

# East Lyme Dog Park



## Background

The Town of East Lyme purchased the Darrow Pond property for \$4.1 million in 2011 with the help of the national nonprofit Trust for Public Land, which paid for all the environmental and legal work associated with the purchase.

Previous owners had proposed an 18-hole golf course and a 600-unit housing development for the property over the course of a decade that saw bankruptcy, lawsuits, settlements and a foreclosure.

The Darrow Pond property consists of 300 acres, of which 200 acres are protected by a conservation easement and the remaining 100 acres has assigned to the Parks and Recreation Commission to manage. The dog park will be located in the 100 acres under Parks and Recreation management.

In 2023, The Town completed the Darrow Pond Master Plan that called for developing amenities that contributed to recreation, conservation and education. Earlier in 2025, members of the Darrow Pond Subcommittee and the Parks and Recreation Commission agreed that including a dog park at Darrow Pond was consistent with the master plan and approved the project moving forward.

The Dog Park Subcommittee has been working for the last 2 years to plan a dog park for the community. The Subcommittee, created by the Parks and Recreation Commission, has established the need for a dog park, obtained feedback from over 500 respondents, researched best practices, issued a report and obtained support from the Parks and Recreation Commission and Board of Selectmen to move forward. This effort builds on past efforts that go back more than 5 years ago to create a dog park.

Based on research the Subcommittee performed, it was determined that there is broad community support for a dog park and that the park should be approximately one acre in size, fenced, accessible and contain several amenities that are reflected in the site plan.

- areas for small and large dogs
- sally port entry
- parking
- shade and seating
- dog waste bags and trash cans
- good drainage
- visual barriers between sections and entrance

## Location

The Subcommittee reviewed a comprehensive list of town-owned properties to determine the best possible location for the park. Some of those locations included Darrow Pond, Veterans Park (identified by previous dog park interest group), Roxbury Road/Romanga Road (Salt Shed location) and Roxbury Road/Roxbury Court (large open meadow).

The property review process identified the Darrow Pond location to best meet the requirements due to its size, location, low impact, ease of developing the site, and future vision for Darrow Pond.

The Subcommittee worked with the Engineering Department to develop the site plan and verified that all necessary considerations were taken into account. No wetlands are impacted.

## **Potential Rules**

The Parks and Recreation Commission will establish rules, procedures and operational plans that will maintain the area to provide a safe and welcoming environment.

1. The Park is open during daylight hours
2. Owners are legally responsible for their dogs and any injuries caused by them.
3. Puppies and dogs must be properly licensed, inoculated, and healthy.
4. Animals should wear a collar and ID tags at all times.
5. Owners must clean up after their dogs.
6. Dogs showing aggression toward people or other animals must be removed from the park. Animals with a history of aggressive behavior are not permitted to enter.
7. Puppies using the park must be at least four months old.
8. Owners should not leave their dogs unattended or allowed out of sight. If young children must be supervised.
9. Dogs in heat are not allowed inside the park.
10. Owners must carry a leash at all times. Dogs should be leashed before entering and leaving the park.
11. Violators will be subject to removal from the park and loss of park privileges.

## **Sidewalk Waiver**

There are no sidewalks along Mostoway Rd or along the streets in the adjacent neighborhood. Installing a sidewalk on the property would have little value since it would not connect pedestrian access to anything else, and it could present issues with encouraging walkers along other portions of Mostoway Rd, or CT 161 that don't have sidewalks, making it a dangerous situation.

## **Parking**

There is no standard for the number of parking spots to be available, but based on information from dog parks in neighboring communities, it appears that the number of spaces proposed (10 or 8+2) will accommodate users of the park on all but the most extreme time, for example during special events. During those times, the open field to the south of the proposed location could be used for overflow parking.

## **Maintenance**

Trash cans will be located on site and will be emptied by Parks and Recreation staff members. The dog park will be mowed and trimmed as needed to maintain a safe and athletically pleasing environment.

## **Potential Concerns**

Since the Darrow Pond property has had relatively little use for years, neighbors may notice a small increase in traffic or increased noise from barking. The proposed location of the park in the front of the property has dense vegetation around the area that would minimize impacts. As additional amenities are added to the Darrow Pond property, improvements for traffic, parking, and other concerns would be planned.