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Water & Sewer Commission  
September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025,  
Regular Meeting Minutes

*Carol M. Blum*  
TOWN CLERK

2025 OCT -6 A 9:10

FILED OCT 6 2025

# Minutes of East Lyme Water and Sewer Commission Regular Meeting - 09/23/25

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**Date and time:** 09/23/25 7:59 PM to: 09/23/25 8:54 PM

**Present:** Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary, Commission Members:, Carol Russell, Dan Cunningham, Chairman, David J. Murphy, David R. Zoller, Roger L. Spencer, David B. Bond, Michelle Royce Williams, Lindsay Bollenbach, Absent:, Ken Roberts

**CC:** Joe Blanchard, Utility Engineer, Ben North, Chief Operating Officer, Attorney Timothy Bleasdale

**Location:** East Lyme Town Hall, Upper Conf. Room, 108 Pennsylvania Ave., Niantic, CT, 06357

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## Topics

### 1. Call to Order

**Note** Chairman Cunningham called the September 23rd, 2025, Regular Meeting of the East Lyme Water & Sewer Commission to order at 7:59 p.m., following the conclusion of the Public Hearing.

**Note** It was noted that the Pledge of Allegiance was observed prior to the onset of the Public Hearing.

### 2. Approval of Minutes

#### 2-1. Public Hearing Minutes of August 26th, 2025

**Note** see attachment.

 [Minutes of East Lyme Water and Sewer Commission Public Hearing 08 26 25.pdf](#)

**Decision** MOTION (1)

Mr. Bond moved to approve the Public Hearing Meeting Minutes of August 25th, 2025, as submitted.

Mr. Murphy seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-2.

Ms. Royce Williams and Ms. Bollenbach abstained from the vote due to their absence from the August 25th, 2025, Public Hearing Meeting.

#### 2-2. Regular Meeting Minutes of August 26th, 2025

**Note** see attachment.

 [Minutes of East Lyme Water and Sewer Commission Regular Meeting 08 26 25.pdf](#)

**Decision** MOTION (2)

Mr. Murphy moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of August 26th, 2025, as submitted.

Mr. Bond seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 6-0-2.

Ms. Royce Williams and Ms. Bollenbach abstained from the vote due to their absence from the August 25th, 2025, Regular Meeting.

### 3. Delegations

**Note** There were none.

## 4. Correspondence Log

**Note** see attachment.

 [Correspondence\\_Log.pdf](#)

**Note** Mr. Cunningham noted several pieces of correspondence:

1. September 6, 2025 – Letter from the Board of Selectmen to the Water & Sewer Commission regarding the Sewer Moratorium Ordinance.
2. September 16, 2025 – Correspondence from the Waterford Utility Commission, including their meeting minutes.
3. September 16, 2025 – Minutes from the New London W&WPCA.

## 5. Discussion & Possible Action on Sewer Capacity Allocation for Landmark LLC & Jarvis LLC Regarding a Development on Caulkins Road

**Decision** MOTION (3)

Mr. Spencer moved to table this discussion until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Ms. Royce Williams seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 8-0-0.

## 6. Discussion & Possible Action on Sewer Capacity Allocation for Dan Trakas et al Regarding a Development on Pennsylvania Avenue

**Decision** MOTION (4)

Mr. Spencer moved to table this discussion until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Mr. Murphy seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 8-0-0.

## 7. Discussion & Possible Action Regarding a Request to Relocate the Sewer Shed Line for Parkers Place LLC

**Note** see attachment.

 [Parker's\\_Place\\_attachments.pdf](#)

**Note** see attachment.

 [Mulholland\\_Letter.pdf](#)

**Note** Mr. Heller introduced himself again and stated he was representing Parker's Place, LLC, owner of approximately seven acres located on Park Place in Niantic.

