

# CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 25, 2016

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

<b>Chester:</b>	<b>Margaret (Peggy) Wilson, Vacancy</b>
<b>Deep River:</b>	<b>Nancy Fischbach, Kate Cotton (E)</b>
<b>East Haddam:</b>	<b>Harvey Thomas (E), Emmett Lyman</b>
<b>Essex:</b>	<b>Claire Matthews (arr. 7:34p), Jerri MacMillian(E)</b>
<b>Fenwick:</b>	<b>Ethel Davies, Borough Warden (E)</b>
<b>Haddam:</b>	<b>Susan Bement (arr. 7:35p)</b>
<b>Lyme:</b>	<b>J. Melvin Woody, Emily Bjornberg (E)</b>
<b>Old Lyme:</b>	<b>Peter Cable, Suzanne Thompson</b>
<b>Old Saybrook:</b>	<b>Madge Fish, Belinda Ahern (E)</b>
<b>Regional Rep:</b>	<b>Raul Debrigard</b>
<b>DEEP:</b>	<b>David Blatt</b>
<b>Staff:</b>	J. H. Torrance Downes
<b>Guests:</b>	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 7:30pm.

### Approval of 1/28/16 Regular Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Fish**, the 1/28/16 minutes were unanimously approved with two corrections: (1) revision of header to reflect "regular" meeting minutes, and (2) deletion of "The deadline" at the end of page 2, paragraph 2.

### Treasurer's Report

**Wilson** led a discussion regarding the accounting compilation that was conducted by Accountant Joe Wollack. Wollack (who wasn't present) previously indicated that performing the compilation annually would likely cost less as there would be less "catch-up" of records if the compilation was performed every other or every three years. He estimated that a annual compilation might take 1/3 of the time it took to perform this year's compilation after a three year hiatus and incur a fee of approximately \$1500 (\$4500 fee was charged for the current compilation). Members decided that the subject of whether to have a compilation performed will be discussed at the GW annual meeting held each year in October. Motion of **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement** to make a decision on the need for a compilation at the annual meeting in October passed unanimously.

A bill was presented for the month of January, 2016. In addition two checks were presented in the amounts of \$100 and \$500 for signature. The two checks, for CLCC membership and workshop sponsorship, respectively, were approved at the 1/28/16 meeting. Total: \$1888.39. Motion by **Bement**, seconded by **Fischbach** to pay, passed unanimously.

Regarding the filing of Tax Form 1099, a question was raised with respect to whether or not Attorney Mark Branse of Branse/Willis should receive such a form. Branse works as a part of the firm and not as an individual. Gateway Financial Administrator Paula Fernald indicated that, in her experience, attorneys and their firms receive 1099s.

### Correspondence/Staff Report

#### A. Correspondence/Staff Report

NEC Future Draft EIS Study. As requested, a second memorandum expressing strenuous opposition to Alternative 1 of the

NEC Future Draft EIS Study was submitted for the record on January 29, 2016. The copy is attached.

NEC Future and the Town of Old Lyme. On Wednesday, February 3, 2016, First Selectman Bonnie Reemsnyder convened a meeting of community leaders with the intent of gaining input to include in a single letter of opposition to be signed by all participants. Peter Cable and JHTD attended as representatives of the Gateway Commission. The Gateway letter of opposition dated 1/29/16 was provided for use in the writing of the letter. The letter was to address the impacts that would occur to historic, cultural, environmental and economic resources in Old Lyme and the lower river valley.

NEC Future Press Conference. Reemsnyder convened a press conference on Wednesday, February 10, 2016 and invited the local media, which included several TV stations. Several community leaders spoke (Reemsnyder, Rep. Formica, Rep. Carney, Flo Gris Ex Dir Jeff Anderson, RiverCOG Ex Dir Sam Gold). Gold was provided environmental highlights by Downes including the numerous accolades, awards and designations and spoke on behalf of the Gateway Commission. Downes stood with the participants as a “community leader”. Representative Courtney was able to provide a letter of support signed by Senators Murphy and Blumenthal and himself (attached). A letter was also submitted by Governor Malloy (attached).

CT Land Conservation Conference, Saturday, March 19, 2016. [www.ctconservation.org](http://www.ctconservation.org)

Wesleyan Campus virtual tour map: [www.wesleyan.edu/virtualtour](http://www.wesleyan.edu/virtualtour)

Two representatives of GW are “comped” – in the past, Woody and Downes. Online registration for others available on the CLCC site. **Members agreed that any member who attended could be reimbursed for their expense.**

2015 National Land Trust Census. “Add your voice to complete the story”. Take the online survey at

[www.lta.org/census](http://www.lta.org/census) For questions, email at [census@lta.org](mailto:census@lta.org) or call (202) 638-4725

DEEP-OLISP Letter to Brian Slater RE: Whalebone Cove. Director Brian Thompson responded indicating that DEEP is aware of sensitivity of Whalebone Cove, but the Department does not have the ability to deny a permit and that all proceedings are in the hands of the Hearing Officer. **Woody reported that the Friends of Whalebone Cove will meet on Sunday, March 6<sup>th</sup> at 4p and would like someone from Gateway to attend. He indicated he would contact Bjornberg to ask if she could attend. If not, he will contact the rest of the Commission to seek a volunteer.**

#### Staff Actions on Variance Applications and Special Exception Reviews

None reported.

