

RYE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 1, 2026 – 6:30 p.m.

Rye Town Hall & via Zoom

Present: *Vice-Chair Victor Odryna (acting as chair), Treasurer Gary Terhune, Secretary/Clerk Hugh Lee, Michael Bean, Glenn Suchocki*

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice-Chair Odryna called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. SEATING OF ALTERNATES & INTRODUCTIONS

RCC Members introduced themselves.

III. SWALLOW PRESENTATION

The Conservation Commission presented an update to the public regarding their work with the barn swallows at the Goss Farm Barn. The RCC has been working over the past two years to find alternative housing structures for the barn swallows, in order to keep them from nesting in the barn.

Highlights:

- April 2025, the RCC reviewed the interior of the barn, which had not been cleaned the prior year. The Fire Chief and Health Officer were asked to inspect the barn for health concerns. Due to the bird guano and health concerns associated, the barn was closed to the public. Equipment in the barn was removed and cleaned.
- Swallows were allowed to nest once again during the nesting season for 2025, as it was too late in the season to consider alternative structures for the birds.
- The RCC started working with Ornithologist Mara Silver to learn more about the barn swallows and discuss the possibility of rehoming the swallows. The RCC learned that barn swallows return to their nests every nesting season. The swallows are very territorial and anti-social when nesting, and nests are built very far apart (approximately 15ft to 20ft).
- There has been a decline in barn swallow population. It's believed that insecticides and pesticides have contributed to the decrease in population, as well as the loss of habitat with fewer barn structures. However, the data from N.H. Audubon over the last six to eight years shows a slow increase.
- RCC took the opportunity to learn about alternative structures that would work for the swallows, which was approximately a year of research. RCC worked with Mara Silver, NH Fish and Game, UNH, and Audubon to consider different designs, including partitioning the interior of the barn off as well.

- Resident John Shaw came up with an idea to build a small barn type structure, which he presented to the RCC. However, the cost of building the structure may not have been feasible, as it was not known if it would even work.
- The swallows left the barn in early September 2025. The barn was cleaned after the birds left. In early 2026, the RCC voted to not let the swallows back into the barn. The RCC put the alternative structure idea to rest, after not being able to come up with a solution that would work.
- RCC Member Hugh Lee came up with a concept for the structures that he presented to the Conservation Commission for consideration. The concept was a four sided structure to allow for the swallows to enter through different flight paths and would also allow for the nests to be separated. The structure can be built entirely off site and is a relatively easy structure to build.
- The shed structure concept drafted by John Shaw was redesigned on a smaller scale. It was decided to go with three different concepts to test each idea. The area between the hoop house and the barn was chosen for placement of the structures. RCC went through the permitting process and received the permits by the end of March 2026.
- RCC Members and others worked on building and installing the structures. Build team: Hugh Lee, Glenn Suchocki, Michael Bean, Gary Terhune, Victor Odryna, John Shawn, Frank Drake, and Tim Johnson.
- Project costs: Shed - \$1,900 Umbrella - \$650 to \$700 Pavilions - \$1,400 to \$1,500
- On April 21st, birds first showed up at the site. Male birds, “scouts”, come first to look for prime nesting sites, and the female birds arrived about a week later. After that time, the nesting process began.
- There was a total of eleven successful nests in the new structures with over three different designs and five different nesting types. Over fifty chicks have been raised this season.
- Next steps: RCC will make some proposed changes to the structures for the next season. The area for the swallows will be marked with signs in the spring just before the nesting season. RCC will continue to monitor the project and collect data to gauge its success.

The RCC presentation can be found on the Rye Conservation Commission page on the Town’s website. More information about the shelter designs can be found on the RCC’s page, along with a report by Pamela Hunt, Ph.D., NH Audubon, evaluating the success of the nesting structures erected by the Commission as a mitigation measure for the closure of the Goss Farm Barn.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ritchie White, 30 Lang Road, commented that he wishes this presentation could have been shown at the Deliberative Session. He wishes the town’s people could see the effort the RCC put in and what a success this project has been. Clearly, the Commission went above and beyond with all the volunteer time and work that was done. He thanked RCC for their efforts.

Shawn Fraim, 47 Old Beach Road, asked when the fledglings will head south. She also asked what will happen to the barn when the swallows return next season.

Member Terhune explained that the chicks stick around about a week or two after they fledge. The first group left about two to four weeks ago. A lot of them are now gathering in various places, such as Plum Island, for the flight south.

With respect to the barn next season, Vice-Chair Odryna pointed out that there are fifty new swallows that have the new structures, which should help. It will be about three years for a complete transition out of the barn.

Suzanne Barton, 114 Clark Road, applauded RCC on their efforts. She noted that the presentation was professional and informational. She thinks how they promote information and action steps is important. She recommends that the RCC use the communication approach they used at this meeting going forward.

Karen Oliver, 1159 Washington Road, read an email from Pamela Hunt as a follow up to her evaluation of the relocation of the barn swallows from the barn at Goss Farm. Ms. Hunt wrote that their key finding is that supplementary structures provide habitat for barn swallow pairs in the short term, but this is no guarantee that this success will continue. The key recommendation is to monitor populations in the future to understand whether supplemental structures are adequate.

Tom King, 535 Wallis Road, reiterated that Mara Silver has said that this is a multi-year process. He pointed out that this is a long-term project. A true scientific experiment will need to be set up. He hopes that there will continue to be success.

Michelle Tyminski, 121 Parsons Road, noted that the most successful structure seems to be the shed. She asked if there are intentions to build more sheds to bring up the volume of the nests for next year.

Vice-Chair Odryna explained that if skirts are put on the sides of the pavilions, they start to become just like the sheds. The intent is to try a couple of different options for the pavilions for next season. He pointed out that the sheds got early use because they were in place first.

Scott Marion, 71 Washington Road, noted that the Conservation Commission made a decision to close the barn, which he opposed. He appreciates the amount of work that was put into this. He also appreciates the design build mindset. He encouraged the RCC to think about the criteria for success, as there needs to be more data. Any good science is based on long-term studies.

Frank Drake, South Road, pointed out that no one knows exactly how this is going to turn out. He noted that there won't be years of successful data analysis, if the project doesn't keep going. He thinks this has been positive for the swallows, as well as the people.

Vice-Chair Odryna stated that this is an opportunity for the entire community and the species. He would like to see the project continue.

Howard Kalet, 90 Colbourn Road, commented this is a great piece of work. He looks forward to the continued work and progress next year.

ADJOURNMENT

Hugh Lee moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Seconded by Victor Odryna. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted
Dyana F Ledger