**Note** Mr. Heller shared some of the following:

- \*The property is bisected by the sewer shed line, running north to south through the parcel.
- \*The eastern portion of the property lies within the sewer shed, while the western portion lies outside of it.
- \*This application was originally submitted along with a sewer capacity allocation request that had previously been denied.
- \*The denial resulted in a stipulated judgment entered in Superior Court, which now frames the basis for the current reconsideration or modification request before the Commission.

**Note** \*The original capacity allocation proposal envisioned 60 residential units, split between two 30-unit institutional-type buildings, all located within the designated sewer shed area.

\*During preliminary meetings with the Town's Land Use Department, it was recommended that the applicant consider relocating the sewer shed line to allow for a design more aesthetically pleasing and better integrated with surrounding development.

\*As a result, approximately a year and a half ago, the development team reformulated their project concept.

**Note** \*The new concept proposes townhouse-style buildings arranged in smaller clusters or pods with green space interspersed, offering improved stormwater management and a more community-oriented layout.

\*No increase in total sewer capacity or total number of housing units (still 60 units).

\*No additional strain on the sewer system beyond what was approved in the prior stipulated court judgment.

\*The requested change is limited to adjusting the sewer shed line.

**Note** \*The current line is based on old, inexact maps, not scientific data.

\*He believes it's poor planning to split a property with this line, and moving it would make planning more consistent, align better with Land Use rules, and improve the overall quality of the development.

\*This change would benefit the project and the community without stressing the sewer system.

**Note** The Commission briefly reviewed the map and sewer shed line with Mr. Heller.

**Note** Mr. Heller reiterated that when the original sewer shed lines were drawn, modern GIS (Geographic Information Systems) technology did not exist. Today's tools allow for more precise and logical boundary setting, which would better align with property lines and real-world geography.

**Note** Mr. North clarified that the Applicant is not seeking additional capacity, only relocation of the sewer shed line, and this isn't an attempt to backdoor new units, but rather a redesign prompted by the Zoning department to create a more cohesive layout.

**Note** Mr. Bond and Mr. Spencer said they're comfortable with moving the sewer shed line to the edge of the property so long as the unit count remains the same (60 units).

**Note** Ms. Bollenbach stated she's comfortable as long as the capacity remains the same.

**Note** Ms. Royce Williams noted she has mixed feelings:

\*She's concerned about setting precedent for future developers to request moving the sewer shed line.

\*She acknowledged that bisecting lots with arbitrary sewer shed lines isn't ideal.

\*She recalls earlier assurances that the project could function within existing capacity.

\*She's still undecided but weighing both fairness and prudence.

**Note** Ms. Russell warned of the need for caution in future cases to avoid opening the door to larger developments requesting sewer shed expansions after initial approvals. She thinks we need clearer rules and official standards going forward.

**Note** Mr. Heller reiterated:

\*The request originated from the town's Zoning Department, not the Developer.

\*The Developer would have been content with the prior two-building design.

\*The change looks better and improves the site design, but it won't change how much wastewater is produced.

**Note** Mr. Cunningham asked Attorney Heller to display the two maps for comparison.

**Note** Mr. Heller reiterated that the project changed from two large buildings to 60 townhouses with greenspace. Both plans require the same sewer capacity. He showed the current sewer line location and where they propose to move it to follow the property line.

**Note** The Commission further reviewed the maps and sewer shed line.

**Note** Some Commissioners feared setting a precedent, while others felt the planning records clearly supported the change. They generally agreed that the Commission needs to update its policy for redrawing sewer boundaries using modern GIS data.

**Note** Tim Bleasdale, Town Attorney, had some of the following remarks:

\*The request fits with the court decision (stipulated judgment) from the town's previous case with the applicant.

\*While the Commission can still approve or deny, there is strong legal support for approval.

\*The Zoning Department provided a logical reason to move the line.

\*The key point is the change only moves the boundary for better planning and doesn't affect the sewer system's capacity.

\*They must still meet all project deadlines to keep their sewer allocation approval.

