



TOWN OF BARRINGTON

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Office of the Select Board

Select Board File Summary: Ayers Lake Boat Launch

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Introduction

It has come to our attention that Camp Fireside recently released a '[Legal Fundraising Appeal](#)' related to the Ayers Lake Boat Launch. Camp Fireside, like many Barrington organizations, is an integral and valued part of this community and, similarly, Ayers Lake is a treasured natural resource which the Town of Barrington is committed to protecting. When given the opportunity, the Town has consistently supported both Camp Fireside and the protection of Ayers Lake.

At issue is a small boat launch on Daniel Cater Road which has been in use since the 1960's. This boat launch has always been restricted by the amount of available parking (room for three vehicles with trailers) and the depth at the end of the launch (about three feet). This access point is most commonly used by members of the public with kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, and small fishing boats. Additionally, some property owners on Ayers Lake use this boat launch to annually launch and recover their boats.

Barrington is rich with natural resources and the Barrington Select Board is committed to preserving and improving public access to our natural resources. In this case, the Daniel Cater Road boat launch is the only access the public has to Ayers Lake, and it has been that way since the 1960's. While there has been much public discussion about this boat launch at Select Board meetings over the years, due to its relative significance to other Town initiatives, we recognize that many residents may not know about the boat launch or recent improvement efforts. In order to address the claims made by Camp Fireside, we will take this opportunity to more actively share details with the community.

Brief Background

Unfortunately, this dispute is not new. Barrington voters tried to resolve disputes with Camp Fireside at Town Meeting in 1968 and 1969. Over the generations since then, there have been many instances where the Select Board reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining this access site. The Select Board has always voted to keep access open. Prior Select Boards have stopped short of spending taxpayer dollars improving the site due to competing priorities and limited funding. That changed in 2023 when the Town was awarded a \$100,000 state grant to improve this Ayers Lake Boat Launch.

The Town's engineer set out to design site improvements which balanced the community's right to access the public lake with environmental concerns of the existing launch. There were two initial designs with much input from the community, Ayers Lake Association, and Camp Fireside which were scrapped during permitting. Working within the limited timeframe of the grant-funded project and in lieu of spending the time and resources necessary to resolve the disputed permit applications, the Town chose to reduce the scope and keep moving forward. Ultimately, the Town received permit #2025-02746 to make shoreland improvements in the vicinity of the Ayers Lake Boat Launch. It is important to repeat that the New Hampshire Department of Environmental



TOWN OF BARRINGTON

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Office of the Select Board

Services (NHDES) issued a permit authorizing the work performed by the Town in 2025. The Town worked cooperatively with NHDES obtaining the shoreland permit and executing the work. Camp Fireside and the Ayers Lake Association disputed the Shoreland permit and have since appealed NHDES's issuance of the permit to the NH Wetland Council.

Comments on Concerns Raised by Camp Fireside

Balancing public access to our natural resources with protection of those same resources can be challenging. Protection of Ayers Lake aligns with Barrington's strategic priorities, and the Town recently authorized \$175,000 to permanently conserve an additional 500 acres along the shoreline of Ayers Lake. Ayers Lake is a public lake and Daniel Cater Road is a public road. Public access to these public resources should not be restricted. Over the years (and in Camp Fireside's 'Legal Fundraising Appeal') concerns about the boat launch have been raised. In support of transparency, the Town will provide the following context regarding recent improvements to the Ayers Lake Boat Launch.

- Swimmer Safety
 - The Camp Fireside 'Legal Fundraising Appeal' claims the Town has: *"Created a direct conflict between motorized boats and swimming children"*
 - Motorized boats are allowed on Ayers Lake. Further, the boat launch on Daniel Cater Road has been in continuous use for more than 60 years.
 - The Town continues to suggest that Camp Fireside pursue a permit from NH Marine Patrol for a buoyed-swimming area at their beach. This is the State's jurisdiction, and they have mechanisms in place to create safe environments for swimmers and boaters alike.
 - Additionally, the Town offered support to the Ayers Lake Association to request that State lawmakers prohibit motorized boats on Ayers Lake. This offer was declined.
- Invasive Species
 - The introduction and spread of invasive species must be addressed. The Town of Barrington has relied on guidance from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). The State does not recommend shutting down public access sites to address the threat of invasive species. Alternatively, they rely on an 'Education, Early Detection, and Rapid Response' approach.
 - The Town has, on multiple occasions, installed NHDES 'Clean Boats – Clean Waters' signs at the Ayers Lake Boat Launch which have gone missing. We have requested assistance from Camp Fireside and the Ayers Lake Association to ensure that users of the facility have access to this educational signage.
 - In 2025, the Town worked with the Conservation Commission, lake associations, and other stakeholders to explore options to work collaboratively on the threat of invasive species. In March of 2026, voters supported two warrant articles to move this project forward with the formation of a working group and a pathway to funding from the Conservation Fund.



TOWN OF BARRINGTON

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Office of the Select Board

- Property Rights
 - The Camp Fireside ‘Legal Fundraising Appeal’ claims the improvements: *“Encroached onto our private shoreline property”*
 - During project development, the Town’s engineers used [the survey prepared for Camp Fireside and the USDA in 2009](#) for their conservation easement project. This survey shows the 50-foot-wide road consistent with historical town records. These Town records from the 1800’s, when Daniel Cater Road was widened to 50’, were provided to Camp Fireside and included with the permit applications.
 - All work recently performed by the Town was conducted within the 50’ roadway of Daniel Cater Road.
 - All work was properly permitted through NHDES Shoreland Permit #2025-02746.
- Boat Launch Does Not Exist
 - The Camp Fireside ‘Legal Fundraising Appeal’ claims the Town: *“Erected signs declaring a “public boat launch” where none exists”*
 - We understand Camp Fireside’s position is that since the Town did not go through a permitting process for the Ayers Lake Boat Launch, it does not exist.
 - Boat launches did not require a permit in the 1960’s and this boat launch has been in consistent use since then. Further, the Town has six sworn affidavits which provide for the existence and continued use of the boat launch since the 1960’s.
- Roadside Vegetation Management
 - The Camp Fireside ‘Legal Fundraising Appeal’ claims the Town: *“Cut down trees and shrubs abutting our property line”*
 - The Town routinely manages vegetation along nearly 100 miles of roadways to preserve and improve safe use of public roads. In the case of Daniel Cater Road, the vegetation management was permitted through NHDES (permit #2025-02746).
- Parking Plan
 - The Camp Fireside ‘Legal Fundraising Appeal’ claims the Town: *“Installed signage welcoming boats and trailers”*
 - Part of the project was improving the parking plan (with input from Camp Fireside). Now, there are three clearly marked ‘boat trailer parking’ signs and additional parking guidance. This parking plan will be much more effective and will be enforced by the Barrington Police Department.
- Road Safety Concerns
 - The Town learned that Camp Fireside walks campers across Pond Hill Road and on ¼ mile of Daniel Cater Road to access their beach property on Ayers Lake. The Town agrees that there are legitimate safety concerns with young children on a public road with limited visibility due to vegetation.
 - To help address these concerns and as part of the improvement project, the Town performed vegetation management to greatly improve the sight distance.
 - Further, the Town’s public safety leaders have suggested making Daniel Cater Road one-way (either seasonally or year-round). This idea was met with local opposition and the Select Board has tabled the topic for now. If safety on Daniel Cater Road is a continued concern, the Select Board is likely to further consider this option.

Page 3 of 4



TOWN OF BARRINGTON

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Office of the Select Board

- Erosion and Lakebed Turbidity
 - Although many gravel boat launches exist across the state, other ramp surfaces are preferred due to erosion and the introduction of turbidity into the lake. Barrington's initial project plans called for a concrete ramp which would greatly reduce the impact of erosion and disturbance of the lakebed. As previously discussed, these plans were objected to by Camp Fireside and the Ayers Lake Association and, due to the grant timeline, the Town was left with no choice but to keep the ramp surface gravel.
- Self Interest and Town Ownership of Camp Fireside Property
 - The Camp Fireside letter cites "*self-interest*" and how "*Barrington officials have openly expressed their desire to acquire Camp Fireside's lakefront property*".
 - The Select Board has only acted to support the public's right to access a public lake from a public road. Additionally, there is no desire to acquire Camp Fireside's property. Staff researched statements from public officials to better understand this claim made by Camp Fireside. They found one statement from one Select Board Member in 2007 which may be construed in such a way. Not only was this statement 20 years ago and made by one Select Board member, but he was also referring to the forthcoming tax deed. Camp Fireside owed nearly \$300,000 in unpaid taxes at that time and the Select Board was discussing the legally required steps (which can include taking ownership of the property) which result from non-payment of taxes. The Town of Barrington is not trying to acquire Camp Fireside property.

Conclusion

The Town will continue to defend the public's right to access Ayers Lake from Daniel Cater Road. We hope to work collaboratively with Camp Fireside to address new and existing concerns with respect and courtesy (both for each organization and their finances). Ultimately, we hope that Camp Fireside's efforts will settle this unfortunate and long-standing dispute. There are many more details available on the Town's website and linked to the countless Select Board meetings where this topic has been discussed. If anyone in the Barrington or Camp Fireside community would like more information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Barrington Select Board

Alexandra Simocko, Chair
Tracy Hardekopf, Vice Chair
Dannen Mannschreck
Joyce Cappiello
James Saccoccia