

# Minutes of BPBCA Zoning Commission April 17th, 2026, Regular Meeting - 04/17/26

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**Date and time:** 04/17/26 6:00 PM to: 04/25/26 6:54 PM

**Present:** Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary, Jim Ventres, Zoning Enforcement Official, Jim Fox, Zoning Commission Chairman, John Horoho, Secretary, Mike Walsh, Regular Member, Gale Shepard, Alternate, Sat as a Regular Member, Lil Diachenko, Alternate, Jim Mastria, Alternate, Absent:, Keith Turner, Regular Member, Betsy Klemmer, Regular Member

**Location:** BPBCA Clubhouse, 6 Sunset Avenue, Niantic, CT, 06357

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## Topics

### 1. Call to Order

**Note** Chairman Fox called the Regular Meeting of the Black Point Beach Club Association Zoning Commission to order at 6:01 p.m. A quorum was present.

### 2. Call for Additions to the Agenda

**Note** There were none.

### 3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

#### 3-1. Regular Meeting Minutes of March 20th, 2026

**Note** see attached. minutes.

 [Minutes of BPBCA Zoning Commission March 20th 2026 Regular Meeting 03 20 26.pdf](#)

**Note** Members confirmed they had received and reviewed the minutes.

**Decision** MOTION (1)

Mr. Horoho moved to approve the Meeting Minutes of March 20th, 2026, as submitted.

Mr. Walsh seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 4-0-0.

### 4. Public Delegations

**Note** Public Delegations is the time when members of the Black Point Beach Club Association are invited to speak to the Commission about certain matters. Items, referrals, or applications subject to a decision by the Commission, a public hearing or any matters in litigation may not be discussed. During delegations, the members of the Commission will not directly answer questions or make comments.

**Note** There were none.

### 5. Reports

#### 5-1. Communications and Correspondence

**Note** There was none.

## 5-2. ZEO: Jim Ventres

**Note** Mr. Ventres noted an unusually high level of activity for the season. Highlights included:

\*Four teardown-and-rebuild projects currently in process or expected by week's end.

\*Approximately 30 additional zoning applications underway.

\*Anticipated construction congestion due to small lot sizes and summer traffic.

\*Some contractors are staging vehicles off-site (e.g., White Cap lot) to reduce neighborhood impact.

\*Compared to other shoreline associations, Black Point is experiencing significantly higher activity.

## 5-3. Board of Governors Ex-Officio

**Note** Mr. Weiss was not in attendance.

## 5-4. Chairman: Jim Fox

**Note** Mr. Fox said he would like to defer his report until after completion of business items.

**Decision** MOTION (2)

Mr. Horoho moved to table the Chairman's Report until after completion of business items.

Mr. Walsh seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 4-0-0.

## 6. New Business

**Note** There was none.

## 7. Old Business

**Note** A. Review and discussion of current Zoning Regulations

**Note** <https://www.blackpointbeachclub.com/new/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/BPBCA-Zoning-Regulations-Dec.-1-2025.pdf>

**Note** The Commission continued its multi-meeting review of the Zoning Regulations.

### 7-1. Signage

**Note** Mr. Ventres and Commission Members confirmed that signage issues raised during the October 2025 Public Hearing have been resolved.

**Note** Members briefly reviewed the prior Public Hearing concerns about artwork and whether it could be classified as signage. Mr. Ventres reminded everyone that signage rules apply only to commercial activity, not residential art.

**Note** No further changes were proposed.

### 7-2. Corrections

**Note** Mr. Ventres referenced outdated language and the Commission agreed to replace all references to "the East Lyme Building Code" with "the Connecticut State Building Code."

**Note** Mr. Ventres and the Commission also discussed the following sentence in the Zoning Regulations: "At no point shall the required front yard be less than the width of the required subject zone."

**Note** The sentence, which is part of the zoning definitions section, attempts to describe the minimum front-yard requirement. This wording incorrectly suggests that the front-yard depth (a measurement from the front property line toward the house) must somehow equal the width. It conflicts with the actual front-yard setback table, which already establishes the correct minimum distances and could be misinterpreted to require extremely large front yards, which was never the intent.

### 7-3. Satellite Dish Regulations

**Note** Discussion centered on outdated dish size limits. Current regulation limits dishes to 18 inches, but modern dishes are 24 inches or rectangular panels (e.g., Starlink).

**Note** Members debated whether to update the regulation to 24 inches, maintain restrictions, conduct further research and/or consider aesthetics and mounting methods.

**Note** Mr. Horoho observed that the way the regulation is written now it precludes people from even putting satellite dishes up.

**Note** Mr. Fox noted that if no revisions are made, all existing satellite dishes would simply remain as legal nonconforming structures. Ms. Shepard asked whether using the phrase “emerging technology” might help future-proof the regulation in case satellite dish designs change over time, while Mr. Walsh observed that in some towns you can see five or six dishes on a single property.

**Note** The consensus was that additional research is needed before proposing any regulatory changes, particularly regarding the new Starlink panels that Mr. Mastria mentioned, which mount directly to the side of a house rather than on traditional poles or brackets.

### 7-4. Garage Rear Setbacks

**Note** Mr. Ventres explained that the setback requirement for garages had been inadvertently removed from the regulations and suggested reinstating it at 15 feet or possibly reducing it to 10 feet.

**Note** Mr. Horoho commented that keeping it at 15 feet, consistent with the house setback, would be the simplest approach.

**Note** Mr. Ventres also noted that the regulations already include a sliding scale for lot depth. Mr. Fox asked whether that sliding scale should continue to apply to rear-lot setbacks, and Mr. Horoho agreed that doing so would maintain consistency.

### 7-5. Unregistered Golf Carts

**Note** Mr. Mastria raised concerns about unregistered golf carts in the community.

**Note** Mr. Walsh suggested requiring proof of vehicle registration and insurance when issuing beach passes.

**Note** Mr. Fox questioned whether, if registration is required for cars, the same standard should apply to golf carts. Mr. Ventres noted that such a requirement would need to come from the Board of Governors.

**Note** Mr. Mastria added that some vehicles in the community are not registered at all, and the Commission briefly discussed whether the Board of Governors might consider adopting an ordinance fully aligned with the Town’s rules.

**Note** Ms. Diachenko raised concerns about traffic speeds, stating that vehicles regularly travel 50–60 mph on Sunrise Avenue and that she rarely sees any police presence. Mr. Fox noted that the Commission’s one major request in the Master Plan was the completion of a traffic study.

**Note** Mr. Walsh added that many residents are unaware that they are personally responsible for anyone who operates their golf cart.

## 8. Chairman's Report

**Note** Mr. Fox returned to his Chairman’s Report. He explained that when COVID hit, it became difficult to hold meetings anywhere, and the world quickly shifted to Zoom. While Zoom is not required, he noted that their regular in-season meetings typically involve discussion only and no formal action. Action is reserved for after their annual public hearing- once public input has been received, the Commission discusses any proposed changes one final time before voting. Those public hearings and the subsequent special meetings are held in a hybrid format, with both in-person and Zoom participation.

**Note** He added that attendance at regular in-season meetings is usually low, but the Board of Governors has questioned him about holding Commission meetings via Zoom. Mr. Fox asked whether the Board intended to provide someone to handle the technical side of hybrid meetings, as he does not believe a Commission member should be responsible for that role. He emphasized that he represents the Commission, and if members have strong feelings about this issue, he would like to hear them, whether tonight, tomorrow, or next week.

**Note** Mr. Horoho noted that the Commission conducted a hybrid public hearing last year and felt it worked well, particularly given that it was held late in the season in October. He emphasized that he has no issue with transparency but pointed out that the Meeting Minutes already document the Commission’s discussions. In his view, the most effective way for residents to stay informed is simply to read the minutes, or to reach out to the Commission by email or in person. He added that hybrid meetings can be distracting.

**Note** Mr. Horoho also observed that the Board of Governors conducts transactional business at every meeting, which is why all BOG meetings are hybrid. By contrast, the Commission takes formal action only once a year- during the public hearing period between July and October.

**Note** Mr. Walsh asked whether there had been many requests for hybrid meetings, and Mr. Fox replied that he had received only a phone call or two. Ms. Shepard commented that it feels somewhat antiquated not to offer hybrid access.

**Note** Mr. Fox revisited the discussion from the previous meeting regarding exempt structures. He explained that another resident inquiry had come in, and that the Commission had already addressed the matter through email correspondence.

**Note** Mr. Fox summarized the legal guidance received from Attorney Branse: there is no such thing as an exempt structure under zoning. While the International Building Code lists certain items such as sheds under 200 square feet and fences as “exempt” from building permits, that exemption does not extend to other regulatory frameworks. Attorney Branse confirmed that such structures are not exempt from zoning, wetlands, health code requirements, or coastal/environmental regulations.

**Note** Mr. Ventres added context from his experience: in larger rural communities, fences are rarely regulated unless they exceed eight feet in height, but in dense shoreline communities like Black Point, fence and shed regulation is essential to prevent boundary disputes.

He emphasized that one of the most important parts of reviewing a fence application is confirming whether the property owner knows the location of their pins; if not, they are advised to coordinate with neighbors or hire a surveyor to avoid conflicts such as the recent case on Sea Spray where a fence had to be moved eight inches after installation.

**Note** He also noted that if sheds were considered exempt, it would raise questions such as whether multiple sheds could be installed without review. Zoning oversight ensures proper placement, prevents encroachments, and reduces neighborhood disputes especially in a community where residents closely observe construction activity.

**Note** The Commission then briefly discussed two related issues that should be referred to the Board of Governors- the fee structure for fence and shed permits and the lack of electronic permitting or payment options.

**Note** Mr. Ventres also described challenges with electronic submissions in other towns, particularly with solar companies that frequently submit incomplete or incorrect applications. He noted that Black Point's current practice- residents emailing plans for a preliminary review before submitting the formal application, works well and avoids many problems.

**Note** Mr. Fox added that residents consistently praise Mr. Ventres for his knowledge, guidance, and willingness to help applicants understand what is and is not permissible. He contrasted this with the approach of many building officials who simply process permits without advising applicants. He emphasized that Black Point processes a manageable number of permits each year, making the current system effective.

## 9. Adjournment

**Decision** MOTION (3)

Mr. Horoho moved to adjourn the April 17th, 2026, BPBCA Zoning Commission Regular Meeting at 6:54 p.m.

Ms. Shepard seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 4-0-0.

**Note** The next BPBCA Zoning Commission meeting is scheduled for May 15th, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

**Note** Respectfully Submitted,  
Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary