

Water & Sewer
January 27th, 2026, Meeting Minutes

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
EAST LYME, CT

2026 FEB -2 A 9:14

Cynthia M. Marino
TOWN CLERK

Minutes of East Lyme Water and Sewer Commission Regular Meeting - 01/27/26

Date and time: 01/27/26 07:00 pm to: 01/27/26 08:02 pm

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

CC: Ben North, Chief Operating Officer, Ann Cicchiello, Deputy First Selectman, Joe Bragaw, Director of Public Works, Joe Blanchard, Utility Engineer

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

Topics

1. Call to Order

Note Chairman Cunningham called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance. A quorum of Commission Members was present.

2. Approval of Minutes

2-1. Public Hearing Minutes of December 16th, 2025

Note see attachment.

 [Minutes of East Lyme Water and Sewer Commission Public Hearing 12 16 25.pdf](#)

Decision MOTION (1)

Mr. Murphy moved to approve the Public Hearing Minutes of December 16th, 2025, as submitted.

Ms. Royce Williams seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 7-0-1.

Mr. Zamarka abstained from the vote since he was a Member during the December 16th, 2025, Public Hearing.

2-2. Regular Meeting Minutes of December 16th, 2025

Decision MOTION (2)

Mr. Bond moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 16th, 2025, as submitted.

Mr. Spencer seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 7-0-1.

Mr. Zamarka abstained from the vote since he was a Member during the December 16th, 2025, Public Hearing.

3. Delegations

Note There were none.

4. Discussion and Possible Action on Linebacker Service Protection Program

Note see attachment.

 [3500_001.pdf](#)

Note Ms. Royce Williams excused herself from the Meeting since she is an employee of CT Water.

Note Danelle Dillon, a Representative from CT Water detailed some of the following:

*They'd like to establish a municipal partnership with the town for their Linebacker" Service Protection Program.

*The program provides insurance-style coverage for service line repairs that typical homeowners' insurance often excludes.

*There are three tiers of plans covering water lines (from curb to shut-off), wastewater/sewer lines, and internal plumbing.

Note *Coverage is up to \$12,000 for water services and \$6,000 for wastewater.

*They employ 17 customer service reps and 24 licensed, vetted contractors.

*A \$75 call-out fee applies to service requests.

*The program has operated for 26 years with only 6 price increases in that timeframe.

Note *They're seeking a municipal partnership where the town endorses the program.

*Marketing materials would be co-branded- (East Lyme Water & Sewer and CT Water.

*The town would provide customer contact information to be uploaded via a secure SharePoint site for digital campaigns and mailers.

*The town would receive a \$10 payment for each customer who enrolls in the program.

Note Mr. Roberts expressed concern regarding the necessity of sharing customer data and Mr. North explained that it's all public information, which is all FOI-able.

Note Ms. Dillon also highlighted the following:

*CT Water handles all billing and risk; the town's primary role would be endorsement and data sharing.

*They to finalize their 2026 pricing within the next week.

*While customers can cancel at any time, CT Water typically looks for a five-year commitment from the municipality, which allows them to recoup the initial marketing costs.

*A formal license agreement is required to handle customer privacy and data security.

Note *There is zero cost to the Water and Sewer Commission. CT Water assumes all risk, repair expenses, and administrative responsibility.

*The town would still receive its turn-off/turn-on fees when a service is interrupted for repair, but CT Water waives these fees for the customers enrolled in the program.

*Coverage limits were last updated in 2015 (from \$10,000 to \$12,000).

*Most repairs stay well within these limits; only rare cases involving long service lines (e.g., 500+ feet) exceed them.

Note Ms. Russell raised concerns about the town endorsing a single vendor without seeing other options. She emphasized that residents would expect the Commission to have evaluated the market before giving an official stamp of approval.

Note Mr. North noted that while research began 18 months ago, they are open to reviewing other competitors if the Commission desires.

Note Mr. Bragaw pointed out that Linebacker is unique because it is run by a utility company rather than a traditional insurance company (like HomeServe/Aquarion), which enables them to often provide better customer service and technical knowledge.

Note Ms. Dillon noted that CT Water boasts a 93.5% satisfaction rate and handles all dispatching and contractor management. Mr. Bragaw and Mr. North observed that by providing a quick repair solution, the program helps reduce unaccounted-for water or leaks that residents might otherwise delay fixing due to lack of funds.

Note Ms. Dillon said she will email the License Agreement to Mr. North for the Commission's review.

Note The Commission discussed comparing other providers to make sure they are recommending the best possible option to the community before making a final decision.

