

EAST LYME COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 12, 2025

Present: Don Danila
Penny Heller
Mark Christensen
Harvey Beeman
Laura Ashburn
Steve Dinsmore, Alternate

Absent: Marjorie Meekhoff, Alternate

Also Present: Rose Ann Hardy, Ex officio

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
EAST LYME, CT
2025 NOV 19 P 12:58
TOWN CLERK

I. CALL TO ORDER. Ms. Heller, Chair, called the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources meeting of November 12, 2025 to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. SEATING ALTERNATES (IF NECESSARY). Having no absences, there was no need to seat an alternate.

III. CALL FOR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA. Ms. Heller noted the need to add under VI. New Business as item c Comments on the Proposed Cedarbrook / Catbird Lane Resubdivision Requested by the Planning Commission and under VII. Old Business item d Memo to Parks and Recreation Regarding Vehicle Damage to Sand Dunes.

MOTION (1): Ms. Ashburn moved to approve the additions to the November 12 Agenda of the Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources. Seconded by Mr. Danila (5-0). Unanimous.

IV. CALL FOR PUBLIC DELEGATIONS. There were no public delegations.

V. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF OCTOBER 8, 2025 MEETING. The following corrections were noted: On page 2, VII. b., the third sentence: "work" should be changed to "assist" and on page 3, item VIII. c., in the second sentence: "42" should be "40".

MOTION (2): Mr. Danila moved to approve the October 8, 2025 Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Minutes, as amended. Seconded by Ms. Ashburn. (3-0-2). Ms. Heller and Mr. Christensen abstained.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **2026 Meeting Schedule.** The 2026 Meeting Schedule was reviewed and approved (attached). Mr. Danila will send a copy to the Town Clerks office.

MOTION (3): Mr. Beeman moved to approve the 2026 meeting schedule for the Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources. Seconded by Ms. Ashburn. (5-0). Unanimous.

- b. **Brief Report on the November 3 Hole-in-the-Wall Workshop.** Mr. Danila mentioned that this workshop, which was sponsored by the Niantic River Watershed Committee, was deemed to be very successful. Held in Niantic, the meeting was attended by 38 people from local town staff, including East Lyme, Waterford, Montville, and Groton, organizations such as The Nature Conservancy (TNC), National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), Pollinator Pathways East Lyme (Ms. Meekhoff of this Commission), and our Chair, Ms. Heller. Presentations were given by UConn CLEAR on methods to handle stormwater and the TNC on identifying and controlling invasive plant species. Attendees walked around Niantic village streets and the Hole-in-the-Wall demonstration project observing the installed stormwater infrastructure, including the variety of permeable pavers at the latter, Mr. Jerry Lokken of East Lyme Parks and Recreation was very helpful in these demonstrations
- c. **Comments on the Proposed Cedarbrook / Catbird Lane Resubdivision Requested by the Planning Commission.** Ms. Heller and Mr. Christensen explained this proposed housing development project and how it is related to the use or misuse of open space and the concept of a cluster subdivision. Considerable discussion by commission members ensued. As our comments about this issue are due to the Planning Commission by December 9 (see the attached letter), a Special Meeting of this commission is warranted. Mr. Danila will provide a notice and agenda to the Town Clerks office.

MOTION (4): Mr. Danila moved to hold a Special Meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources to provide comments to the Planning Commission. Seconded by Ms. Ashburn. (5-0). Unanimous.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **Saving an Iconic Town Tree from Potential Damage due to Beech Leaf Disease.** Mr. Christensen reported that even before Mr. Decker notified this Commission about this tree under Public Delegations at our September 10 meeting, town personnel were aware of the issue. Treatment of this tree by a tree service company had begun under the direction of Parks and Recreation Department.
- b. **Maintenance of the ELHS Rain Garden.** Ms. Ashburn reported no further action has taken place since our last meeting. She still needs to meet with Mr. Lund, ELHS Facilities Head, to see what can be done. Again, Ms. Meekhoff will assist on plantings and help determine future planting plans.
- c. **2025 RBV Sampling.** Mr. Danila reported that after much consideration, he and the East Lyme RBV team, which besides him includes Ms. Heller and her husband,

decided to forgo RBV sampling this year and in the future. Personal schedules and variable rainfall and, therefore, stream flow volumes make RBV sample scheduling very difficult. Also, Mr. Danila found that a large tree and several smaller ones had fallen into Latimer Brook behind the IGA Plaza, which is one of the stations being sampled. The treefall not only covered a portion of the sampling space, but also appeared to partially dam up the brook, thereby increasing depth upstream. Further, Ms. Heller noted that the flow in Cranberry Meadow Brook remains low, which makes this site, which has few riffles, difficult to sample. Mr. Danila will continue to assist Ms. Ashburn, who takes her ELHS students to the Latimer Brook site for sampling. It is hoped that Ms. Ashley Hamilton and her colleagues at the NERR will pick up the RBV sampling responsibility in subsequent years.

- d. **Memo to Parks and Recreation Regarding Vehicle Damage to Sand Dunes.** A draft memo about this issue to Mr. Lokken of East Lyme Parks and Recreation was prepared by Mr. Danila and presented to the commission for review and approval. One additional sentence was suggested. A copy of the memo is attached to these minutes.

