reviewing any signage as it comes through. He suggested the Committee begin by first presenting the current state of the property. Collection of public input throughout the process is necessary. Pros and cons of different use scenarios need to be gathered, and long-term vision should be established. R. Gargeya emphasized the importance of public input. However, the public must understand the current state of the property and the Committee needs to find the best way to give the public this information, through photos and/or physical walks on the site and how to then gather input widely from the community. D. Henkels added that Sudbury TV offers a great format for getting information to the public.

Bill Pimentel mentioned how challenging it is to get enrolled in the Camp and how attractive it is to people to use the public areas. He hopes we can find ways to respond to all the interest.

D. Dineen added that the Committee's meeting of June 4th should be a focus on the financials of the property. A close inspection of the ROI from the Camp and other costs to the Town need to be carefully reviewed as part of the current picture. Assistant Town Manager - Finance Director Victor Garofalo will present to the committee at our next meeting. D. Henkels added that input from other Town boards such as Board of Health and Park & Recreation need to part of the picture.

Presentation by Camp Sewataro Staff

Present: Scott Brody, Camp Operator; Emmy Niinimaki, Executive Director since 2007; Kristen Drummey, Community Engagement Coordinator (Not Present: Ramon Torres, Property Manager who lives on the property)

K. Drummey provided some background on the Camp: The Camp started as a family-owned camp in the 1940s and was privately run by the family until 2019 when the property and camp business was sold to the Town.

The name Sewataro comes from the surnames of the founding family members - Secatore, Walsh, Taylor and Romano. There are 39 days of camp each summer and they host approximately 700 campers at one time with a summer total of 1470 campers. 490 campers are from Sudbury. Ages range from 3 -year-olds to 10th grade Counselors in Training. 54 scholarships are awarded to Sudbury residents each year with the assistance of the Sudbury Social Worker. The camp has 256 employees, mostly seasonal. The Camp pays insurance. Maintenance and Capital Improvements are paid by the Camp with a cost sharing option for larger (>\$20k) expenses, which the camp has thus far not asked the Town to share. An annual base payment of \$200,000 plus 25% of net revenue is made to the Town (2022 numbers). Annual independent audits have found no discrepancies. Direct payments to the Town totaling approximately \$1,869,000 have been made between 2019 -2022.

The Camp operates under a Lease Management Agreement. At the end of next summer, 2027, the lease term ends. S. Brody stated that Sudbury is his #1 priority. He is an American Camp Association Leader as Board chairman for summer camps. He also operates Camp Everwood in Sharon under an agreement similar to the Sudbury agreement. Everwood is owned by both the Town of Sharon and a non-profit. His lease in Sharon is a 30-year lease that was recently extended by 10 years. He is familiar with public/private partnerships. He noted that a longer-term lease can result in more up-front investment, bank financing, and a longer-term plan. In Sharon, he has a duty to provide \$320-340K annually to the Town and incur \$500,000 in costs.

S. Brody stated he would like to work with Sudbury town boards to maximize usage of the property. He has thought about a splash pad, an indoor recreational facility, etc.. He noted that the camp can build less expensively than the Town due to less strict procurement laws. With a longer lease, he could also finance improvements over 20 years to make the cash flow work. The improvements would be funded by the camp operation. Presently, facility constraints are the impediment to growing the camp. He would like to “open up and dream big” with the Town. Kids are going to need places that tether them and help them develop human skills in an age of increasing technology. He would not want to compete, but to do that in partnership with Park & Recreation and others. He added that not a lot of municipal sites come with cash flow.

Cindy Weinberger, 175 Greystone Ln., said she felt that summer camp is an extraordinary experience affecting children's growth, and she hears joyful noises from the camp all summer. She would like to see this special place continue to exist.

J. Pincus stated that she would like Sewataro to be affordable for all Sudbury's children. She noted that the Town's Park & Recreation camp can only take limited enrollments and usually spots can only be reserved for one week. She would like to see a different fee structure, perhaps raising funds by adding a hockey rink, splash pad, etc. to make the camp more affordable for more Sudbury kids. G. Atkeson stated he agrees. He appreciates the vision for the future but notes that the Town is still subsidizing the camp in some ways. S. Brody responded that the *financial return on investment* (ROI) is considerable for the only 8 weeks of camp use annually. S. Brody takes all opportunities available for town benefit. As an example, he applied for and received a grant for Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) during COVID. Grants are not part of the revenue sharing but are considered income when the loans are forgiven. He emphasized the desire to continue the strong partnership with the Town and increase the benefits financially and programmatically. G. Atkeson would like to investigate how much the property maintenance would cost the Town if the camp was not there. D. Dineen agreed and noted that although the camp provides an ROI, there might be other overriding town needs that might cost the town financially more to develop someplace else if not located on the Liberty Ledge property. D. Henkels agreed that these are core issues for the Committee as laid out in the Mission Statement.

B. Pimentel noted that while some scholarships are great, the camp is still very expensive for many families who do not qualify for scholarships but cannot afford to pay the high tuition, especially for multiple children. He would like to see if increased enrollment with improvements could lower the cost, perhaps with a longer-term lease. He felt many Sudbury residents would like to see some financial relief. D. Henkels stated that it is a good discussion to have but the Committee should wait to have it until after all the financials are reviewed.

Responding to a question from R. Gargeya, S. Brody stated the maximum capacity at any given time is due to the lease agreement and the constraints of the current site infrastructure. The camp needs to be able to keep the kids safe in bad weather under a covered space. With the rise in extreme weather conditions, further development is needed to accommodate anything except a marginal increase in campers and staff. He would be open to discussing a model to grow the camp over time and add a mixed tuition component to accommodate more families.

