

EAST LYME COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 10, 2024

RECEIVED FOR RECORD  
EAST LYME, CT

2024 JAN 12 A 11:27

*Carroll Hillier*  
TOWN CLERK

Present: Penny Heller  
Don Danila  
Laura Ashburn  
Mark Christensen  
Steve Dinsmore, Alternate  
Marjorie Meekhoff, Alternate

Absent: Harvey Beeman

Also Present: Rose Ann Hardy, Ex officio

**I. CALL TO ORDER.** Ms. Heller, Chair, called the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources of January 10, 2024 to order at 7:03 p.m.

**II. SEATING ALTERNATES (IF NECESSARY)**

**MOTION (1):** Mr. Danila moved to seat Marjorie Meekhoff in favor of Harvey Beeman. Seconded by Ms. Ashburn. (4-0) Unanimous.

**III. CALL FOR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA.** There were no additions to the Agenda.

**IV. CALL FOR PUBLIC DELEGATIONS.** There were no guests.

**V. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 13, 2023.** Ms. Heller asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the December 13, 2023 Minutes.

**MOTION (2):** Mr. Christensen moved to approve the December 13, 2023 Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Mr. Danila. Ms. Meekhoff abstained from voting. (4-0-1) Motion Carried.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Plan for Darrow Pond Property.** The Darrow Pond Subcommittee made a presentation to the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen approved its passive recreational and educational plan. Ms. Ashburn asked Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Newton to write a letter of support for the subcommittee's plan. She received permission to set up a meeting with Richard Williams to get more information on planned educational programs.

Ms. Hardy reported that the subcommittee is also planning on new signage for the trails, disc golf layout, and designated areas pollinator plantings and protective vegetation for New England Cottontail (a studied population of a CT threatened species).

Ms. Hardy added it is a multi-project that will take three to five years to build everything if it is approved. It will be administered by the Parks and Recreation Department. They have

discussed an outdoor educational center. There is some controversy about expanding the parking lot. Two hundred acres is to be preserved where no motorized vehicles will be allowed. There are no plans for a restroom facility and no plans to charge admission. Mostoway Road needs much improvement. She asked that representatives of this Commission review the plan. Mr. Danila added that the New England cottontail rabbits present on the property are a threatened species and need to be protected.

Ms. Ashburn reported she has been requested to write a curriculum for the educational component. She suggested that this Commission write a memo to Mr. Lokken to request that a member of this commission be liaison to the subcommittee. Ms. Heller offered to do that.

Ms. Hardy expressed concern about the liability the town has regarding mountain bike programs or any activity that is not passive recreation. She added there is no plan for security nor gates. She was also concerned about other potential liabilities.

- b. Town cooperation with Pattagansett Lake Association.** Mr. Danila stated the Pattagansett Lake Association has undertaken various methods to control aquatic vegetation in the lake. The Association is in the process of applying for a CT DEEP AIS grant. The Association would partner with the town if the town is willing to assist. The lake has a state boat ramp for residents and out of town visitors. East Lyme has a Rowing Association. The lake needs to be treated for several years with an herbicide for effective control. If the Association applies for a \$18,000 grant, it needs to match 25% or \$4,500. Ms. Hardy suggested the Association request partial funding from the town as budgeting is now underway. This summer the lake level was very low. One reason was that someone removed a stop log at the dam, but a resident put it back into place. DEEP Dam Safety told the Association that the stop logs have deteriorated. Mr. Danila felt it would be helpful if town staff were in contact with Dam Safety to facilitate repairs. He stated it is a safety issue. The Pattagansett Lake Association would like to see a plan of maintenance or replacement.

Ms. Heller stated the Pattagansett River downstream from the lake is prone to flooding, with water levels very high now after a single heavy winter rain. East Pattagansett Road was also flooded.

## **VII. OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Update on Hole-in-the-Wall stormwater project.** Mr. Danila reported the Niantic River Watershed Committee has received a \$9,600 grant from Dominion to support this project.

Ms. Meekhoff reported when the site was surveyed it was observed that both berms were filled with mugwort, including under the nylon mesh used to hold the banks. Ms. Heller suggested controlling the mugwort by first tightly covering it with plastic sheets, followed competing groundcover plants once mugwort is reduced. These procedures might take several years. Mr. Christensen suggested hiring a landscaper licensed to use Rodeo, known to be an effective herbicide for mugwort. Ms. Meekhoff stated she will work with Mr. Lokken to determine the best procedure. Ms. Ashburn suggested signage to educate the public about what is required to deal with invasive species like mugwort. Ms. Ashburn asked Ms. Meekhoff to inform her if volunteers are needed.

## **VIII. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

a. **Communications.**

1. **East Lyme Water Department Letter regarding PFAS testing.** East Lyme Water Customers received letter dated January 2, 2024, regarding PFAS in two of the seven well sites that serve the town. (See attached letter).

b. **Agribusiness Subcommittee.** Mr. Christensen reported the Preservationist's Potluck Supper will be held on Saturday, January 13 at 6:00 p.m. at Niantic Community Church with Sunday as a snow date. He sent a note to the First Selectman's secretary requesting that town officials be invited to the potluck. A notice was placed on the town website and an ad was placed in The Day newspaper.

On February 3 at 2 p.m. Mr. Londregan will speak at the library on the current and future plans for harvesting oysters.

On April 6 at 2 p.m. Ms. Ostfeld will discuss procuring natural grown food at the library

c. **Sustainable CT Subcommittee.** Ms. Heller reported the subcommittee is waiting to see if a letter was received requesting that we have a workshop assisting the town in assessing its climate vulnerability. Ms. Hardy needs to submit the letter on town letterhead and needs to send the request to the CT Chapter of The Nature Conservancy who is sponsoring this free service.

