

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

January 28, 2016

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

Chester:	Margaret (Peggy) Wilson, Martha Wallace (E)
Deep River:	Nancy Fischbach, Kate Cotton
<i>East Haddam:</i>	Harvey Thomas, Emmett Lyman (E)
<i>Essex:</i>	Claire Matthews, Jerri MacMillian(E)
<i>Fenwick:</i>	<i>Ethel Davies, Borough Warden (E)</i>
Haddam:	<i>Susan Bement (E)</i>
Lyme:	J. Melvin Woody, Emily Bjornberg
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:	None.

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 7:35pm.

Approval of 12/3/15 Annual Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by **Cable**, seconded by **Wilson**, the 12/3/15 minutes were unanimously approved as presented. Noted that later in the meeting, a request was made to reflect that a conversation had been had regarding Reynolds Subaru during the Correspondence report.

Treasurer's Report

Wilson presented the financial "compilation" delivered by Accountant Joe Wollack for fiscal year 14/15. It was reported that Wollack found nothing "out of the ordinary". The fee for the compilation - \$4500 – was higher than expected (full audits had cost the Commission between \$5000 and \$6000) because of compiling the records of several years (last audit performed three years ago) and because of the records of the transfer of the GW portfolio from Merrill Lynch to Essex Financial.

Wilson reported on a meeting held with Essex Financial during the week of January 22, 2016. **Wilson, Fischbach** and **Matthews** attended. Patrick Gengras of EF reported on "irrational volatility" that exists in the market at present. Current allocations ; 63% equities, 34% fixed and the remainder cash. Decision made to shift some mid-cap into large-cap. Fees were reported to be 0.67% on funds.

Bills were presented for the month of November and the month of December. Two month total: JHTD, \$602.95, PF \$202.98, overhead \$1145.82, for a two month total of \$1951.75. Motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Thomas**, passed unanimously.

A bill for services rendered by Accountant Joe Wollack was presented in the amount of \$4500. The bill was presented by Wollack when he met with **Wilson** and Downes the previous week. The bill will be included in the February Treasurer's Report.

Finally, upon a motion by **Thompson**, seconded by **Blatt**, the Commission authorized the reimbursement of \$39 for

the cost of pizza provided by **Fischbach** for the Governance Committee meeting held at 6:15pm prior to the scheduled Gateway Commission meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence/Staff Report

Downes discussed a proposal of Reynolds Subaru to construct a new building on the site of their existing facility on Route 156 in Hamburg. Downes said he had had discussions with Lyme ZEO Bernie Gigliotti. It wasn't clear whether variances would be necessary. Downes encouraged Gigliotti to require that larger facades facing Hamburg Cove to the west were visually broken up and/or visually buffered with landscape vegetation.

NEC Future Memorandum. The deadline for comment has been extended to February 15th. The letter submitted in January as testimony on behalf of GW follows at the end of this document (#1). The comment period has been extended to February 15, 2016. The Commission could opt to send a second letter which recommends an option *other than* the one that results in an additional bridge crossing at the CT River. Another comment could be one where it is recommended that the new CT River bridge – which has yet to be built but *has* been designed – be Re-designed to accommodate whatever high-speed rail needs are required, thereby eliminating the need for the second bridge. **A discussion of whether strong criticism should be sent in this preliminary stage of the plan. Blatt offered that there was no reason *not* to send strong language and criticize concepts. Upon a motion by Fischbach, seconded by Cable, the Commission requested that a more strongly-worded letter be sent wherein it is described that it is “strenuously opposed” to Alternative 1 of the Tier 1 Draft EIS. The motion passed unanimously. The deadline**

Draft Beaver Ledges Letter of Support, Haddam Land Trust. Draft letter of support follows at the end of this document (#2). Commission to “approve” or modify as appropriate. **Commission approved the letter, which was sent on Friday, January 29, 2016. Request for Letter of Support came after the December 3, 2015 GW meeting. Grant amount is \$325,000. Motion to approve by Debrigard, seconded by Wilson, to send letter as drafted with the following: “On behalf of the Gateway Commission, which so voted at it’s 1/28/16 meeting....”. Further discussion occurred regarding the land acquisition criteria of Gateway and whether or not they allow donations/grants for land outside of the Conservation Zone, which they do.**

Melville Dock Application, Whalebone Cove, Lyme. Testimony sent on behalf of GW. Comment period closed earlier in January. Submitted letter follows at end of this document (#3). **Woody indicated that he attended the meeting and spoke as a private resident. Concern wasn't as much about the impacts of the dock, rather of the motorized vessels that would more commonly frequent the Cove. The State can “prohibit” motorized vessels, but the town can? In this case, personal communication with the permit analyst indicated that she explored the possibility of conditioning the permit for human-powered craft only but Mr. Melville wanted to be able to use a small motorboat. OLISP, therefore, didn't pursue that. Members expressed the need to protect Whalebone Cove because of its fragility.**

