

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

January 22, 2015

Present/Absent: [Excused absence (E); Unexcused absence (U)]

Chester:	Margaret (Peggy) Wilson, Martha Wallace
Deep River:	Nancy Fischbach, Sam Shaw
<i>East Haddam:</i>	Harvey Thomas, Emmett Lyman
<i>Essex:</i>	Claire Matthews, Jeri MacMillian
<i>Fenwick:</i>	<i>Ethel Davies, Borough Warden (E)</i>
Haddam:	Susan Bement, Derek Turner
Lyme:	J. Melvin Woody, Vacancy
Old Lyme:	Peter Cable, Suzanne Thompson
Old Saybrook:	Madge Fish, Belinda Ahern (E)
Regional Rep:	Raul Debrigard
DEEP:	David Blatt
Staff:	J. H. Torrance Downes
Guests:	Samuel S. Gold, Executive Director, RiverCOG

Call to Order

Chairman **Woody** called the regular meeting of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission to order at RiverCOG offices located at 145 Dennison Road, Essex at 7:30pm.

Approval of 12/4/14 Regular Meeting Minutes

Corrections include indicating the absence of **Bement**, and adding an additional reason for the resignation of **Fischbach** as vice chairman (seeking to promote a “leadership development” opportunity). Motion to approve minutes as corrected by **Cable**, seconded by **Matthews**, passed unanimously.

Approval of 10/23/14 Annual Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve minutes by **Bement**, seconded by **Wilson**, passed unanimously. **Cable** abstained.

Introduction of RiverCOG Executive Director Sam Gold

Gold introduced himself and indicated that he looks forward to working with the Gateway Commission as a longtime partner of the predecessor agencies CRERPA and Midstate, and of RiverCOG since that agency’s inception two and a half years ago.

Treasurer’s Report

Wilson reported that the Finance Committee met with John Rafal of Essex Financial on Monday, January 19, 2015. EF reported that they have the cash on hand for the Sogge purchase. **Wilson** reported that it was decided to reduce GW investment exposure to foreign equities from 14% to 9%, this because of global uncertainties, and reminded members that the EF management fees are approximately half of what was paid to previous investment counselor Merrill Lynch.

Numerous bills were presented for payment including \$155 (legal fees, Matt Willis), \$6,550 (surveying fee, Sogge, Doug Bonoff aka Swamp Yankee), \$1125.82 (November staffing: \$303.80, JHTD; \$33 PF; \$505.90 overhead and \$284.32 in payroll taxes going back to July 1, 2014), \$1651.72 (December staffing: \$607.20, JHTD; \$33 PF; \$690.30 overhead and \$51.22 in payroll taxes). Motion to pay bills by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement**, passed unanimously.

Correspondence and Staff Report

1. Meeting with Graham Stevens, DEEP RE: Goodspeed Airport Scenic Easement. On Friday, January 9, 2015, Melvin Woody, Downes and Attorney Campbell Hudson traveled to Hartford to meet with Land Acquisition director Graham Stevens to discuss the proposed "Grant of Scenic Easement" at the Goodspeed Airport. Hudson summarized the entire process over the past 12 years and provided copies of pertinent letters/documents to Stevens, providing the same to GW for their files. The application is going to the DEEP review committee in early February, and this was Steven's chance to review the easement and submissions and to update the committee on what, if anything, was different from the last time they reviewed it and turned it down. This time, the owner of the airport – Tim Mellon – is offering to donate an 8 acre parcel of wetlands bordering Chapman Pond immediately south of the airport, a change that might "sway" the review committee. During the discussion, Woody provided a brief history of GW and a brief history of Mellon's conservation efforts in the Hamburg Cove area in partnership with GW. An aerial photo showing the 300 acres conserved by Mellon through scenic easement was provided to Stevens in addition to Gateway's list of acquisitions since their beginnings in 1973.

Woody made it clear that Gateway would like to see the Department move forward with the acquisition including the 8 acre parcel in order to protect this incredibly visible parcel. He also took the opportunity to update Stevens on the Sogge purchase, providing Gateway's map of the Haddam Neck area showing all of the conserved properties, including the Sogge parcel. Woody and Downes said they wanted the review committee to know that, in addition to GW asking the State to accept the easement, GW was also "putting their money where their mouth was" by purchasing the property on behalf of conservation partner Middlesex Land Trust.
2. Haddam Cove EPA Clean-up\Up. It was reported in the Hartford Courant on 1/5/15 that the EPA is seeking additional funds for additional clean-up at the factory site above the cove. 5,000 tons of contaminated soils have already been removed. EPA feels that an additional 3,000 tons need to be removed as well, an effort that will require an additional \$900,000 of funds, according to First Selectman Melissa Schlag.
3. Essex Board of Trade Annual Membership Fee (\$25). Motion to pay \$25 for renewal of EBOT membership.
4. Bulkhead Replacement, CT Riverfront, Deep River.
5. Grant Fund for Closing and Other Costs for Easement Donations. Intent is to provide funds through the Jessi B Fox Foundation to those who would like to consider donating a scenic or conservation easement but don't have sufficient funds to employ an attorney or other professional to determine how to best accomplish the potential benefactor's goals.
For info, contact Margot Burns.
6. CRWC "Clean-Up Chronicle". Source-to-Sea Cleanup de-brief.
7. Letter date 12/23/14 to DEEP Commissioner Rob Klee RE: Support of CRWC and other river partners over concerns caused by navigation boom at the site of the former CY plan.
8. Essex Financial Fruit Basket. At the end of December, EF sent a fruit basket over to RiverCOG offices. Given the timing, Downes instructed RiverCOG staff to enjoy the fruit basket as a holiday gift from the Gateway Commission.
9. Heads-Up: Willow Street in Essex. February preliminary review for property located on North Cove in Essex. Property owner and engineer will come before GW for suggestions. Members discussed an upcoming project.
10. Guidance: 4 Joel Road, Old Lyme. Variance of Flood Regulations. Downes instructed to prepare and send a letter of no opposition because little visual impact will result from proposal.
11. Guidance: Zoning Map Change vs. Zoning Regulation Change. Statutes governing GW states "...[n]o adoption, amendment or repeal of a local zoning, subdivision or planning regulation with respect to property within the conservation zone within such town shall be effective which has not received the approval of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission." Downes instructed to consult statutes and report to Town Planner Liz Glidden accordingly.

