

EAST LYME BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
OCTOBER 15, 2025

PRESENT: Board of Selectmen Members Dan Cunningham, Ann Cicchiello, Rose Ann Hardy, Jason Deeble and Don MacKenzie  
EXCUSED: Candice Carlson  
ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: BOE Finance Director Maryanna Stevens and Brookside Farm Museum Curator Annah Perch

Mr. Cunningham called the regular meeting of the East Lyme Board of Selectmen to order at 7:04 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1b. Additional Agenda & Consent Items

**MOTION (1)**

Ms. Cicchiello MOVED to add agenda item #3e to appointment someone to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Seconded by Ms. Hardy. Motion passed 5-0.

1c. Delegations

There were none.

1d. Approve Minutes

**MOTION (2)**

Ms. Cicchiello MOVED to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of October 1, 2025, as submitted.

Seconded by Mr. Deeble. Motion passed 5-0.

1e. Consent Calendar

**MOTION (3)**

Ms. Cicchiello MOVED to approve the Consent Calendar for October 15, 2025, in the amount of \$2,616.33.

Seconded by Mr. MacKenzie. Motion passed 5-0.

2a. School Building Committee

**MOTION (4)**

Ms. Cicchiello MOVED the following: RESOLVED THAT the Board of Selectmen determines it is necessary to replace the roof at the Niantic Center School and to approve and authorize the School Building Committee to undertake the project within approved appropriations and grant funds received by the Town for that project. Further pursuant to subsection (a) of East Lyme Ordinance § 31.25 the Board of Selectmen hereby appoints Board of Education members William Derry and Alisa Bradley to serve respectively as the eighth and ninth members of the School Building Committee.

Seconded by Mr. Deeble. Motion passed 5-0.

2b. Pension Board

As this matter is very important, everyone should take the time to review the information handed out by the Finance Director, attached hereto as Exhibit #1. This matter is tabled.

2c. CIP Committee Members

This matter will be tabled until after the November election and after the new Board has been sworn in.

RECEIVED FOR RECORD  
EAST LYME, CT  
OCT 21 P 3:51  
Candice Carlson  
TOWN CLERK

2d. Town of East Lyme Poet Laureate  
This matter is tabled to gather more information.

3a. Proposed Ordinances

Mr. Cunningham explained that there are a couple of proposed ordinances in the works; an automated ticketing ordinance and a property maintenance ordinance. The attorneys are currently reviewing subject information and will report at the next meeting. This matter is tabled.

3b. Schedule Public Hearing - Ordinances  
This matter is tabled.

3c. Presentation – Brookside Farm Museum

Curator Annah Perch gave a presentation on the state of the Brookside Farm Museum, attached hereto Exhibit #2.

3d. Appointment to Zoning Board of Appeals

There was no action on this item; Ms. Kolosowski is a current Alternate Member of the ZBA and remain as such until a full member position opens up.

3e. Appointment to Parks and Recreation

**MOTION (5)**

Ms. Cicchiello MOVED to appoint Kenzie Lloyd, 22 Cardinal Road, East Lyme, to serve as a Member on the Parks and Recreation Commission with a term to expire on January 3, 2028. Seconded by Mr. Deeble. Motion passed 5-0.

4a. Ex-Officio Reports

Ms. Hardy reported:

- The Zoning Commission voted down a proposed dog park at Darrow Ridge. There were many people in attendance from the neighborhood that were vehemently opposed. It was noted that the subcommittee is dedicated to finding a good spot for a dog park in East Lyme. Regarding the dog park discussion, Ms. Cicchiello added that someone might contact the management at Gateway apartments to see if they would share their dog park with the general public.

Mr. Deeble reported:

- Stars to Stem fundraiser on October 24<sup>th</sup>; Mystic Dead Quartet for \$20 per ticket.
- As the final BOS meeting before the election, he thanked his fellow board members for a great two years working together, and wished everyone good luck and thanked them for their courage in wanting to run for public office.

Mr. MacKenzie reported:

- The plan to move clams into the Niantic Bay from the Guilford area is moving forward.
- The Planning Commission is considering allowing up to six (6) chickens on a 2-acre lot of land.