Access to the nearby Haynes School might be considered as an emergency shelter. E. Niinmaki noted that about 1/3 (approximately 500) of the campers are from Sudbury. R. Gargeya asked if Sudbury should have log-in registration before the general public. The hours and weeks of the camp operation limit the public access to the property. In response to a comment from R. Gargeya, S. Brody noted that the revenue share to the Town of Sudbury jumps from 25% to 33% once a certain level of revenue is exceeded. R. Gargeya asked what the public access hours are at the property. K. Drummey explained that during camp season (Jun-Aug) from 6 AM to dusk during the week and from 9 AM to dusk on weekends. The rest of the year (Sep-May) it's dawn to dusk.

Alicia Carrillo, Basswood Ave., asked how many residential style structures are on the property regardless of current use. E. Niinmaki answered that there are six. A. Carrillo asked how many are occupied as living quarters. E. Niinmaki replied that two are. A. Carrillo asked how many of the occupied residences are used year round. K. Drummey replied that now both are year-round residences. These are the brick house where the full-time caretaker resides and the apartment above the barn. A. Carrillo asked what the value of residing in the houses is as compensation for the camp staff. S. Brody replied that the staff compensation is more of a tax issue for the individual staff. Further responding to A. Carrillo, K. Drummey stated that of the 500 Sudbury campers, she believes these campers represent approximately 325 Sudbury families.

Bill Adams, 135 Greystone Lane, noted that as just mentioned the number of Sudbury families enrolled in the Camp will increase organically.

Mark Marchionni, 28 Julian's Way, restated how positive the experiences are for the children in the camp.

Marion Glenn, 39 Julian's Way, expressed her opinion that the camp is expensive but offers an amazing experience for kids and represents value. She would like to see Sudbury residents have priority, with perhaps the Town, since it makes a profit from the camp, could subsidize Sudbury campers. She would encourage a long-term investment plan. S. Brody noted that a plan cannot be developed without knowing what the different groups in Sudbury want and what the collective priorities are.

Adam Burney, Planning Director, offered that the Planning Board would not become involved until a decision on future use is determined. He said the property is zoned residential and fully Town owned. There is an approved subdivision plan on the entire property and the options are both limited and infinite. If the town were to sell the property it would likely either be sold to a

camp operator or to a real estate developer and it is likely it would have the subdivision built out. Should a buyer wish to develop something not allowed by the present underlying zoning, it would likely take 5 or more years for the use to change. The property is 44 acres, all of which is in the RA1 zoning district. He felt the Town would not be interested in closing the camp down and putting in an affordable housing project. There are way too many layers of bureaucracy and associated cost for an affordable housing project on the property. D. Henkels agreed that the

Planning Board will have more to do with the property on permitting and any changes.

K. Bell questioned if the camp was originally approved under a special permit of use variance.

A. Burney felt it had probably been a special permit. He added that zoning is decided by a town, not the counties in MA. Zoning dictates uses within area. Zoning one property only in an area is considered spot zoning and is considered illegal. K. Bell asked if a park or open space is allowed on residentially zoned land. A. Burney replied that it could be. D. Dineen asked how many undeveloped lots are on the property. A. Burney said that there are 45 undeveloped lots which were established through a 1989 subdivision this subdivision was modified in 1991. The landform is probably a drumlin and likely is a rocky subsoil.

D. Dineen asked if the land was to be developed as the approved subdivision today would it be likely that all 45 lots are developable based on the need to meet today's Title V septic, state stormwater, and roadway length and layout safety requirements. D. Henkels noted that these standards have changed in the interim. A. Burney stated that the subdivision predated Title V.* He added that development of the land today might need Zoning Board and likely Site Plan approval but it could be a continuation of an existing use.

Bill Pimentel inquired about what limitations there might be for the current zoning, in consideration of possible changes like increasing camp enrollment and adding structures and new programs. A. Burney explained that with the current special permitted it is likely no change of that would be needed, depending on the specifics of that permit. A building would be subject to all the building permitting requirements for storm water, siting, etc., that other buildings go through. Building more roads would be under similar permitting processes.

Chairman Henkels asked if there were any additional public comments.

Cindy Weinberger, 175 Greystone Lane, noted that people in general don't know much about Sewataro. D. Henkels stated that this Committee is hoping to inform more committee volunteers and residents about the existence of the property and seek suggestions for making the most use of it based on the desires of the residents. The LLSAC is planning a Community

Outreach session for around June 15th. He noted that there are only 4 public attending this meeting with 7 more on Zoom. He stressed that the committee cannot consider concerns we don't know about.

M. Marchionni, 28 Julian's Way, asked who people should contact with their ideas. D. Henkels repeated that all are invited to attend these meetings to share their ideas. M. Marchionni asked if kids could attend the meetings. D. Henkels said kids are absolutely invited.

K. Bell asked if members may send questions in advance for the Finance Director. A. Burney suggested that people send those and any communications to the Chair and to James Goudy-Murray, who is the staff person for LLSAC.

K. Bell asked what upcoming events, other than Camp, are planned for the property. K. Drummey said there is a fishing derby upcoming on Saturday, June 13 that is free and open to the public. MA fishing regulations apply. There is also a spring resident event on Thursday, June 4 from 5-7pm.

On a motion by R. Gargeya, 2nd J. Pincus, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous roll call vote.