

BAA March 10th, 2026,
Meeting Minutes

FILED IN EAST LYME
CONNECTICUT
Mar 17, 2026 AT 10:35 AM/PM
Breanne K. ... ATC
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Minutes of East Lyme Board of Assessment Appeals - 03/10/26

Date and time: 03/10/26 6:00 PM to: 03/10/26 7:57 PM

Present: Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary , Mike Bekech, BAA Chair, Gary Cicchiello, Patrick Hughes, Sue Graham, Deanna Delaney

CC: Diane Vitagliano, Assessor

Location: East Lyme Town Hall, (Conf. #1), 108 Pennsylvania Avenue, Niantic, CT, 06357

Topics

1. Call to Order

Note Chairman Bekech called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. 6:00pm R- Diane DiPiero-Sala, 7 W. Main St

Note The applicant was sworn in before giving testimony.

Note The Board noted that the application required an estimated property value, which had not been filled in initially, and she entered an estimated value of \$35,000.

Note Ms. DiPiero-Sala explained that she's an 84-year-old widow, and that she and her late husband purchased the property years ago with plans to build, but the plan never materialized. She is now attempting to sell or dispose of the property as part of estate planning.

Note She described several factors reducing the property's usability and value:

*The town installed a guardrail blocking the original entrance to the property.

*Because of this, potential buyers must access the land through a neighboring property, creating complications.

*A utility lamppost installed by the electric company further obstructs possible driveway access.

Note Ms. DiPiero-Sala discussed how two outside assessments/appraisals were obtained, showing values of approximately \$23,750 and \$37,800.

She detailed how she sought help from real estate professionals but has encountered difficulties marketing the property.

Note She added that she contacted town offices regarding the guardrail blocking access to the property while attempting to sell the lot. She was informed that if the property were sold, the town would review the situation and determine whether the guardrail could be removed to allow driveway access.

Note Mr. Cicchiello asked whether the Applicant had contacted the State of Connecticut or hired an attorney to pursue removal of the guardrail. She stated that she had not pursued either option.

Note Discussion followed regarding the utility pole located near the property frontage.

Note Ms. DiPiero-Sala indicated that the pole is located near the neighbor's driveway and may interfere with a potential driveway location.

Note Mr. Bekech explained that utility poles are typically located within utility easements and that driveway placement must meet required setback distances from property lines.

Note The Applicant stated that the neighboring property owners are protective of their driveway and do not allow others to use it to access the lot.

Note Mr. Hughes commented that the guardrail could potentially be removed if necessary. Ms. DiPiero-Sala stated that she had previously been told it might be addressed if the property were sold, but she was hesitant to pursue removal herself if its presence involved safety concerns.

Note Mr. Hughes responded that property owners are entitled to access their property and suggested she speak with appropriate town officials regarding the matter. He noted that the lot appears to be a buildable lot with road frontage and indicated that the presence of the guardrail alone should not prevent development of the property.

Note Mr. Hughes observed that the property is nearly two acres in size and still has potential value as a building lot. There may still be other options for access, and he encouraged the Applicant to explore those possibilities and speak with Bill Mulholland, the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

Note The Applicant thanked the Board for their time and consideration.

3. 6:15pm R- Karen Garner, 1 Dogwood Lane

Note Mr. Bekech swore Ms. Garner in.

Note Ms. Garner stated that her appeal relates not to the assessed property value but to a tax exemption matter.

Note She explained that she recently returned to Niantic, Connecticut after the death of her husband, a 100% permanently disabled veteran and former Green Beret, who passed away in February. After selling her home in South Carolina, she purchased a residence at Chapman Farms in Niantic and moved there during the summer.

Note Prior to closing, she contacted the Assessor's Office about exemption eligibility, submitted her husband's DD-214 and supporting records, and confirmed after closing that all documents were received. She later discovered she had not submitted the required C-14B form, noting she never received the notification letter. She contacted the Connecticut Department of Policy and Management, which confirmed similar issues affected other applicants, and she cited the town website stating only one application was needed, which contributed to her misunderstanding. The Applicant noted the past year had been challenging and sought clarity on her exemption entitlement.