Ms. Cicchiello reported:

- Inland Wetlands Agency is finalizing their regulations and will bring them to the Board of Selectmen at a future meeting. They will be sure to come with a summary of changes to make it clear.

4b. First Selectman's Report

Mr. Cunningham reported:

- After a major storm, the temporary wall that our staff built at McCooks withstood and is still standing strong.
- The storm left trees and power lines down in Saunders Point.
- Experienced some issues with our public safety services when a tree came down on Rte 156 near the 72 connector and took out power to that area.
- The Town is committed to continue to keep up with and improve our emergency services infrastructure.
- On Tuesday, October 21<sup>st</sup> at 6pm, the America250 Planning Committee will be meeting at Town Hall.

5. Communications

There was none.

6. Public Comments

There was none.

7. Selectman's Response

There was none.

8. Executive Session For The Purpose Of Discussing School Security

**MOTION (6)**

Ms. Cicchiello MOVED to enter into executive session to discuss school security. The Board entered into executive session at 8:01 PM and returned at 8:44 PM with no formal votes taken.

Seconded by Mr. Deeble. Motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION (7)**

Ms. Cicchiello MOVED to adjourn the October 15, 2025, regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen at 8:44 p.m.

Seconded by Mr. MacKenzie. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sandra Anderson  
Recording Secretary

# Exhibit #1

**Sandi Anderson**

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**From:** Kevin Gervais  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 14, 2025 4:37 PM  
**To:** Justin Hanna; Jessica Dwire; Ron Bence; David Swinburne; Stevens, Maryanna; Jeffrey Newton; Dan Cunningham; Town Hall Employees; Dept Heads  
**Cc:** Sandi Anderson; Stacey Konakowitz; Robert Curry; Karen Galbo  
**Subject:** Pension Board Vacancy - Employee Vacancy  
**Attachments:** Pension Board Seat Interest Form - Updated 10-14-2025.pdf  
**Importance:** High

Hello

I would like to take a moment to inform you that a seat on the Pension Board has recently become vacant.

This particular seat is designated for an employee who is also an active participant in the pension plan.

Active members of our pension plan span several union groups including Police, Dispatch, UPSEU (United Public Service Employees Union), as well as a few unaffiliated employees, certain employees of the Board of Education and one active member from the Fire Service. This diverse representation underscores the importance of ensuring that the open seat on the Pension Board reflects the interests of all participating groups.

To ensure transparency and fair representation, we will be following a structured process to fill the vacancy:

**1. Union and Eligible Employee Notification**

All union presidents and eligible employees will be notified this week of the opening to serve on the Pension Board (this email serves as this notification).

**2. Interest Form Submission**

Interested individuals will be asked to complete a standardized interest form, which includes basic employment information, confirmation of pension plan participation, and a brief statement of interest.

**3. Eligibility Review**

We will verify that each applicant is a pension participant and in good standing with their union, if applicable.

**4. Candidate Selection**

Selection will be made by executive decision after interviews are conducted with the 1<sup>st</sup> Selectman, Finance Director and Human Resources Director.

### Proposed Timeline

| Date                 | Milestone                                                    |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 15           | Notification sent to union presidents/<br>eligible employees |
| October 22           | Interest forms accepted until 10/22                          |
| Week of October 27th | Interviews held for eligible employees                       |
| Week of November 5th | Final candidate selected and<br>announced                    |
|                      |                                                              |

Please let me know if you have any questions.

KG

Kevin Gervais Jr.  
Finance Director  
Town of East Lyme  
108 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Niantic, CT 06357  
(860)-691-4111  
[Kgervais@eltownhall.com](mailto:Kgervais@eltownhall.com)



***Effective July 10, 2023***

**New Town Hall Hours:**

**Monday – Thursday 8am – 5pm**

**Friday 8am – 11:30am**

**Town of**



**East Lyme**

**Pension Board**

108 Pennsylvania Avenue  
P.O. Box 519  
Niantic, CT 06357

**Pension Board Seat Interest Form**

Full Name:

Union Affiliation:

Job Title:

Department:

Date of Hire:

Are you a participant in the pension plan? ☐ Yes

\*If not a pension plan participant, you are ineligible to join the Pension Board.