Staff Actions

Saybrook Point Hotel, 19 Bridge Street, Old Saybrook. Variance application requesting relief from sideline setback (south) and height to install side decks for several rooms, to allow for a wider front porch and to allow for the construction of the elevator core structure which will reach a height of approximately 37 feet from existing natural grade. As a part of this proposal, the Appellant will seek a Special Permit to allow for an architectural roof to be constructed on top of the elevator core that will reach another five (5) feet above that. Downes reported that a letter of "no opposition" was sent stating that due to the distance of the structure from the river, the closely spaced nature of the 19 Bridge Street structure with surrounding structures, and the fact that GW standards make provision for "architectural features" via Special Permit. No concern was expressed.

Variance Applications to be Reviewed and Approved by the Gateway Commission: None.

Regulation Changes to be Reviewed and Approved by the Gateway Commission

1. Old Saybrook, Bulk Storage of Fuel. The Zoning Commission is proposing a limit of 20,000 gallons for bulk storage of fuels in all areas of town, including those commercial districts which are located within the Gateway Conservation Zone. Currently, no limit exists. The proposal was based upon a similar (though larger) proposal that was put forth recently in the Town of Clinton by that town's P&Z. Motion to "approve"

pursuant to Section 25-102g CGS by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement**, passed unanimously. **Fish** abstained from voting.

2. Old Saybrook, Signs (Freestanding and building signs). Downes informed the Gateway Commission that the petitioner has submitted revised sign regulations which exclude any new sign regulations from application to properties in the Gateway Conservation Zone. At their December 4, 2014 meeting, the Commission had “approved” the regulations with the condition that the regulations not apply to Conservation Zone properties. Because of the submission, Downes sent a letter confirming “approval” to the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission.

Committee Reports

a. Land.

Wilson discussed various issues related to the purchase of the Sogge property on Haddam Neck in Haddam. A walk was held during the past month where numerous GW members along with Jim McHutchison and his wife were able to see the views of the river. Attorneys Willis (GW) and Bill Howard (MxLT) agreed to have the MxLT purchase the property using funds granted to that organization by GW through assignment of the purchase contract. The balance of funds owed to Mr. Sogge amount to \$161,000. A check was drawn on GW funds in the amount of \$164,000 as recommended by the GW Land Committee to cover the funds owed plus title search, closing costs and owed taxes. The balance of the \$164,000 which is unused will be returned to GW. Motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Matthews**, to grant MxLT \$164,000 to purchase the Sogge property as agreed upon. The property, it was reported, will be named the “Brainard Quarry Preserve”.

Wilson, as authorized signatory for the Gateway Commission, signed the Letter of Assignment provided by the attorneys. Earlier in the week, Chairman **Woody** signed the MxLT/GW Letter of Understanding as authorized by the Gateway Commission (attached).

In the coming weeks, a joint press release will be issued by GW and the MxLT. The Commission instructed Downes to prepare a draft press release with MxLT Executive Director David Brown to be reviewed and approved by **Woody**.

Woody commented that, in his years as a member of the Gateway Commission and its predecessor Gateway Committee, this acquisition is “one of the best things GW has ever done”. He expressed pleasure at, not only the visibility of the hillside, but the historical value of the property. He repeated the Commission’s gratitude to Haddam member Susan Bement who brought the opportunity to the Commission. He also expressed gratitude to former member Lisa Niccolai who was a great help as the plans for the acquisition got underway.

Woody then spoke about his efforts on behalf of the Connecticut River Land Trust with the Land Trust Exchange and brought up the issue of the CRLT acting as a fiduciary organization for the LTE.

Debrigard brought up the fact that other properties may become available in the Haddam Neck area.

b. Outreach.

Downes reported that **Cable, Thompson** and he are scheduled to visit with the Old Lyme Zoning Commission on February 9, 2015. That will leave the P&Z in Lyme and the Zoning Commission in Essex as the only towns to visit regarding the proposed standards. **Fischbach** reminded that the Essex meeting should be scheduled for April when she is available to participate.

c. Governance.

Fischbach and **Thomas** summarized the recent Governance Committee meeting. A short discussion regarding a legislative bill entitled the “revisor’s bill” occurred with respect to addressing the regional membership of the Gateway Commission, this since the formation of the Lower CT River Valley Council of Governments. **Fischbach**

reported that she will communicate with Representative Miller on this issue.

Nomination for the vacant position of Vice Chairman was discussed. **Cable** nominated **Thompson** for the position. No other nominations came forth. The nomination was passed unanimously.

New Business.

None.

Old Business.

None.

Adjournment

Upon motion by **Bement**, seconded by **Matthews**, and passed unanimously, the meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.