Note Mr. Hughes explained that the Applicant is entitled to the exemption and suggested she contact the town's Veterans Ombudsman, who hosts a veterans' support meeting and can assist with issues arising from recent law changes.

Board Members emphasized she is among peers and resources are available to clarify and secure her 100% veteran exemption. They reassured her that despite past notification or paperwork issues, the town and veterans' organizations can provide guidance and support.

4. 6:30pm R- Giancarlo D'Angelo, 65 Arbor Crossing

Note Mr. D'Angelo confirmed that he received a notification letter from the Assessor and, although initially told his attendance wasn't required, he came to verify in person. The Board informed him that he is all set and no further action is needed.

5. Additions to the Agenda

Decision MOTION (1)

Mr. Hughes moved to add the Approval of the January 29th, 2026, BAA Organizational Meeting Minutes and Assessor Recommended Changes to this evening's Agenda.

Mr. Cicchiello seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 5-0-0.

5-1. Approval of January 29th, 2026, BAA Organizational Meeting Minutes

Note see attachment.

 [Minutes of East Lyme Board of Assessment Appeals Special Organizational Meeting 01 29 26.pdf](#)

Decision MOTION (2)

Mr. Hughes moved to approve the January 29th, 2026, BAA Organizational Meeting Minutes as presented.

Mr. Cicchiello seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 4-0-1.

Ms. Graham abstained from the vote due to her absence from the January 29th, 2026, Meeting.

5-2. Assessor Recommended Changes

Note Diane Vitagliano, the Assessor, reviewed and discussed her recommended changes with the Board.

 [Adobe Scan Mar 14 2026.pdf](#)

Note In addition, she noted that Mr. D'Angelo's APA exemption had been properly processed and that one personal property account that had closed and moved to Montville is being recommended for deletion.

Decision MOTION (3)

Mr. Hughes moved to accept all Assessor-recommended changes, including the five corrected accounts, Mr. D'Angelo's exemption, and the deleted personal property account.

Ms. Delaney seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 5-0-0.

6. Deliberations

6-1. R- Diane DiPiero-Sala, 7 W. Main St

Note The Board reviewed the 1.7-acre lot, noting the owner's \$35,000 estimate versus the assessed value of \$149,400. Concerns about a guardrail were discussed; the lot is buildable, and the guardrail does not impede access since it can simply be removed.

Note No adjustment was deemed necessary, and the Applicant retains the right to seek legal remedies if dissatisfied.

Decision MOTION (4)

Mr. Hughes moved to take no action.

Mr. Cicchiello seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 3-1-1.

Yay- Ms. Delaney, Mr. Hughes, and Mr. Cicchiello.

Nay- Ms. Graham.

Mr. Bekech abstained from the vote.

6-2. R- Karen Garner, 1 Dogwood Lane

Note The Applicant's eligibility for a 100% disabled veteran property tax exemption was discussed. The Assessor noted that recent law amendments required submission of a form, which the Applicant had not initially received. The Applicant had moved from South Carolina shortly before the mailings and submitted the required documentation after closing. The Board acknowledged that confusion from the law changes had affected multiple applicants statewide.

Note After discussion, the Board agreed that granting the full exemption specifically for the Applicant, based on her late husband's service and disability status, reflects the spirit and intent of the law.

Decision MOTION (5)

Mr. Hughes moved to grant the full veteran's exemption to Ms. Garner.

Ms. Graham seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 5-0-0.

Note Mr. Hughes left the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

7. Appeals Continued-

7-1. 7:00pm C- Abhijit Deshnukh, 43 Pennsylvania Ave

Note The property owner did not appear for the scheduled hearing and as a result, no action was taken. The owner cannot appeal this item to court this year.

