East Haddam Recreation Commission

Special Meeting Minutes
March 30, 2026

1. Call to Order

The Special Meeting of the East Haddam Recreation Commission was called to order by the Chair, Mr. Grillo, at 7:06 PM at the Municipal Office Complex.

Attendance

Members Present: Barbara Free, Fern Tremblay, Barry Thiele, Chick Grillo, Patrick Laffan, Christine King, Travis Goode
Members Absent: Jamie Kehlenback, Margy Roberts
Also Present: Lisa Conroy

2. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Ms. Free to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Ms. King, and unanimously approved.

3. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Laffan to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Tremblay and unanimously approved.

4. Committee Report

Disc Golf - Mr. Laffan noted there is use of the course. May 23rd is the tournament, and a few folks have reached out. Ms. Conroy will make sure that parking is all set.

Music on the River – Ms. Conroy gave an update. Jansky is all confirmed. Finances for Music on the River were part of the packet provided to the commissioners. She reviewed the opening balance and walked through concert costs. She outlined her goal of staying around $13,000 for concert costs and right now it is around $11,000. One of the bands, who have confirmed, does not charge, so that saved some money. Next year is the 20th year of Music on the River down by the river, so having a larger budget for next year's music will enable her to get bigger bands potentially. Only 55% or 60% of the starting budget has been used on bands right now, which Ms. Conroy is very happy with. Chairs and other incidentals still need to be organized so that will require funds.

5. Director's Report
   a. Winter Programs

Ms. Conroy provided a breakdown of the basketball programs which was very successful. RA Parady and Shagbark sponsored the season, and the jerseys provided were fantastic. It was a great season. There was a challenge with referees and coaches speaking to referees. They brought in a certified referee to speak to the kids to provide information. She conducted a

survey; there were about 90 kids and she received 10 surveys, all of which were favorable in feedback. She focused on having closer in age groups together to ensure there were adequate players per game. She received some feedback that the teams were a bit too big at 10-12 players, so next year she will run teams with 8-10 players. Feedback on practice days and times was good. Other towns hold 1 or 1.5 hour practices and East Haddam does 2 hour practices, which is well received.

The Middle School Open Gym volleyball was a success. Abrakadoodle Clay Works and American Red Cross numbers are all solid. Volleyball numbers are increasing. Adult soccer is underway right now and has solid numbers, as does adult basketball. The numbers remain strong on those program. She provided a run down of the program numbers to the group.

Stop the Bleed had 4 students in January and 10 students in April

Pickleball was having 22 people show up for a session, so a registration system was put in place and worked for the winter months. Outdoor courts open around April 6th, and the same schedule will remain as is with demand being monitored and then adjusted based on the participation. This season will only be inside with the outdoor courts being open at all times.

Puzzle Palooza was very popular, and Ms. Conroy has ordered more puzzles for next time.

Indoor soccer was very popular, and outdoor soccer just had a team added for 7th and 8th graders. There are 7 kids enrolled and if more register, she will get a field, refs and the necessary things arranged. Time will tell if that team remains or gets cancelled.

b. Spring/Summer Preview

Ms. Conroy has created a few pickleball programs for kids, which has good registration already. One of the nets has broken so she is looking to get that fixed. She briefed the commissioners about the problem she had with ordering the parts and what options there are for nets. She is reviewing the net options and thinking about which nets to purchase going forward.

Puzzle Palooza will have a patriotic puzzle to celebrate America's birthday.

Home school open gym has been having smaller numbers and may be put on pause in May depending upon April numbers.

She is trying to get a glow-in-the-dark laser tag program going, but only has 7 kids enrolled thus far. She needs 24 kids to go forward and can handle 48 kids. It costs $20 per child to join the program. She will push the materials back out into the community.

Unplugged is going to be on April 24 in conjunction with East Haddam Youth and Family Services.

April 1st is deadline for summer staff applications. The program needs 1-2 beach attendants, 7 to 8 camp counselors and 2 to 3 lifeguards. A bunch of kids are graduating from college or

participating in internships so will not be back this summer. No senior staff was lost this year though. Camp employment is in great shape.

