

Minutes of the East Lyme Zoning Commission October 2, 2025, Regular Meeting

Date and Time: 10/2/2025 7:30PM to 9:15PM

Present: Members: Secretary, Nancy Kalal, Norman Peck, Michael Foley, Debbie Jett-Harris, Denise Markovitz. Alternates: Jim Liska, Cathy Yuhas . Staff: William Mulholland. Ex-Officio: Roseanne Hardy. Recording Secretary: Jessica Laroco

Absent: Member: Chairman, Anne Thurlow. Alternate: Sarah Susco.

Location: East Lyme Town Hall Upper Conf Room 108 Pennsylvania Avenue

1. Call to Order and Pledge

-Acting Chairman Nancy Kalal called the October 2, 2025, Regular Meeting of the East Lyme Zoning Commission to order at 7:30PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Attendance

-Ms. Kalal called the roll and noted Chairman Anne Thurlow and Alternate Sarah Susco were absent. Ms. Kalal sat Alternate Jim Liska.

3. Public Hearing

a. The East Lyme Zoning Commission proposal to amend Section 1 by adding the definition of Short-Term Rentals to the East Zoning Regulations.

MOTION 1

-Mr. Foley moved to open and continue with no discussion as the Chair was not present.
-Ms. Markovitz seconded the motion.
-Motion passed unanimously, 6-0-0.

b. Application of Jerry Lokken, for East Lyme Parks & Recreation for Special Permit under Section 20.1-F of the East Lyme Zoning Regulations, for property located at 16 Mostowy Rd, East Lyme, Assessor Map 40.0 Lot 5.

-Ms. Markovitz read a memo from the Zoning Official to the Zoning Commission (Exhibit 6).

-Ms. Kalal invited Mr. Lokken, Park & Rec Director, on behalf of the Dog Park Subcommittee, the Parks & Rec Commission and the Darrow Pond Master Plan Committee to speak and he invited Donna Palumbo, 133 Black Point Rd, Chair of the Subcommittee to make the following comments:

-Dog Parks are common in many communities, this project has been in the works for over a decade. Reviewed Operations, Best Practices, evaluated Town owned locations, raised awareness, surveyed residents, raised funds, held regular meetings, including posting minutes and agendas. Good things about dog parks include improving dog socialization, better bonding, exercise, freedom, the community becoming active.

-Jerry Lokken made the following comments: fenced in area where dogs can be off leash. They chose Darrow Pond because of the existing parking spaces and only needing to increase that to 10 spaces, hiking trails there, public already uses it and could be utilized more. The increased positive uses will decrease the negative uses such as ATVs on trails. Noise was considered and it is noted that the closest house is 300 feet away, with a lot of vegetation in between. Traffic was considered

and deemed it wouldn't be too impactful as the usage would be spread out over the day not concentrated during 1 particular time of day. As the Darrows Pond Master Plan becomes more implemented perhaps the Town would consider widening the road. There is concern about aggressive dogs or diseases and the Best Practices and rules would be implemented and posted to try and avoid problems. There will also be minimum age for dogs to attend as they cannot get vaccines prior to a certain age. There would be a separate section for big dogs and for small dogs.

-The following is Q&A between the Commission and Mr. Lokken:

-Mulholland: What are hours of operation? Would there be cameras? Would there be staff onsite? How is the waste handled?

-Lokken: Hours would be sunrise to sunset. No Cameras at first but if the need arose, they could be installed. The park would not be staffed. The maintenance crew would come to cut grass, empty trash etc. but not to staff the park. There would be "Mutt Mitts" available and people would be responsible to clean up after their dog and throw into the trash which would be emptied by Parks & Rec (P&R) staff regularly.

-Kalal: Reminder that it is responsibility of the Commission to think about the health and welfare of all residents. Why was the right side of the driveway, which is not level, chosen as this slope is at the bottom of the pond which feeds into Latimer Brook and into Long Island Sound. How will you stop any fecal problems from going into Darrows Pond since 1 gram of feces contain 23 million coliform bacteria? How can you count on feces being policed if there isn't staff on site? Will the picnic table currently there stay?

-Lokken: The dog park would be over 300 feet from the water source. The area would be confined by fences, and any feces would be policed. He is available by phone at any time, and he would be notified and would have it taken care of. Any pet owner would be contacted in the event of aggressive dogs or persistent feces left. The owner would be asked to comply with the rules. Most dog owners will be responsible users. The picnic table will stay but whether it will be in or out of the fence hasn't been determined yet. A group of Girl Scouts are constructing agility equipment. The right side of the driveway was chosen because of the noted presence of eastern cottontail on the left side in an environmentally sensitive area and the right side is already mowed and maintained.

-Markovitz: Will there be signage to include P&R contact information?