Statement of Interest:

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

Signature:

Date:

**Town of East Lyme**  
**Brookside Farm Museum**  
**Report of Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities**  
Prepared by: Annah Perch, Curator  
October 15, 2025

**Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to share with you what has been happening at Brookside lately, as well as what I am currently working on and envisioning for the future. It's essential to inform you, gather your feedback, and explore the support you might be able to offer. If this direction resonates, I believe it will bring about greater use of the facility, stronger partnerships, new cultural and environmental resources for the Town, a healthier landscape, and a modest but real boost to the local economy through paid programs such as concerts and workshops that will attract more visitors to the north end of town.

I have been reimagining Brookside not only out of vision but also necessity—because what we were doing before simply wasn't drawing community interest. The work ahead must be both imaginative and relevant, ensuring that Brookside grows from a preserved place into a living part of East Lyme's culture.

**Opportunities for Preservation and Renewal**

We have made significant strides in preserving the physical structure of the museum. After years of deferred maintenance, the LoCIP-funded project to repair the historic house has finally begun. This work—addressing structural rot, replacing the roof, and repainting the exterior—represents the most significant investment in Brookside in decades. I plan to devote much of this winter and spring to closely overseeing this project.

We are now in the final stages of completing a partially grant-funded Historic Structures Report, which documents Brookside's architectural history, condition, and recommendations for preservation. We will soon embark on an Architectural Assessment Report, fully funded by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and a federal agency through the Historic Preservation Fund, which will provide a detailed analysis of structural elements, materials, and repair priorities. These reports will guide both short-term and long-term restoration planning. Both reports will also include recommendations for moving forward, based on current best practices in reimagining historic house museums.

Brookside is now in its second year of participation in the Homegrown National Park initiative ([www.homegrownnationalpark.org](http://www.homegrownnationalpark.org)) and its second year of a grant from the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut to restore the ecosystem at the site. While initially a practical way to maintain our landscape with minimal resources, it has evolved into a model for regenerating a healthy ecosystem in East Lyme, an area designated by the State of Connecticut as environmentally distressed. While one goal is to keep the landscape responsibly and beautifully, the Homegrown National Park model is specifically designed to encourage property owners throughout East Lyme and beyond to take similar steps—restoring native habitat as the simplest, most effective, and most beneficial way to manage our landscapes.

Working with Colin Bennett and Swamp Yankee Earthcare, we have removed a huge amount of invasive species and planted native perennials to begin restoring the ecosystem. If you've driven by Brookside lately, you may have noticed the three large Douglas firs along the property. For the first time in years, they are free of the invasive vines that had been choking them. Thanks to our restoration work, these trees will now survive and thrive—a simple but powerful symbol of what we're trying to accomplish through our Homegrown National Park initiative.

With the guidance of Colin Bennett, Swamp Yankee Earthcare, and the Connecticut College Arboretum, we are planning to turn the wooded area behind the house into a small arboretum and walking trail. This will not only restore a healthy forest ecosystem but also provide a quiet, natural space for reflection, learning, and recreation. Nearly all of the native plants we've brought to Brookside have come directly from the Connecticut College Arboretum, making this a truly local partnership grounded in shared values of ecological stewardship.

### **Partnerships and Community Engagement**

Brookside's strength and potential lie in collaboration. One of our most meaningful partnerships has been with the East Lyme Public Library. The Library and Brookside have developed a strong and supportive relationship, sharing and cross-promoting programs, co-hosting events, and exploring ways to expand their spaces to include each other. Together, we can create a more connected, accessible cultural hub for East Lyme.



We have also partnered with Wild Ones and the Pollinator Pathway East Lyme to host community environmental workshops that engage residents in sustainable landscaping and biodiversity. (One such program on sowing winter seeds is taking place on January 17 from 10-12.) Preliminary discussions have been held with the Department of Parks and Recreation to develop youth programming, including summer camps and after-school sessions at Brookside, which would provide young people with hands-on experiences in history, agriculture, and the environment.