Note Ms. Dillon clarified that this is not insurance, it is a service protection program. There are no claims or reimbursements. If a customer has a leak, they call CT Water directly, and the company dispatches a vetted contractor to fix it. If a resident hires their own plumber first, they cannot be paid back by the program.

Note Mr. Bond said he's a plumber and that a typical sewer snaking can cost \$650 just for the visit, while a full line repair can easily reach \$6,000+. Ms. Dillon explained that Linebacker's negotiated rates keep their average repair cost around \$3,500.

Note Mr. Bond detailed how he's been suggesting something like this for years and would have loved to see it done in house.

Mr. Bragaw and Mr. North explained that the town is not a marketing machine nor a risk organization. Trying to run the program internally would likely fail due to a lack of enrollment and the high financial risk of expensive repairs early in the program's life. Partnering with CT Water removes the risk from the town while providing a reliable service they can endorse to residents.

Note If a homeowner can't afford a repair, the leak continues, wasting the town's water and money. Linebacker ensures fast repairs, which helps the town remain financially solvent by stopping leaks quickly.

Note Ms. Dillon offered these final comments:

*CT Water is transparent in what they do and do not cover.

*They're a utility with a local presence and a reputation to maintain.

*Customers prepay annually.

*They use local contractors (like Schumacher and B&L) that the town is already familiar with.

*If approved, mailers and e-blasts co-branded with the town, would likely begin in late Q1 or early Q2.

Note *Coverage officially begins 30 days after payment is received.

*CT Water handles all billing directly; the town has no administrative involvement.

*The basic water plan is likely increasing from \$100 to \$109 per year while the water & wastewater plan is increasing from \$176 to \$220 per year.

Note Ms. Royce Williams rejoined the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

5. Correspondence Log

Note Mr. Cunningham noted the communication received, see attachment.

Note see attachment.

 [Correspondence_Log.pdf](#)

6. Billing Adjustments/Disputes

Note see attachment.

 [1_10.pdf](#)

Note Mr. North noted that Mr. Wilson requested a billing adjustment but he's not here to present his case, which is a regulatory requirement.

Decision MOTION (3)

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

Mr. Roberts seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 8-0-0.

7. Approval of Bills

Note There were none.

8. Finance Director Report

Note see attachment.

 [Finance_report.pdf](#)

Note Mr. North noted Mr. Gervais was unable to attend this evening but that a Finance report has been provided.

Note He noted that revenues are currently tracking as expected for this point in the fiscal year. 400 notices were mailed to customers identified as having potential leaks, which is a priority because unaccounted-for water represents lost revenue for the Commission.

Note It was also noted that 180 door hangers were physically placed at properties where customers had failed to respond to previous billing notices. As a result of these efforts, the list of delinquent accounts has been narrowed down to 90 customers who are now scheduled for water shutoff due to non-payment.

9. Chairman's Report

Note Mr. Cunningham shared that the first budget proposal will be presented to the Board of Selectmen on February 10th. Because of this, the regular meeting scheduled for February 4th has been cancelled.

Note He thanked the Public Works Department for their assistance during the recent major storm.

Note He reported that he had a promising meeting with the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and the Department of Correction regarding the Gates facility. The town is looking to see if the DOC has excess sewer capacity, they might be willing to let the town borrow or utilize for future growth. There are no hard numbers as of yet and they plan to continue these negotiations to see if a formal agreement can be reached.

10. Staff Updates

10-1. Water Department Monthly Report

Note see attachment.

 [Water_report.pdf](#)

Note Mr. North shared that production is holding steady at 40 million gallons, which aligns with the last few years and that billing is becoming more effective.

10-2. Sewer Department Monthly Report

Note see attachment.

 [Sewer_Report.pdf](#)

Note Mr. North noted that wastewater flows are averaging about 400,000 gallons per day. While these numbers are consistent, he warned of the potential of groundwater entering the sewer system as snow begins to melt.

Note Mr. Cunningham and Mr. North addressed a recent newspaper article regarding the \$17 million PFAS project. To cover the \$17 million cost of the mandated PFAS improvements, they're proposing a 13% rate increase for the next fiscal year.

11. Future Agenda Items

11-1. Sewer Capacity Subcommittee

Note This will remain a recurring agenda item as the town continues its outreach to both the State and OPM.

11-2. Finance Subcommittee

Note The Financial Subcommittee will meet next week.

11-3. Capital Projects Subcommittee

12. Adjournment

Decision MOTION (4)

Mr. Roberts moved to adjourn the January 27th, 2026, Water & Sewer Commission Meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Mr. Bond seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 8-0-0.

Note Respectfully Submitted,
Brooke Stevens,
Recording Secretary