-Lokken: There is a list of suggested rules in Exhibit 2 but these rules could be amended

-Jett-Harris: Are nonresidents allowed to use the park? Will 10 parking spaces be enough? Have you done a study on the traffic as it is frequently a full lot? Is there a plan to do any spraying? Have you spoken to any veterinarians about their opinion on a dog park? Who will be in charge of making sure dogs are vaccinated?

-Lokken: The park is open to nonresidents just like any other park in town. The usage now plus the dog park should be fine with regard to parking. There are many other towns with dog parks and East Lyme's would be one of many. Lokken was unsure what type of spraying Ms. Jett-Harris was asking about but a dog park would be pretty low maintenance and the area inside the fence where the grass likely wouldn't thrive anyway. They did not survey local veterinarians. Best Practices would be to make sure the dog is vaccinated when it goes to a dog park. The Town Clerk handles

dog licensing and people could look to see if there was a dog without a tag they could ask the owner about vaccinations. People are going to have to be responsible for themselves just as they are in other life situations.

-Jett-Harris: Are there any shade trees there? Will staff be going up daily to ensure feces inside and outside the fence will be picked up?

-Lokken: There are pitch pines, and a legacy oak. There could be a shade structure at some point. Staff will go up daily just like the other town park.

-Kalal: Will you tear out the current parking lot to put more spaces in? Who will lock and unlock the fence? How did you decide on 6 feet for fence? This will not keep a deer out. Would water bowls be provided?

-Lokken: The engineer was talking about putting in a pavement cut and putting in additional spaces. There will be no lock, just posted hours of operation. If it was found that a lock needed to be added that could happen. If a deer got in it would have to get itself out. There isn't city water or a well nearby so owners would need to bring their own water.

-Mulholland: Would dogs be on leashes?

-Lokken: The ordinance is written that you need to be in control of your dog so that could be open to interpretation, but generally speaking, dogs would be on leashes to get out of the car and then go to the outer fence area which would be like a sally port. Then you could unleash your dog and let them into the park, off leash.

-Peck: Did you consider any other locations? Was McCook's Point considered, as many dog parks are located in denser areas.

-Lokken: Vets Field, Roxbury Rd & Romagna Dr, Roxbury Rd & Roxbury Ct. McCook's was not considered as the area is too heavily used for other things and taking away an acre for a dog park wouldn't make sense.

-Liska: In traveling overseas, he noticed dogs are everywhere, he wondered if more and more stores in East Lyme were allowing dogs in.

-Lokken: had no data on that.

-Ms. Kalal asked for public comment, for, against and neutral to the project.

Against:

-Laurie Zrenda, 40 Mostoway Rd, spoke of noise, traffic concerns, loss of property value, lack of police presence in the park currently, noting a busy area would be more suited to this activity.

-Harald Henning, 22 Darrows Ridge Rd, noted the impending noise as the noise carries across the pond and the proposed dog park changing the area.

-Anne Hosking, 6 Greentree Dr, stated that she feels dog owners are often not in control of their animals, and worried about the dog waste not being cleaned up properly. The eroded grass from the usage could lead to water contamination.

-Jeffrey Law, 10 Mostoway Rd. is concerned with property value decrease, the noise increase, the lack of police presence in the park, illegal ATVs on the trails, the dangerous curve on Mostoway Rd,

and the wildlife currently living in the area, such as bears and deer. If the trash isn't picked up, the potential for more bear activity is increased.

-Marliyn Burrige, 42 Mostowy Rd, stated concerns regarding traffic, wildlife, and noise.

-Roger Mendes, 28 Mostowy Rd, noted the potential for contaminated & pooled water from fecal matter draining into Darrows Pond and Latimer Brook, the risk of parasites from infected dogs. He submitted 2 articles, Exhibits 4 & 5, regarding parasites and dog parks and gastrointestinal issues.

-Matthew Walsh, 43 Mostowy Rd, noted concerns with traffic as his school aged daughter could not get on the bus on Mostowy Rd because the road is deemed unsafe for buses. He noted the Darrows Pond Plan goes against the rabbits and wildlife there. He also reported hearing fireworks in the park at night and there was not a good police presence. He stated that if the dog park were not built there, no one would be harmed, but if it was, the neighbors would be harmed.

Neutral

-Ira Sitko, 20 Darrows Ridge Rd, noted concerns for traffic and noise and maintenance of the dog park. He wondered about the signage, the waste and how often it, and the trash, would be removed.

For

-Deborah Stewart-VanOrden 21 Hillwood Dr, stated that people who bought next to a publicly owned property could not expect it to remain secluded forever, she has confidence that dog owners would be respectful and responsible about vaccinations and waste cleanup. She told a story about a responsible dog owner and stated that she had never been to a dog park that was full of feces.

-Laura Schultz, 79 Dean Rd, wondered what a previous traffic study stated. She noted that she lives in a busy neighborhood and people get used to noises around them, this would be no different.

-Danielle Holsapple, 22 Old Black Point Rd, did not want the Commission to hold the inappropriate actions at the park against the current proposal.