7-2. 7:15pm P- Lsrc, LLC, 22 Colton Rd

Note Eric Moore, representing the Lyman Shores Racquet Club, appeared to discuss an issue with their recent assessment notice, and Mr. Bekech swore him in.

Note Mr. Moore discussed and highlighted some of the following:

*They received a \$568 late penalty, and they were told that his assessment form was returned late.

*He scanned the form on October 15th before mailing it from Indiana on the 16th.

*It should have gone out from either Granger, IN or Mishawaka, IN, where their facilities are located.

*East Lyme reported receiving it on December 1st, nearly six weeks later, despite a November 3rd due date.

Note *The envelope he retrieved from the town showed a Hartford postmark, which made no sense given the Indiana origin.

*The envelope had the correct postage.

*He always uses the club's Connecticut return address so any delivery issues would be caught locally.

*The envelope appeared beat up, suggesting it sat somewhere for an extended period.

Note *He stated he could not explain how the letter ended up postmarked in Hartford or why it took so long.

*He stressed that LSRC mailed it more than two weeks early, and they have a long history of timely compliance.

*He acknowledged that some might argue he should have used registered mail, but he felt the timeline was more than reasonable.

*He asked the Board to consider fairness, given LSRC's consistent good-faith dealings with municipalities.

Note Board members and staff noted:

*They have seen other mail delays, including issues with Eversource bills arriving 7-10 days late.

*Some mail routed through Massachusetts or Hartford has shown inconsistent postmarks.

*Delays of six to seven weeks are unusual but not impossible.

Note Mr. Moore shared that LSRC will now, when sending payments, email a copy to the Assessor's office at the same time, and the Assessor agreed to notify him if the physical copy doesn't arrive on time. He emphasized that the town staff have been helpful and responsive, and LSRC is committed to preventing future issues.

Note Mr. Moore stated the amount will not make or break the Club, but the principal matters given their timely actions and the unexplained postal delay.

7-3. Deliberations continued- P- Lsrc, LLC, 22 Colton Rd

Note Mr. Bekech said by law, penalties are typically 25% of the assessed value and cannot be waived unless there is evidence supporting the appeal.

Note Members debated:

*Whether Mr. Moore's documentation constitutes sufficient proof.

*Whether relying on the postal service is reasonable given current performance.

*Whether LSRC's long history of timely compliance should be considered.

Note Ms. Delaney said that the Applicant appears to have done everything correctly while Ms. Graham observed that the envelope clearly shows signs of significant delay.

Note The Board discussed how the situation reflects systemic postal issues, not negligence by LSRC. They agreed that the Appellant will likely email filings going forward, given this experience.

Note The Board revisited the statutory language printed on the personal property declaration form, which states:

*The declaration must be signed and delivered or postmarked to the Assessor no later than November 3rd.

*Penalties apply for late filing or failure to file.

Note The Assessor reminded the Board that:

*The BAA handbook states penalties generally cannot be removed.

*However, penalties may be waived if there is substantiated evidence that the taxpayer acted correctly.

Note Some Board members felt LSRC's long record of timely dealings and the documented mailing timeline support removing the penalty. Others emphasized that the statute has been unchanged for years and that relying on the postal service is inherently risky.

Note It was noted that the postal service's reliability issues are well-documented, but the statute still hinges on postmark or delivery.

Decision MOTION (6)

Mr. Cicchiello moved to waive the \$568 penalty, asserting that the Appellant mailed the declaration on time and that the delay was caused strictly by the postal service.

Ms. Graham seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 5-0-0.

Note The Board expressed concern about the increasing unreliability of the postal service and its impact on statutory deadlines.

8. Adjournment

Decision MOTION (7)

Mr. Beckech moved to adjourn the March 5th, 2026, BAA Meeting at 7:57 p.m.

Mr. Cicchiello seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 5-0-0.

Note Respectfully Submitted,

Brooke Stevens,

Recording Secretary