#### Regulation Reviews

None presented.

#### Land Committee

**Wilson** reported that according to Jim McHutchison, the appraisal for the Hilt property complex is moving forward. The appraisal, commissioned by the Haddam Neck Spirit, is being conducted by the Keystone Consulting Group. Two other adjacent properties may be considered and the Haddam Spirit – at their cost – asked their appraiser to include those properties in the appraisal as well. One of those two parcels is on the market (overly steep driveway necessary to access). Larger of two – 4.66 acres, \$40K. Smaller of two – 3.5 acres, \$88K. McHutchison indicated that he is keeping the Middlesex Land Trust informed through David Brown.

#### Governance Committee

Fischbach reported that she, Downes, Matthews and MacMillian are scheduled to discuss Gateway standards with the Zoning Commission in Essex on April 18, 2016.

#### Outreach Committee

Downes reiterated that the CLCC workshop will be held on March 19, 2016 where a Gateway table with distribution materials will be set up.

#### Old Business

Question was asked whether the Land Trust Alliance is presently pursuing grants for land acquisition. Woody informed members that a short documentary about land conservation in Lyme, narrated by Actor Sam Waterson, was to be aired on CPTV next year and is also available via a smartphone “app”. Extra footage that was shot that wasn’t used will be available to the public for use in other projects. All footage shot will be organized into six thematic packages that will be available by land trusts or others for their own projects.

#### New Business

A short discussion of the lecture series at the CT River Museum occurred, including a lecture that presented information on invasive plants. A “traveling” invasives exhibit would be presented.

#### Adjournment

Upon motion by **Bement**, seconded by **Wilson**, the meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.

## Letter to Federal Railroad Administration, Included with 2/25/16 "Items of Interest" Report

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)  
**MEMORANDUM FROM:** J. H. Torrance Downes, Senior Planner  
Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments  
Connecticut River Gateway Commission  
**DATE:** January 29, 2016  
**SUBJECT:** Comments on Option 1, NEC Future Tier 1 Draft EIS

This memorandum is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission and its member towns Old Saybrook and Old Lyme to express strenuous opposition to Alternative 1 which would establish the high speed rail corridor through the shoreline of Connecticut in the area of the lower Connecticut River. Alternative 1 will cause significant damage to historical resources dating back to the first English settlements in Connecticut and to the unique environmental resources of the lower Connecticut River. Those environmental resources have received international, national, state, regional and local accolades. To damage or impact those celebrated estuarine resources in any way is short-sighted and makes little sense

**It is the opinion of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission that any efforts to construct a new railroad bridge and its approaches between Old Saybrook and Old Lyme and to develop a right-of-way as summarized in Alternative 1 of the Tier 1 Draft EIS should be discontinued with the other two alternatives being likely more feasible and explored more seriously as the NEC Future planning process moves forward.**

As codified in Section 25-102a of the Connecticut General Statutes, the lower Connecticut River Valley in the area of the possible new bridge crossing was found by the Connecticut General Assembly "... to possess *unique scenic, ecological, scientific and historic value contributing to public enjoyment, inspiration and scientific study, that it is in the public interest that the provisions of this chapter be adopted to preserve such values and to prevent deterioration of the natural and traditional riverway scene for the enjoyment of present and future generations of Connecticut citizens* (emph.added)....". The provisions of this chapter were adopted by each of the eight member municipalities, including Old Lyme and Old Saybrook.

In order to accomplish this important mission, the General Assembly and the eight member towns established the Commission to act in a regional capacity to preserve the values described above and to "...*prevent deterioration of the natural and traditional riverway scene for the enjoyment of present and future generations of Connecticut citizens*...". The Commission has been doing so for the past 42 years.

The Gateway Commission accomplishes this mission through the adoption of zoning standards designed to minimize the visual impact of development within the Gateway Conservation Zone which encompasses the hillsides of the river valley up to the first ridge. The Commission also has the ability to acquire conservation easements and fee-simple land within the river valley to accomplish the same protective goal. Since its inception in 1974, the Gateway Commission has participated in the protection of over 1,000 acres of land for purposes of visual and ecological preservation.