Watrous Point, Old Saybrook. Discussion of radio tower at 42 Watrous Point Road. Downes and ZEO Costa met on site with the property owner who is interested in installing a ham radio tower which will extend above the tree line by about 30 feet or so. Discussed was the most optimum location with respect to hiding the tower from view from the river as best as possible. A site to the rear of the house (so the lower portion was hidden by the structure during the winter) was thought to be optimum. Property owner was told that photos, perhaps “Photoshopped” with an indication of what the tower would look like from the river was the best path to take. No contact has been made at this point. ZEO Costa interprets the structure as needing a variance of the 35 foot height maximum, so GW will eventually receive the application to review. **Some members of the Commission queried whether they have the authority to review/regulate based upon nation security issues for ham radio operators.**

Essex Board of Trade Renewal, \$25. Members voted to renew.

CLCC Membership Appeal. GW has not been a member. Chooses, instead, to support individual efforts including participating in the March workshop at Wesleyan University. “Friend”, \$1 - \$99; “Sustaining Member”, \$100 - \$499; “Sponsoring Member”, \$500 - \$999; “Conservation Benefactor”, \$1000 and up. **Members voted to join at a level of \$100. The Commission voted to sponsor the Wesleyan University workshop at a level of \$500, same as previous years. Motion by Thompson, seconded by Bjornberg, approved unanimously.**

Staff Actions on Variance Applications and Special Exception Reviews

None reported.

Regulation Reviews

Old Saybrook, Pedestrian Node, Ferry Point District . Proposed regulations impact “Marina Way”, which is not within the Gateway Conservation Zone, and the Ferry District of Ferry Point, which *is* within the Conservation Zone.

Pedestrian Node regulations require that a developer build parking lots on sides and rear of a building and to have a design which promotes the movement of people from the rear of a building to the front. In that there isn't a large likelihood of this design occurring on the river side of Ferry Road (already developed, and there isn't a significant amount of upland before the topography drops down to a lower level , such as the Between the Bridges marina sites). Commission members requested that, if possible, have the Zoning Commission add language which will required visually-buffering landscaping on the river side of parking lots that are visible from the river, and to request that assurances are made that parking lot lighting isn't visually obtrusive on the river scene. Motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bjornberg**, approved with the additional request. **Fish** abstained from voting.

Lyme, Regulations Concerning Farm Wineries and other non-impacting issues.

Members felt that farm wineries as permitted by the proposed regulations are consistent with the Gateway mission of protection and are in keeping with the character of the Conservation Zone. Motion to approve by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bjornberg**. Motion passed unanimously.

Haddam, Various Regulations including Housing Opportunity District Development.

Proposed HOD regulations require the “landing” of a set of regulations on a particular parcel or parcels along with a specific design that is based upon standards set forth in the proposed HOD regulations. Commission members were told that Town Planner Liz Glidden and Downes had met in November to review and discuss the proposal. Based upon suggestions of Downes, Glidden made modifications what standards developments to be located within the Conservation Zone would be held. The proposal clarified that developments proposed within the Conservation Zone would be reviewed according to the Gateway Standards *unless* a development wasn't visible from the river. In that case, the development could be exempted from Gateway Standards. Commission members raised concern over who would define “visibility”. Downes suggested that additional language could require a collaborative approach between the Haddam P&Z and the Gateway Commission (or their staff). Such a “visibility” determination would govern whether an exemption was warranted. **Fischbach** requested that language from the proposed standards regarding the blocking of visibility by structures, topography, large stands of trees be included. Also included should be language regarding visibility or lack thereof as related to distance from the river. Motion made by **Debrigard**, seconded by **Fischbach** approved unanimously and to include suggestions made by Downes regarding visibility and façade size (200 feet maximum length outside of the Conservation Zone, 100 feet maximum length within, with 35 foot unbroken façade requirement and a five foot offset).

Land Committee

Wilson reported that the Haddam Spirit was hiring a Ms. Flanagan of Keystone to appraise the properties under discussion in Haddam Neck (aka “Hilt”).

Governance Committee

Fischbach reported on a Governance Committee meeting held prior to the regular Gateway Commission meeting on 1/28/16. The Committee decided to accept the invitation of the Essex Zoning Commission in its letter dated 10/22/15 to further discuss concerns which still exist with the proposed standards. Downes was requested to have Gateway placed on the next available agenda and write a letter expressing gratitude that the ZC is interested in continuing discussion. The Committee will prepare a point-by-point review of the concerns expressed by the EZC in the 10/22/15 letter for the purposes of discussion. It is anticipated that the work will likely proceed in subcommittee as had been the case previously.

Old Business, New Business.

None.

Adjournment

Upon motion by **Wilson**, seconded by **Thompson**, the meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.