We have also partnered with Scouts, with three Eagle Scout projects completed to benefit Brookside, and Girl Scouts, who have helped plant native species. Looking ahead, I hope to strengthen connections with East Lyme Public Schools, other area schools, homeschooling organizations, and the Niantic Children's Museum to make Brookside a 'classroom without walls,' where students can explore the intersection of history, ecology, and civic life. One of our strongest partnerships lately has been with Wil Reed's archaeology class at East Lyme High School, which conducts an annual archaeological dig at Brookside.

In partnership with the East Lyme Public Library, we are continuing to plan programs together. One example includes producing a creative new project for 2026: a Paranormal Investigation Series based on the findings of researchers who have conducted investigations at Brookside. Whether one is a believer or not, this work provides an engaging lens through which to explore the site's layered history and folklore. It is also known to draw a big crowd, which will provide a source of income through the Friends of Brookside. The program is planned for public release in the spring of 2026 and will combine history, curiosity, and storytelling in ways that draw in new audiences.

Finally and obviously, there is tremendous potential for a partnership with the East Lyme Historical Society. Communication between our organizations has been limited to date. However, there are opportunities for Brookside to host some or all of the Historical Society's meetings, research, and archival storage space, and to initiate conversations about future joint projects that could serve as the foundation for a true historical and cultural campus for the Town.

A model for what this could look like can be found at the Simsbury Historical Society, which operates a vibrant, multi-building campus that includes several historic structures relocated to the property, a reconstructed Native American dwelling, formal gardens, and the Ellsworth Visitor Center. This modern building

houses archives, meeting rooms, and a gift shop. The Simsbury site illustrates how multiple historic and interpretive spaces can coexist on a single campus, each telling a distinct part of a community's story. Brookside has the potential to evolve similarly: blending preservation, education, and community use into a cohesive destination for East Lyme.

### **Interpretation and Exhibits**

Our interpretive direction is evolving to reflect a broader and more inclusive story of East Lyme. Thanks to the Friends of Brookside, we have restored *The Christian Freeman*, an abolitionist newspaper printed in 1845, and discovered it hidden in the walls of the house. It is the only original artifact directly connected to the site, and its preservation is inspiring a new permanent exhibit that interprets its history and meaning.

For the first time in the history of telling the story of this historic house, we are also developing *The Story of Amos*, an exhibit focused on Amos Watrous (whose last name is actually Congdon), an eight-year-old Black child recorded in the 1850 census as living at Brookside with the Avery family. With the research of local historian Tom Schuch, we now know details of Amos's family—his mother, who is buried nearby, and his father, a seaman out of New London.

We have developed a working plan to bring this exhibit and story to life in consultation with Tammy Denease, a Connecticut historian and consultant specializing in African American history and living history interpretation. Among other impressive projects, Tammy has collaborated with the Weston Historical Society and the Farmington Historical Society to create dynamic exhibits that are bringing people together. Together, we are exploring ways to interpret what life might have been like for a Black child in Connecticut in 1850—connecting the story of Amos to the larger context of abolition as an early progressive movement for racial and social justice.

Together, these exhibits—*The Christian Freeman* and *The Story of Amos*—will anchor a more thoughtful and relevant interpretation of Brookside, tying local stories to the greater social construct of today, a time in American history when we could all benefit from learning how to work together toward the common good.

## **Challenges**

One of the ongoing challenges facing Brookside is the lingering impact of the name change from “Smith-Harris House” to “Brookside Farm Museum.” While well-intentioned, this change has unintentionally led to confusion and disinvestment among community members. The site does not currently function as a farm museum, nor does it have the necessary resources, staff, or physical infrastructure to accurately interpret agricultural history at that scale. In practice, the name has distanced the museum from its strongest assets—its preserved 19th-century domestic architecture, its deep local family histories, and its connections to broader themes of New England life.

More importantly, the label “farm museum” has not inspired the kind of public curiosity, civic pride, or educational engagement that a vibrant historic site requires to thrive. By contrast, embracing a more accurate identity—one that centers on Brookside as a historic home and cultural hub—would better align with its mission, attract new partnerships, and invite residents to see the property as a living part of East Lyme’s story, rather than a static, rural display. A renewed focus on authenticity, storytelling, and inclusivity could reinvigorate public interest and help the museum reclaim its rightful place as a cornerstone of community heritage.

