

Chatham Light: Restoring Navigational Performance

A safety-first request for Town–Coast Guard partnership

August 21, 2026

In July 2026, the Coast Guard replaced Chatham Light's rotating twin-beam aerobeacon with a single-tier LED lantern. The new light is modern and efficient, but manufacturer specifications indicate materially less intensity and an offshore range below the station's published 24 nautical miles. Mariners have also reported the loss of the strong rotating near-shore reference historically visible around Chatham's harbors and shoals.

The immediate request is not for the Select Board to choose a replacement technology. It is to recognize the navigational concern and empower the Waterways Advisory Committee and community partners to engage the Coast Guard directly and drive a collaborative working session to determine how best to restore the light's navigational performance. Chatham and community partners are prepared to contribute technical work and, subject to later approvals, help identify practical solutions that can be developed collaboratively while the Coast Guard retains full Aid to Navigation authority.

The Navigation Issue

NAVIGATION OBJECTIVE	HISTORIC / PRIOR	TODAY	WORKING GOAL
Effective intensity	~2,800,000 cd	~78,000 cd	Evaluate with USCG
Offshore range	24.3 nm	19.1 nm	Published 24 nm
Near-shore reference	Strong rotating presence	Materially reduced	Restore useful reference
Time Frame	1969, 1993–2026	LED Single Tier Installed July 2026	Meet and evaluate together

The objective is straightforward: preserve a reliable near-shore navigational reference and the published offshore performance of LLNR 525. Technical options have been studied and are available as background, but solution selection should follow direct discussion with the Coast Guard.

Where Things Stand

- The Chatham Waterways Advisory Committee reviewed the issue on August 20 and voted to recommend action to the Select Board; the Chatham Historical Commission separately voted to support the effort.
- The Select Board is being asked to endorse the navigational objective and empower the Waterways Advisory Committee and community partners to engage the Coast Guard directly and lead a collaborative working session. No Town expenditure is authorized at this stage.
- Following a favorable Select Board vote, the Waterways Advisory Committee and delegation would engage USCG Sector Southeastern New England directly to arrange and lead a working meeting with Town and maritime stakeholders. A formal written proposal should follow—not precede—that discussion.