

TOWN OF EAST LYME
COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION of NATURAL RESOURCES
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2026, 7:00 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 1

PRESENT

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

ABSENT

Marjorie Meekhoff, Alternate

ALSO PRESENT

Selectperson Rose Ann Hardy, Ex-Officio

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EAST LYME, CT
2026 JAN 21 A 11:45
TOWN CLERK

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Heller called the Wednesday, January 14, 2026, East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Regular Meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

II. Seating of Alternates (if necessary) – none

III. Call for Additions to the Agenda – none

IV. Call for Public Delegations

Chairperson Heller introduced and welcomed Meagan Moore to the meeting. Ms. Moore, a new resident of the Town, holds a Ph.D. in Atmospheric Chemistry and is interested in learning about the Town's environmental and sustainability efforts.

V. Review and Approval of December 10, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

MOTION (1): Motion made by Commissioner Beeman, seconded by Commissioner Ashburn, to approve the December 10, 2025 East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Regular Meeting Minutes, with the following amendments:

Page 2, Item VII(a), Old Business, Vehicle damage to dunes on beach by the Niantic Bay Boardwalk

Commissioner Beeman Danila provided highlights of ...

Page 3, Item VIII(c), Reports and Communications, SustainableCT Subcommittee:

Commissioner Dinsmore Beeman is continuing to correspond...

Discussion: None. Voice vote, 4-0-1. Voting in Favor: Commissioners Ashburn, Beeman, Danila, and Heller. Voting in Opposition: None. Abstention(s): Commissioner Christensen. Motion carried.

VI. New Business

a. Commission Reappointments

All the Commissioners, with the exception of Commissioner Meekhoff, who was not present, confirmed that they were officially reappointed and sworn in.

b. Plan for Conservation

Commissioner Dinsmore suggested drafting a Conservation Plan that includes the Town's environmentally sensitive areas and provides guidance as to the maintenance of these areas. Chairperson Heller proposed highlighting, designating, and prioritizing the Town's resources by color, outlining their characteristics, and stating the reasoning for their preservation, specifically highlighting the area around the Four-Mile River Aquifer. The Town's open space, zoning changes, easements, aquifers, and native plants should also be outlined on the map. The Planning Director will be contacted regarding the possibility of engaging the intern to draft the map(s) for the Commission.

The Commission's tasks, as outlined in the Town's (POCD) Plan of Conservation & Development, were reviewed and the Commission agreed to draft a list of its priorities and objectives to provide the Town with the necessary teeth to make decisions and assure, for example, that open space remains open space.

c. Town Open Space Issues

Discussion ensued regarding the development of properties that were previously designated as open space and the lack of communication between the Town Departments. Part of the issue lies in the Land Trust's acquisition and selling of open space and the importance of including a statement in the Deed deeming the property as open space. Selectperson Hardy stated that the existing map should be updated and referred to, as necessary. She also informed the Commissioners that the matter has been brought to the First Selectman's attention and the issue will be addressed with the Board of Selectmen. Integrating departments, remembering agreements, and maintaining open space should be a fundamental goal of the Town. Commissioner Christensen proposed the Commission draft a letter stating that open spaces created through the subdivision of a property should be signed over to the Town. The Commission agreed to draft a list of priorities upon which a Plan of Conservation will be based.

VII. Old Business**a. 2026 Budget**

Chairperson Heller reported on the Commission's proposed FY2026/27 Budget request. The Town Planner has requested the addition of \$1,000.00 to the Budget for Trail Maintenance and reduced \$50.00 from the Commission's line item for Speakers.

VIII. Reports and Communications**a. Communications**

- 1) A letter inviting the Commission to join the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) as an affiliate member.
- 2) Agribusiness Subcommittee
Commissioner Christensen reported that a successful Annual Potluck Party for Preservationists, which included several short presentations on a variety of subjects, was held. Upcoming events include:
 - Black Bears, Saturday, January 17, 2:00 p.m., Senior Center
 - Groundwater Sustainability, UConn Geologist Dr. Gary Robbins, February 7, 2:00 p.m., Library
 - Groundwater Contaminants and Water, UConn Researcher Judy Preston, Saturday, March 7, 2:00 p.m., Senior Center
- 3) SustainableCT Subcommittee
Commissioner Beeman reported that the Energy Portfolio Manager, which includes energy data from Town-owned buildings and identifies their efficiency and necessary improvements, is progressing.
- 4) Pollinator Pathways East Lyme – *not present; no report*
- 5) Chairman's Report
Chairperson Heller expressed her gratitude for the invitation to the Annual Potluck Party, where she learned about the Town's many offerings. She is looking forward to working on the Conservation Plan, which should help improve their communication with the Town's departments, boards, and commissions.
- 6) Ex-Officio Report
Liaison Selectperson Hardy reported on the following items:
 - Oswegatchie Hills Housing Development – The negotiations are continuing. The Developer is anxious to construct the proposed housing units and has offered to sell the lower level to the Town as open space.
 - Proposed Cell Tower – The proposed cell tower continues to be in contention. The placement of a Cell Tower behind Smokey O'Grady's would require access through a

wet and soggy area. The possibility of adding to existing towers was deemed not feasible. The Siting Council will be meeting next week. Due to the expense and the short timeframe, the Town will not seek intervenor status. A group of individuals is being gathered to attend the Public Hearing.

Re-Appointments to Boards/Commissions – Approximately 58 candidates were re-appointed to boards and commissions during the recent Board of Selectmen Meeting. The next Board of Selectmen meeting will include the appointment of candidates, as recommended by the Town Committees, to boards and commissions to fill the vacant positions.

250 Committee – The Committee will be meeting on the fourth Thursday of each month. Striving for simplicity, they are tasking groups to host an activity(ies) and/or event(s) throughout the year. A master calendar of events will be created to help minimize conflicting events and activities. Commissioner Christensen proposed hosting a Guided Hike along Aunt Lou's Turnpike and participating in a parade with horses and the Governor's Footguard. Selectperson Hardy stated that the plans for a parade were abandoned due to the time necessary to obtain a state permit to close the road. Additionally, per state law, including animals in parades is prohibited for sanitary reasons. The possibility of including the celebration as part of the Memorial Day Parade or hosting it on a town road was raised. The Historic Cemetery Association will be forming a work group(s) and the Veterans will be contributing funds to clean and renovate gravestones.

IX. Adjournment

MOTION (2): Motion made by Commissioner Danila, seconded by Commissioner Ashburn, to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes T. Miyuki, Substitute Recording Secretary for the Town of East Lyme