## **The Friends of Brookside Farm Museum**

Another significant challenge has been maintaining an effective and engaged Friends group. The Friends of Brookside Farm Museum, which exists to provide financial and volunteer support for the museum, has not been operating in accordance with its stated purpose or governing documents for some time. The organization has struggled with communication, transparency, maintaining the minimum number of required Board members, attracting volunteers, and adherence to basic nonprofit best practices, including regular meetings, clear recordkeeping, and active collaboration with the Town and museum leadership.

As of this summer, the Friends group has become temporarily dormant rather than continue to operate out of compliance. This is through no malintent on the part of the Friends who remained at that time, each of whom has shown genuine care and commitment to Brookside over the years. Instead, it reflects the need for a new structure that aligns with the best practices of modern nonprofit “Friends” organizations. I have proposed to restructure this partnership in a way that clarifies roles, establishes accountability, and re-engages community members who wish to contribute to Brookside’s success. There are currently openings for four Board

members and a variety of volunteer opportunities, including event planning, fundraising, program development, docenting, and earth care, among others.

In gratitude for the stewardship of the funds that the Friends have maintained, I plan to honor their legacy through a tangible and visible improvement to the site: rebuilding the fence around the kitchen garden as a period-appropriate feature that reflects Brookside's historical integrity and satisfies the stipulation of a restricted fund. This project will be dedicated to and publicly recognize those Friends and former commissioners who have assisted with Brookside's care over the last three years but who are no longer involved, including Chuck and Donna Massung, Wanda Stacik, and Commissioners Gary Lakosky, Bob Stifel, and Maggie Prokop. Their dedication over the years has ensured that Brookside remains a valued part of East Lyme's history, and this acknowledgment will serve as a lasting expression of appreciation for their service.

## **Conclusion**

Early in my career, I was taught by a very successful entrepreneur to "copy the best." During my time at Brookside, I have kept my mind on examples of institutions that I aspire for us to be. My personal vision for Brookside is guided by the belief that history, community, culture, and environment are inseparable. My guiding principles come from several exemplary institutions: Coogan Farm in Mystic, which unites conservation, education, and heritage; Dudley Farm in Guilford, which operates as a living historic site; Grace Farms in New Canaan, which demonstrates how architecture, civic engagement, and nature can coexist; Muscoot Farm in Katonah, New York, an actual working farm and museum that balances history with daily public use; and the Simsbury Historical Society, whose multi-structure campus shows what a thriving community-based historic site can become. The Wilton Historical Society and the Farmington Historical Society have also recently become models for me, which I hope Brookside can someday emulate.

A long-term goal could include developing a small visitor or interpretive center similar to Simsbury's Ellsworth Visitors Center, which could provide shared space for exhibits, archives, and public programs in partnership with the Historical Society,—the Library, and the Community Center. A bigger goal, more challenging to achieve but entirely possible through grants and fundraising, is to create a campus for East Lyme History on the Brookside site. We also hope to create opportunities for community gatherings through farmers' markets, small concerts, seasonal festivals, and outdoor events that connect residents to both history and nature.

We will continue to expand the Homegrown National Park effort through the planned arboretum and woodland trail behind the house—a project guided by Swamp Yankee Earthcare and the Connecticut College Arboretum—creating both a restored native ecosystem and a living outdoor classroom for the community.

I have received numerous professional opinions from notable leaders in the field, including Joshua Torrence, Executive Director of the Florence Griswold Museum, and James Sexton of Archaeological and Historic Services, Inc., who is currently overseeing the Historic Structures Report funded by the SHPO. I also continue to draw inspiration from *Reimagining Historic House Museums: New Approaches and Proven Solutions* by Max van Balgooy and Kenneth Turino, which has deeply informed Brookside's direction.

However, my current visioning is a departure from the vision Brookside had for itself when I first arrived at Brookside. This is why I want to ensure that everyone with a stake in the future of Brookside has the opportunity to shape the vision for the future. Which is why I hope you will take the time to share your ideas and your resources with me.

If you have any questions about this report or would like to discuss any of these ideas further, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. I welcome your feedback, suggestions, and guidance as we continue shaping the future of Brookside together.

Contact: [brooksidefarmmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:brooksidefarmmuseum@gmail.com) | 860-333-8793 | (cell) 646-281-1989