**Note** Mr. North said he will ensure the full version of the letter and map are entered into the public record.

**Note** Mr. Cunningham asked if approval should be conditional upon zoning approval or construction progress.

**Note** Mr. Heller stated that the town can't impose conditions that rely on decisions made by other agencies because those things are out of the Applicant's control. However, the Applicant agrees to a condition ensuring that the total sewer capacity and the number of housing units won't increase beyond what's currently approved.

**Note** Mr. North confirmed that the line adjustment affects only Parker's Place parcel.

**Note** Mr. Cunningham expressed support for the townhouse plan's design and efficiency but emphasized the need for future policy to prevent arbitrary sewer shed moves.

**Note** Mr. North suggested that the Commission should create a standardized two-step review process:

1. Determine sewer capacity first.
2. Evaluate layout or boundary adjustments second, ensuring zoning and capacity align.

**Note** Mr. Bleasdale reinforced that the Commission's authority covers capacity management, not land-use aesthetics. He reassured that this project's capacity remains unchanged.

**Note** Ms. Russell raised a what if scenario, if the project fails post-approval, would the sewer shed line would remain permanently expanded?

**Note** Mr. Cunningham acknowledged the concern but noted the Developer's good record and that the stipulated judgment includes expiration clauses tied to project timing. He supports moving the line, emphasizing that it doesn't affect capacity and that the Commission must stay in its lane of resource allocation, not zoning.

**Decision** MOTION (5)

Mr. Murphy said the following:

1. The present request to relocate the sewer shed boundary is sought in order to accommodate certain design changes to the proposed development that have been recommended by the East Lyme Zoning Department.

2. The Stipulated Judgment entered in the case captioned Parkers Place, LLC v. East Lyme Water & Sewer Commission, HHD-CV-24-6197671-S, provided that the applicant could request this boundary relocation in order to accommodate design change recommendations from the East Lyme Zoning Department and that the relocation of the boundary, if granted, would not entitle the applicant to an additional wastewater treatment capacity allocation.

3. Although the relocation of the sewer shed boundary line as sought by the applicant will result in a de minimis extension of sewer service into a new area, such extension will not result in additional consumption of treatment capacity or otherwise increase the service burden and cost on the East Lyme Sewerage System. And further to approve the request of the applicant to relocate the sewer shed line as proposed by the applicant for its property located in the East Lyme Tax Assessors Map 11.1 Lot 11.

Mr. Murphy moved to approve the request of Parker's Place, LLC to relocate the sewer shed boundary line as proposed, to accommodate design changes recommended by the East Lyme Zoning Department, consistent with the stipulated judgment (HHD-CV-24-6197671-S).

The relocation does not increase capacity or number of units and will not result in additional sewer service consumption or costs.

Mr. Bond seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 5-2-0.

Yay- Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Bond, Mr. Murphy, Ms. Russell, Ms. Bollenbach, Mr. Zoller.

Nay- Ms. Royce Williams and Mr. Spencer.

**Note** Mr. Bond left the meeting at 8:42 p.m.

## **8. Discussion & Possible Action Regarding the Purchase of Manhole Assemblies from the Sewer Assessment Fund**

**Note** see attachment.

 [Manhole\\_frames.pdf](#)

**Note** Staff explained that during a recent Hazard Mitigation meeting, the town identified areas where saltwater and storm inflow were entering the sewer system — particularly along Atlantic Avenue near McCook's Beach.

**Note** The plan is to install new sealing manhole covers equipped with cam-lock mechanisms that tightly secure the lid and prevent infiltration of saltwater, sand, and debris. These covers are designed for flood-prone coastal zones to reduce system stress during storms. The cam locks fasten at each corner, fully sealing the manhole structure and preventing surface runoff from entering the sewer line.

**Note** Mr. North noted the following:

\*They plan to purchase 20 total frames and covers.

\*8 will be the new sealing type, which cost about three times more than standard covers, the rest will be traditional models.

This is a pilot test to assess long-term performance.

\*This pilot project will help identify other high-risk inflow and infiltration (I&I) zones for future upgrades.

