



December 17, 2025

Kristen Nannini
Program Administrator for Safety and Health
Eastern Suffolk BOCES
Barton Avenue Armory Operations and Maintenance Department
Health and Safety Office
100 Barton Avenue
Patchogue, NY 11772
email: knannini@esboces.org

RE: Eastern Suffolk BOCES
215 Old Riverhead Road, Westhampton, Town of Southampton
SCTM Numbers 900-310-3-20.2 and 900-310-3-21
Central Pine Barrens Core Preservation Area

Timothy C. Hubbard
Member

Ryan P. McGarry
Member

Maria Z. Moore
Member

Daniel J. Panico
Member

Edward P. Romaine
Member

Dear Ms. Nannini:

On November 10, 2025, the Central Pine Barrens Commission office received your proposal on the referenced project site in the Central Pine Barrens Core Preservation Area.

The submission includes:

- A letter expressing concerns regarding emergency evacuation particularly to minimize impacts on staff and special needs students who occupy the facility in the event of wildfire.
- A copy of the Property Survey including tax lots 20.2 and 21.
- A copy of a map titled "Proposed clearing area."
- Photographs of the site and the nearby wildfire in March 2025.
- A copy of a Riverhead Local article on the March wildfire.
- A copy of a document referred to as "Commission document" illustrating "Good property maintenance help protect your home from wildfire."

Project Site

The two properties controlled by Eastern Suffolk BOCES (ESBOCES) covered in this request include tax lot 900-310-3-20.2 and tax lot 900-310-3-21.

- Lot 20.2 is located on the west side of County Road 31 and is developed.
- Lot 21 is located on the south side of Stewart Avenue. It is undeveloped and in a naturally wooded condition with pine barrens habitat.

Tax Lot 900-310-3-20.2 (lot 20.2), west side of County Route 31

Tax Lot 20.2 is 8.5 acres. It is located on the west side of Old Riverhead Road (CR 31) in Westhampton. This property is developed with a complex including four

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buildings and parking lots. Curb cuts for access are located on CR 31.

A limited amount of natural vegetation remains on this property. It is in the LI 40 zoning district. Facilities on this site are occupied by 331 students and 260 staff including 40 wheelchair bound students serviced by 55 mini buses with some requiring wheelchair accessibility. The Administrative Center holds 430 additional adult staff.

Tax Lot 900-310-3-21 (lot 21), south side of Stewart Avenue

Tax Lot 21 is 5.6 acres. It is located to the west of lot 20.2 and has approximately 256 feet of frontage on the south side of Stewart Avenue. The west and south sides of the property adjoin Suffolk County public land. The property is undeveloped and naturally wooded with pine barrens habitat. It is in the CR 200 zoning district.

Proposal

The proposal seeks to modify vegetation on portions of the two ESBOCES properties including “clearing of undergrowth and removal, pruning and thinning of clumps of trees” to reduce risk to students, staff and property from fire and smoke in the event of wildfire. The letter expresses concerns, activities and measures to reduce risk from wildfire including:

“Since our remaining option would be to shelter-in-place, we need to consider additional on-site pro-active fire management actions to reduce the risks of direct damage from raging fire, flying embers that ignite buildings or are drawn into the HVAC systems, and smoke inhalation or damage. As a result, we are working to strengthen our firefighting posture to ensure the safety of the property and therefore the students and staff when a fire threat is present. As such, we anticipate installing an additional fire hydrant along the existing western property driveway to aid in firefighting operations. As recommended to ESBOCES, we are also in discussion with the local fire department about stockpiling of fire foam on-site as an option to be used as needed.”

“Due to the close proximity of the Central Pine Barrens tree line adjacent to our buildings, playground, bus loading zone and main thoroughway, ESBOCES requests the Central Pine Barrens Commission to allow for clearing of undergrowth and removal, pruning and thinning of clumps of trees within a minimum of a 30’ (and up to 100’) distance along the existing 915’ western fence on the developed parcel, all within PROPERTY OWNED BY ESBOCES, that will reduce the risks. ESBOCES would also like to consider prescribed burning of the remainder of the wooded property owned by ESBOCES in order to reduce the fuel load.”

Additionally, the letter states, “ESBOCES would also like to consider prescribed burning of the remainder of the wooded property owned by ESBOCES in order to reduce the fuel load.”

Central Pine Barrens

The proposal appears to constitute development activity, pursuant to the definitions in New York State Environmental Conservation Law Article 57 Section 57-0107.13. The activity is expected

to result in the material alteration of grade or vegetation. Therefore, the proposal requires the submission of a Core Preservation Area Hardship Application, subject to Commission decision. The application packet is on the Commission website and a copy is enclosed for your use.

Thank you for your attention. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (631) 218-1192.

Sincerely,



Julie Hargrave
Pine Barrens Manager

cc: Judith Jakobsen Executive Director
John C. Milazzo, Counsel to the Commission