She reviewed the camp information. There is interest this year for track. There will be a separate camp for cheerleaders across 2 weeks. Regular day camp is 7 weeks and will be moving to the Elementary School, where they have not been in years. HVAC was installed this year in the elementary school. There are 2 playgrounds and closer proximity to the library and Moodus Ice Cream which provides additional opportunities for outings.

She is working on getting swim lessons at Town Beach but has run into some issues. There are questions if the program should be a Parks and Rec program or have the person operate as a business. Ms. Conroy is looking to offer the program as a Parks and Rec program. To become a certified swim instructor requires quite a bit of training and qualifications. She will call around to the different towns to get clarity on their programs for the different lakes. The swim instructor carries her own insurance.

c. Financial Reports/Budget Update

Ms. Conroy provided an update on the budget and noted they are in great shape. The special programs budget is not correct, so she will check on that. Both the building maintenance and transfer funds are still available. This helps with things like ropes around the parking lot at Town Beach and bringing in sand at the beach. The playgrounds will be inspected this spring and may require maintenance.

Ms. Conroy also provided clarity around what is set aside under capital for future renovations and programs. There are funds set aside to handle maintenance for Nicols field, the tennis courts and Chap's court (basketball court at Nichol's field) and the community playground.

Ms. Conroy provided an update on the audit that was conducted. She also provided context as to a number of different metrics for Parks and Rec, like number of programs offered and run. These numbers are tracked back to 2018 through 2024/2025. Things are growing; she noted that registration and revenue growth were both down.

She asked for a budget increase of 3.4% due to increased seasonal/part-time staff. Commissioners noted that having a beach attendant has made a huge difference in the quality and feel of Town Beach. She increased camp costs to reflect the increased wages. There was discussion related to the fact that the Town's camp fees are lower than other local camps.

The increase to the budget is very, very slim.

Beach volleyball may come in cheaper given that Public Works may be able to help with the project.

6. Unfinished Business
   a. Gym and Stage Mat Project
   The gym has been completed. The gym mats have been replaced and installed. They were around $13,135 for the mats on the stage as well. Life expectancy is around 8 years old, if not

more. The new ones seem to cover more area on the stage. They also brought the mats down to the floor.

There is another project to install a crank to move the basketball hoop in front of the stage. Discussion ensued related to how to address the floor covering to make the bleachers useful. She is having more conversations around this topic.

There was a question related to the quality and quantity of Columbia's Park and Rec programs and facilities at the last meeting. Ms. Conroy talked with Mark Walter, Columbia's Business Manager, to learn about how they are able to make the improvements they make. She reviewed the various projects that Columbia has done recently. Mr. Walter outlined that they use grants and the monies from COVID.

b. Field/Complex/Playground Discussion

Ms. Conroy walked through the playground update and noted that there is not any more room to expand given the Disc Golf course.

7. New Business
   a. Town Beach Updates

Everything will be opened around May 9th. They are looking into adding a gaga pit.

   b. CFMC Grants

Ms. Conroy wants to submit a grant application for this year

A motion was made by M. Tremblay to apply for a grant. Seconded by Ms. King and unanimously approved.

   c. Recommend commission members for reappointment

Ms. Conroy noted that every board member needs to be reappointed.

Mr. Goodie – reappointed to 7/1/2026 and 7/1/2029
Mr. Grillo – reappointed to 7/1/2026 and 7/1/2029
Ms. King – reappointed to 7/1/2028
Ms. Free – reappointed to 7/1/2027
Mr. Tremblay – reappointed to 7/1/2027
Mr. Laffan – reappointed to 7/1/2028
Mr. Thiele – reappointed to 7/1/2029
Mr. Kehlenback – reappointed to 7/1/2028
Ms. Roberts – reappointed to 7/1/2027

A motion was made by Mr. Goodie to approve and recommend the reappointments to the Board of Selectmen. Seconded by Ms. King and unanimously approved.

Ms. Conroy noted that the 8/17 meeting will be moved to another date as that is a Music on the River event.

d. Tennis/Pickleball Outdoor Court Use

Ms. Conroy is concerned about the use of outside courts and making sure that there is plenty of court time for residents, so has made a plan to address non-resident players if it becomes a problem. She may need to hire a high school student to monitor who is using the courts to manage the number of players. There is also an option to charge for use of the court time. Currently the outdoor courts are open, first come, first served and are free for use.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Shannon A. Goyette
Recording Secretary