-Mr. Liska asked about road safety.

-Mr. Lokken noted that it was just a few spaces and they did not anticipate a huge increase in traffic. Once the Town implements the Darrow Pond Master Plan and the activities increase at the location, the town will have to consider the nature of the road.

MOTION 2

Ms. Jett-Harris moved to close the Public Hearing.

Mr. Foley seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously, 6-0-0.0

Regular Meeting

a. The East Lyme Zoning Commission proposal to amend Section 1 by adding the definition of Short-Term Rentals to the East Zoning Regulations.

-This item was continued.

b. Application of Jerry Lokken, for East Lyme Parks & Recreation for Special Permit under Section 20.1-F of the East Lyme Zoning Regulations, for property located at 16 Mostowy Rd, East Lyme, Assessor Map 40.0 Lot 5.

-Ms. Markovitz stated she would like to continue the decision to be able to read the submitted exhibits.

-Mr. Foley noted that while health and safety are a concern, the zoning implication of property value loss and the fact that if the park were not built in this location, no one would be harmed. However, if the park were built in the location, then residents would be harmed was important to consider. He also thought that this park should be built somewhere more of an industrial or commercial area as opposed to a quiet woodland.

-Mr. Liska stated that although it is a quiet area and is currently not heavily trafficked, the Darrow Pond Plan is for it to become more used. Something will go there, and they have to weigh if a dog park is better or worse than anything else. His main concern is the description of the road, and he was leery of the plan to be to build the park and then enhance the road as opposed to the other way around.

-Ms. Kalal is concerned about the road and water runoff, including animal feces and worries about anything that will impact the waters that affect the health and safety of the East Lyme residents.

MOTION 3

-Ms. Jett-Harris moved to deny the application of Jerry Lokken, for East Lyme Parks & Recreation for Special Permit under Section 20.1-F of the East Lyme Zoning Regulations, for property located at 16 Mostowy Rd, East Lyme, Assessor Map 40.0 Lot 5 for the reasons of environmental concerns, a lack of police presence in the area, the potential for noise, and the adverse impacts to local neighbors and wildlife.

-Ms. Kalal seconded the motion.

-Motion passed unanimously, 6-0-0.

-The legal notice to be published October 9, 2025.

c. Application of Mel Wiese for Coastal Area Management (CAM) Review for demolition of existing single-family dwelling and construction of new single-family dwelling for property located at 59 Quarry Dock Rd, Niantic, Assessor Map 22.1 Lot 12.

-Mr. Wiese has been a long time and active resident in town who has worked on many projects in tow. He described the poor condition of the subject property. He described the application and the controls he would use to protect the area. The property septic will be brought up to standards. The new house will be further back from the shoreline.

MOTION 4

-Mr. Liska moved to approve the Application of Mel Wiese for Coastal Area Management (CAM) Review for demolition of existing single-family dwelling and construction of new single-family dwelling for property located at 59 Quarry Dock Rd, Niantic, Assessor Map 22.1 Lot 12, noting the Application is consistent with all applicable goals and conditions of the CAM Act and the Applicant has taken all reasonable measures to mitigate any adverse impacts of the proposed activity to both coastal resources and future water dependent uses.

-Ms. Markovitz seconded the motion.

-Motion passed unanimously, 6-0-0.

d. Approval of 2026 Regular Meeting dates

MOTION 5

-Ms. Markovitz moved to approve the 2026 Regular Meeting date schedule as presented.

-Ms. Jett-Harris seconded the motion.

-Motion passed unanimously, 6-0-0.

4. Disposition of Minutes

Approval of Minutes of September 18, 2025, Regular Meeting

MOTION 6

-Ms. Jett-Harris moved to approve the Minutes of the September 18, 2025, Regular Meeting of the East Lyme Zoning Commission, as presented.

-Ms. Markovitz seconded the motion.

-Mr. Liska abstained from the vote.

-Motion passed 5-0-1.

5. Old Business

6. Subcommittee Reports

7. New Business

a. Any business on the floor, if any, by majority vote of the Commission-There was none

b. Correspondence-There was none.

8. **Public Delegations** -There was none.

9. **Zoning Official**-There was none.

10. Comments from Ex-Officio

-Ms. Hardy will be speaking with the Chief of Police regarding the comments made about the activity at Darrow Pond.

-Mr. Cunningham is working with the Town Attorney on the Moratorium application.

11. Zoning Board Liaison to the Planning Commission

- a. October 14, 2025- Kalal- will attend
 - b. November 10, 2025- Liska- will attend
 - c. December 9, 2025-Markovitz- will attend
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12. Comments from the Chairman

13. Adjournment

MOTION 7

- Ms. Jett-Harris moved to adjourn the October 2, 2025, Regular Meeting of the East Lyme Zoning Commission at 9:15PM.
- Ms. Markovitz seconded the motion.
- Motion passed unanimously, 6-0-0.0

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Laroco,
Recording Secretary