**Note** Mr. Bragaw shared that Public Works will coordinate with the Town Highway Department as well as Water & Sewer next year, to repave and perform work in areas like Attawan Heights and Crescent Beach. These are manhole-intensive areas that require realignment and replacement.

**Note** Mr. Bragaw mentioned that crews were already working on-site earlier that day and are repairing covers using the new manhole cutter equipment. This work is part of a priority sewer maintenance area for the upcoming year.

**Note** Mr. Cunningham observed that sealed manhole covers are critical to protect pumps and system components from saltwater intrusion, which can corrode and destroy mechanical parts.

**Note** Mr. Bragaw and Mr. North added the following:

\*East Lyme's manhole covers are unusually large, which increases wear when vehicles drive over them.

\*Large diameter lids create greater "moment" (mechanical leverage), causing faster deterioration on busy state roads.

\*Replacing this in-house will save significant costs — about \$5,000 per manhole if contracted out (excluding traffic control and materials).

Being able to do this in-house is a bit unique to East Lyme.

\*Performing this work internally saves both time and taxpayer money.

**Note** The Commission commended Staff on their proactive maintenance.

#### **Decision** MOTION (6)

Mr. Murphy moved to approve an expenditure of up to \$22,862.28 for manhole replacements, the funds will come from the Sewer Assessment Fund, with a new internal account titled "Manhole Purchase – September 2025" created to track expenses for 20 new manhole frames and covers.

Mr. Spencer seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 7-0-0.

## **9. Billing Adjustments/Disputes**

**Note** There were none.

## **10. Approval of Bills**

**Note** There were none.

## **11. Finance Director Report**

**Note** Mr. Cunningham explained that the Member Packet includes revenue and expenditure summaries, noting that finances are generally on track, though audits remain pending. He added that the audit process is progressing under an aggressive timeline.

**Note** see attachment.

 [Finance\\_Report.pdf](#)

## **12. Project Updates**

**Note** This item was tabled until next month.

## **13. Chairman's Report**

**Note** Mr. Cunningham stated he has no formal Chairman's report, as the meeting topics have been covered thoroughly.

## 14. Staff Updates

### 14-1. Water Department Monthly Report

**Note** see attachment.

 [Water Department Report.pdf](#)

**Note** Mr. North shared that water and sewer usage trends are typical for this time of year, though water usage remains elevated due to below-average rainfall (only 2 inches vs. 4-inch monthly norm). Several wells remain offline, but the system is stable and meeting demand.

**Note** Mr. North added that the Department is preparing for first billing cycle using the new software system. He mentioned ongoing technical issues with batch billing—currently unable to generate all 7,000 bills in one batch. They can print individual bills, but integration bugs prevent batch exports to the printing vendor.

**Note** Mr. Blanchard said that even delinquent bills (about 200 sent last month) had to be printed one by one. They've kept residents informed through social media posts, emphasizing this is a temporary technical issue, not a lack of billing effort. Mr. North confirmed residents will be notified once the system is fully live (expected by November 1st).

### 14-2. Sewer Department Monthly Report

**Note** see attachment.

 [Sewer Department Report.pdf](#)

## 15. Future Agenda Items

### 15-1. Sewer Capacity Subcommittee

**Note** Mr. North noted that Mr. Blanchard has been working hard on digitizing the caveat (connection restriction) list and the integration of the GIS system to identify parcels not yet connected to the sewer network.

**Note** Mr. North said once that data compilation is complete (in the next couple of months), the Subcommittee will meet to review and recommend policy adjustments.

**Note** Mr. Cunningham said the digitization project will help track outstanding connections and prioritize enforcement or follow-up under the sewer connection ordinance.

### 15-2. Capital Projects Subcommittee

**Note** Nothing to report at this time.

## 16. Adjournment

**Decision** MOTION (7)

Mr. Murphy moved to adjourn the September 23rd, 2025, Regular Meeting of the Water & Sewer Commission at 8:54 p.m.

Mr. Spencer seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 7-0-0.

Note Respectfully Submitted,  
Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary