

East Hampton Democrats

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Preserving and Selectively Expanding Hunting Opportunities

Hunting in the Town of East Hampton is a tradition that dates back to the middle 1600's when our area was first settled. 375 years later hunting still provides an excellent source of nutrition, helps balance our ecosystems, provides a connection with the outdoors, and creates connections among family members as well as a camaraderie among fellow hunters.

While local municipalities can't pass local laws regulating hunting seasons, they can decide whether or not to permit hunting within their jurisdiction. In addition, local municipalities by local law and resolution can affirm which of their holdings are able to be hunted, and which are not.

Since the East Hampton Democrats won the majority in 2014, the Town Board has been very supportive of preserving and selectively expanding hunting opportunities for local residents. Below are a few examples of actions we have taken in the last ten years:

In 2014 as a result of changes in State regulations allowing more areas to be hunted for big game, the Town Board amended Town Code Chapter 91 to add properties where hunting is permitted. (See Resolution 2014-712.)

In 2014 when the DEC extended bow hunting for deer into January, the Town Board amended the Town Code Chapter 91-48 to allow for bow hunters and shotgun hunters to safely utilize the limited Town parklands resources during their traditional periods without overlap, providing both types of hunters with access to this recreational activity. (See Resolution 2014-1494.)

In 2015 when the DEC amended their regulation regarding a DEC town permit, the Town Board amended the Town Code Chapter 91-49 to waive the requirement for a hunter to obtain a DEC Town hunting permit. (See Resolution 2015-649.)

In 2015 the Town Board amended Town Code Chapter 91 to add properties where hunting is permitted. (See Resolution 2015-774.)

In 2015 the Town Board approved a selective hunting pilot program on three Town properties. (See Resolution 2015-1371.)

In 2016 the Town Board amended Town Code Chapter 91 to add properties where hunting is permitted. (See Resolution 2016-863.)

In 2017 the Town Board amended Town Code Chapter 91 to add properties where hunting is permitted. (See Resolution 2017-968.)

In 2023 when the DEC expanded hunting for wild turkey into the Spring, the Town Board amended Town Code Chapter 91-46 to support the expansion for wild turkey during the Spring with the exception of Memorial Day weekend. This carve-out commences with the Thursday before the Memorial Day weekend and continues to and includes Memorial Day each year when our population increases for the holiday weekend. (See Resolution 2023-531.)

The Maidstone Gun Club (MGC)

The matter of Roxana Pintilie, et al. versus Town of East Hampton and Maidstone Gun Club is pending before Judge Modelewski in Suffolk County Supreme Court. The court is currently conducting hearings on the Temporary Restraining Order (“TRO”). The first hearing was held on May 24, 2023. The hearing was set to resume on August 22 but has since been adjourned three times, at the request of either the Plaintiffs or the MGC. It is presumed additional witnesses will be called. The MGC’s attempt to modify the TRO has been unsuccessful, so until there is a ruling by the judge, the MGC remains closed for all purposes.

The Town has been named as a co-defendant since it owns the land on which the MGC is situated. Sokoloff & Stern is defending the Town in the litigation.

The MGC lease expires October 31, 2023. The Town has retained Daniel Cahn of Cahn & Cahn, P.C. as outside counsel to negotiate a lease renewal with the MGC. (See Resolution 2023-1235.) Mr. Cahn has had discussions with counsel for the MGC. In addition, the Town Board has retained Hampton Real Estate & Appraisal Inc. to conduct a fair market appraisal of the MGC located at 411 Wainscott NW Road. (See Resolution 2023-1253.)

Given that the MGC is the subject of litigation and lease renewal negotiations, Town Board members are constrained in what they can and should discuss. With that said, We do support a range for the East Hampton Town Police Department and other enforcement agencies for training purposes. We do not support continuing with the existing lease without extensive modifications to ensure the safety of the neighboring property owners as well as the safety of the members of the MGC.

It should be noted that Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc and the Supervisor's staff are recused and will not be involved in any MGC matters including litigation and lease negotiations.

Town Oyster Gardening Program

In 2016 the Town launched a shellfish education and oyster gardening program facilitated by the East Hampton Shellfish Hatchery known as EHSEED – the East Hampton Shellfish Education and Enhancement Directive. The EHSEED program created opportunities for local citizens to learn about and help the threatened ecosystem that is part of the vital Peconic Estuary system, resulting in educated and dedicated stewards of the environment.

In 2023 EHSEED operated with over 100 oyster growers in five oyster garden locations: Three Mile Harbor, Accabonac Harbor, Hog Creek, Napeague Harbor, and Lake Montauk. In addition, oyster growers can also use their own dock.

It is our intent to keep this program fully funded and to expand this program based on resident interest and staff availability.

Shellfish Poaching Issue

In response to groups of people coming to East Hampton after dark harvesting shellfish without a town permit, harvesting undersize shellfish, and taking quantities in excess of the legal limit, the Town Board updated the Town Code Chapter 213 in conjunction with the Town Trustees to make shellfish poaching an aggravated level of violation. As an aggravated offense, potential violators can be arrested, fines are hefty, and if convicted, it is punishable by up to 30 days in jail and will remain on a person's criminal record. (See Resolution 2023-1007.) This amendment to our local law was filed with New York State on July 25, 2023 and is widely supported by our local enforcement agencies.