Ms. Heller is waiting to hear from Mike McDowell of the Parks and Recreation Department for a meeting about planning a bike and walk safety audit.

d. **Pollinator Pathway East Lyme (PPEL).** Ms. Meekhoff reported Lydia Pan of "Wild Ones" will give a presentation January 27<sup>th</sup> at the library at 2 pm on using native plants and the work of Wild Ones. Ms. Meekhoff has arranged a second presentation on March 8 at 10 a.m. at the DOT office with the Project Manager in charge of landscaping the I-95 bridge construction site.

A Master Conservationist of DEEP will discuss how to live with eastern coyotes later in March.

Ms. Meekhoff met with Annah Perch, Curator of Brookside Farm Museum, to register Brookside Farm as a home-grown national park. Pollinator Pathways East Lyme will partner with Brookside Farm to develop this program. Ms. Meekhoff asked if there was any money in the budget for an intern to work from the state Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDDB) Site Map. Ms. Meekhoff stated we are trying to update the town's website to make the NDDDB information for East Lyme more readily available and more easily updated.

As example, Mr. Danila reported that the CT DEEP maintains the NDDDB. There is a map of East Lyme showing where listed species have been noted. The Pattagansett Lake Association wanted to use a specific herbicide but due to the NDDDB process a state Botanist informed them it cannot be used until a wetlands plant survey for listed species has been conducted.

Ms. Hardy suggested submitting it as a new line item in this Commission's upcoming budget request. Ms. Ashburn suggested hiring an intern for ten hours of work.

Ms. Meekhoff reported EarthFest will be held on May 18 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

- e. **Chairman's Report.** Ms. Heller had nothing further to discuss.
- f. **Ex-Officio Report.** Ms. Hardy reported the Board of Selectmen have been working on filling vacancies to various commissions.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION (3): Mr. Danila moved to adjourn the January 10, 2024 East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources at 8:25 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Christensen. (5-0) Unanimous.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary**

# Town of

East Lyme Water Dept.

Phone: 860-691-4104

Email: [watersewer@eltownhall.com](mailto:watersewer@eltownhall.com)



# East Lyme

108 Pennsylvania Ave

Niantic, Connecticut 06357

January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

Dear East Lyme Water Customers,

We are writing to inform you that during recent EPA testing of the Town's public water system, the East Lyme Water Department has detected per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in two of the seven well sites that serve the town. PFAS are a group of man-made chemicals that are widely used in consumer products and industrial processes and can be found in items such as:

- Cleaning Products
- Water-resistant fabrics such as rain jackets, umbrellas and tents
- Grease-resistant paper and food packaging
- Nonstick cookware
- Personal care products, such as shampoo, dental floss, nail polish, and makeup
- Stain-resistant coatings used on carpets and upholstery
- Fire fighting foams

These chemicals have been in use for over 50 years and can enter the environment many different ways including spills, leaks, or the use cycle of PFAS-containing products. Unfortunately, because of extensive use of PFAS, these chemicals are appearing in public water supplies across the country, and their detection is a widespread issue that is not unique to the Town of East Lyme.

***It is important to note that the water that is currently being supplied by the East Lyme Water Department is in compliance with all State and Federal drinking water standards.***

The levels of PFAS detected in two of the seven well sites in town were found at very low concentrations and are below any required action levels of current Connecticut public health guidelines for drinking water. We are testing for these chemicals down in the parts per trillion range, which is equivalent to a drop of water in 20 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

We want our customers to be assured that the East Lyme Water Department is committed to continuing to provide safe and high-quality drinking water *that meets or exceeds all State and Federal water quality standards*. We have already begun exploring advanced treatment methods and alternative sources of water to reduce and/or eliminate PFAS in our water system. We will be working closely with the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to monitor the situation and implement additional actions as necessary. Most importantly, we will be keeping you updated on our plan and our progress.

We have included a table of the PFAS compounds that we have detected in our system. All other well sites not listed do not have detectable levels of PFAS, and because our various well pumps blend into one system before the drinking water is delivered to you, your individual exposure will likely be lower than these results.

Water Source/Location	Amount Detected	DPH Drinking Water Advisory Level	Results Below the DPH Drinking Water Advisory Level?
<b>Well 1A/6 WTP Flanders Area</b>	PFOA – 4.5 ppt PFOS – 5.8 ppt	16 ppt 10 ppt	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Well 4A WTP Niantic Area</b>	PFPeA – 5.5 ppt PFHxA – 5.4 ppt PFOA – 9.2 ppt PFBS – 4.8 ppt PFOS – 3 ppt	N/A 240 ppt 16 ppt 760 ppt 10 ppt	<b>Yes</b>

*\*ppt = parts per trillion      WTP = Water Treatment Plant*

We understand that you may have questions or concerns about PFAS and your health. We encourage you to visit the DPH website ([portal.ct.gov/dph/environmental-health/PFAS/PFAS](http://portal.ct.gov/dph/environmental-health/PFAS/PFAS)) or call the DPH Drinking Water Section at 860-509-7333 for more information on PFAS, health effects, exposure routes, and ways to reduce your exposure. The East Lyme Water Department can be contacted by calling 860-691-4104 or by emailing [watersewer@eltownhall.com](mailto:watersewer@eltownhall.com) if you have any questions or regarding our findings and the steps we are taking to address this issue.

We will be holding an informational meeting at our next water and sewer commission meeting at East Lyme Town Hall, 108 Pennsylvania Ave in Niantic on January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7 pm. We encourage you to attend this meeting to learn more about this issue and ask us any questions in person that you may have.

Providing safe drinking water to the East Lyme community is our highest priority. Our staff is committed to producing and delivering the best quality drinking water to our customers. We appreciate your attention, cooperation, and trust as we continue to upgrade our systems.