MOTION (5): **Mr. Beeman moved to approve the Memo to Jerry Lokken, Director of Parks and Recreation. Seconded by Ms. Ashburn. (5-0). Unanimous.**

VIII.REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

- a. **Communications.** There were none reported.
- b. **Agribusiness Subcommittee.** Mr. Christensen reported that the October 18 "End of Harvest" festival held at the Samuel Smith Farmstead was very successful. Attended by approximately 240 people, it was the largest of the year. The Farmstead received over \$500 in donations. He noted that the annual "Potluck for Preservationists" get-together will again be held this coming January, with a date yet to be determined.
- b. **SustainableCT Subcommittee.** Mr. Beeman reported that progress continues to be made on the Energy Portfolio Manager database. During the past month, 14 of the previously reported 20 input discrepancies have been resolved. The 6 remaining discrepancies impact the High School (1), the Middle School (2), Community Center (2), and the Public Safety Building (1). He will continue to work with Eversource to resolve these issues. In addition, a preliminary report to support SustainableCT Objective 7.1 has been generated using this database.
- d. **Pollinator Pathways East Lyme.** Ms. Meekhoff was absent, so there was no report.
- e. **Chairman's Report.** Ms. Heller spoke with Alex Klose concerning progress on plans for the East Pattagansett sidewalk. He reported that final plans have been submitted to CT DOT for comment. He is confident that work should begin in the spring. CT

DOT is also developing a "Bike Safety Plan Template" for municipal use, which should be available online soon.

- f. **Ex-officio Report.** Ms. Hardy reported on the recent Zoning Commission review of agricultural and farm property. Specifically, further regulation on chickens held by residents in residential areas did not go forward, although roosters remain not permitted.

The proposal for a Dog Park at the Darrow Pond property did not receive approval by Zoning. This meeting had considerable attendance and opposition by residents of the surrounding area. The consensus was that this proposal was not consistent with the intended purposes for this property.

The Crescent Beach temporary stonework has worked well, including during recent storms. However, a more permanent structure will likely be needed.

An application by Parkers Place LLC has been put forth for a zoning change for multifamily affordable housing on the west side of Park Place in Niantic. However, no details about this development have yet been provided. This proposal may require a CAM review. Commission members expressed some reservations over the extent of this proposed development within this neighborhood.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION (6): Mr. Danila moved to adjourn the November 12, 2025 East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Meeting at 8:29 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Christensen. (5-0). Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald Danila, Commission Secretary

TOWN OF EAST LYME
COMMISSION for the CONSERVATION of NATURAL RESOURCES

2026 Meeting Schedule

(7 PM on the second Wednesday of each month except where indicated)

East Lyme Town Hall Upper Conference Room 1

January 14, 2026

February 11, 2026

March 11, 2026

April 8, 2026

May 13, 2026

June 10, 2026

July 8, 2026

August 12, 2026

September 9, 2026

October 14, 2026

November 18, 2026*

December 9, 2026

*Moved to third Wednesday because of Veterans Day holiday on November 11

Town of

P.O. Drawer 519

Department of Planning &
Inland Wetlands

*Gary A. Goeschel II, Director of Planning /
Wetlands Enforcement Officer*



East Lyme

108 Pennsylvania Ave
Niantic, Connecticut 06357

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November 12, 2025

Penelope Howell-Heller, Chairwoman
East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources
Town of East Lyme
108 Pennsylvania Avenue
Niantic, CT 06357

RE: **Application of Kristen Clarke, P.E., Applicant; Hathaway Farm LLC, Owner;** for a Resubdivision of approximately 4.1 acres, and Waiver Request from Section 4-2-3(I) Stormwater Management Plan, of land located at Cedarbrook Lane & Catbird Lane, Tax Assessor's Map #36.0, Lot #31, East Lyme.

Chairwoman Howell-Heller:

The East Lyme Planning Commission, at its Special Meeting of November 10, 2025, voted to refer the above referenced application for your review and comment.

Comments must be received prior to December 9, 2025 for inclusion in the record during the Public Hearing. If you have any further questions regarding this application, please do not hesitate to contact the Director of Planning, Gary A. Goeschel II, at (860) 691-4105.

Sincerely,

Kirk Scott, Vice Chairman
Planning Commission

cc: William Mulholland, Zoning Official
File

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jerry Lokken, Director, East Lyme Parks and Recreation Department
FROM: East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources
DATE: November 13, 2025
RE: Protection of Niantic Bay Beach Sand Dunes

Mr. Greg Decker of Niantic recently brought to the attention of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources that wheeled vehicles have been traveling over the sand dunes located just off the boardwalk at Niantic Bay Beach. This damage to the dunes from vehicular traffic has also been observed by several Commission members. We understand that Mr. Decker also mentioned this to you directly. Nevertheless, our Commission members wish to convey our concerns about this issue as it is an environmental matter. As you may know, sand dunes serve many important functions, including protecting more inland areas such as residences, businesses, and infrastructure, and providing habitat for a distinct assemblage of plants and animals. Due to many factors, sand dunes are not commonly found along Connecticut's shoreline and should be protected. Also, the vegetation on these East Lyme sand dunes was planted at great expense and labor. We strongly urge that town staff be prohibited from driving vehicles on the sand dunes at this location or on any others that may exist in the town. We understand that the vehicles in use at Niantic Bay Beach might have some difficulty when operating on the flatter sandy beach areas seaward of the dunes. We suggest that your department invest in tires that are more appropriate for this type of surface, which would enable their use on the open beach rather than on the dunes. Should you need a special appropriation from the Board of Selectmen for this purchase, our Commission would wholeheartedly support your efforts in obtaining the funding. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Penny Heller, Chairman
Donald Danila, Secretary
Laura Ashburn
Harvey Beeman
Mark Christensen
Steve Dinsmore
Marjorie Meekhoff