

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 24, 2016

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

Chester:	Margaret (Peggy) Wilson, Vacancy
Deep River:	Nancy Fischbach (E), Kate Cotton
East Haddam:	Harvey Thomas, Emmett Lyman
Essex:	Claire Matthews, Jerri MacMillian(E)
Fenwick:	Ethel Davies, Borough Warden (E)
Haddam:	Susan Bement, Vacancy
Lyme:	J. Melvin Woody, Emily Bjornberg
Old Lyme:	Peter Cable, Suzanne Thompson (E)
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 7:31pm.

Approval of 2/25/16 Regular Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by **Bement**, seconded by **Wilson**, the 2/25/16 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 reported that the finance committee will be meeting with Patrick Gengras of Essex Financial on April 25, 2016. Discussion will include the performance of the portfolio for the first quarter of 2016. Wilson raised the question of whether or not to support the East Haddam Land Trust annual calendar. Gateway has supported that project for the last several years at a level of \$100. Upon a motion by Bement, seconded by Fish, the Commission unanimously voted to contribute \$100 to East Haddam Land Trust again this year. Staffing Bill totals \$1432.65 (\$525.16 - Downes; \$67.66 – Fernald; overhead - \$839.83). Second bill for legal services from Attorney Mark Branse - \$260 (work done on review of housing regulations in Haddam). Motion to pay bills by **Bement**, seconded by **Fish**, passed unanimously.

Correspondence/Staff Report

A. Correspondence/Staff Report

Old Saybrook. S&S Marine. Update on Previously Approved Riverfront Development In a recent special exception review, GW supported plans for a marina building design, including the inclusion of a cupola atop the structure. The OSZoning Commission, however, pushed back on the cupola and its height, requiring a lower roof peak which slightly reduced the pitch and height of the roof, in order to make way for the cupola. Photo at left shows the partially constructed building from the S&S docks, located between the S&S Marine building (left) and the Oak Leaf Marina building (right).

Lyme. Reynolds Subaru, Route 156, Hamburg. Proposal is pre-application; no application has been presented yet. Downes reviewed current plans with engineer Tom Metcalf and April Maly of Pennimann and Associates on Monday, March 13th. No variances required; application will be reviewed through the site plan process (Gateway standards requiring a special exception for structures in excess of 4,000 square feet only apply to *residential* structures). That said, the P&Z will be submitting the application to GW staff for advisory review as if the application *was* a special exception application.

Building is located within the *inner* portion of Hamburg Cove and is not visible from the river *or* the outer cove. A Photoshop “rendering” of the proposed building as seen from across the cove through trees was shown. The existing riparian buffer, which includes low vegetation as well as several mature trees, will be left as is with no activities or impacts proposed in that area.

Keystone Consulting Group Appraisal, Haddam Neck. The appraisal for the Haddam Neck properties commissioned by the Haddam Neck “Spirit” was available for view at the regular meeting held on March 24, 2016. **Wilson** will discuss as a part of the Land Committee update.

East Haddam Land Trust Nature Calendar, Donation Request. Gateway has donated \$100 in each of the last several years.

NECFutures – Amtrak Hi-Speed Corridor. As a result of all of the concern over the proposal to build the high speed rail through Old Lyme with a new bridge to be located between the two existing bridges (Alternative 1 of 3), representatives of the Federal Railroad Administration met with numerous officials in Old Lyme on Monday, March 13, 2016. At that meeting, it was reported that of 3,000 comments received from ALL areas of the proposed corridor from Virginia to Massachusetts, 1,200 were received from residents, officials and organizations which are impacted in Old Lyme. The message, FRA said, was heard “loud and clear”.

History of State Parks Booklet

<http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/stateparks/history/parkshistorybooklet2014.pdf>

Downes reported that Deep River member Nancy **Fischbach** requested that authorization be sought from the Commission to write a letter of support to area legislators on the proposed constitutional amendment (Senate Joint Bill 36). Discussion ensued which summarized that area legislators (Miller, Carney and Linares) already support the amendment.

Bill has been reported out of committee. A request can be made to have Miller, Carney and Linares add their names as sponsors if they haven’t already. Motion by **DeBrigard**, seconded by **Bement** to strongly support the adoption of Senate Joint Bill 36, a constitutional amendment and to ask Miller, Carney and Linares to add their names as sponsors if they haven’t already. Motion passed unanimously. **DeBrigard** reminded members that letter of support from individuals might be warranted as well.

Staff Actions on Variance Applications and Special Exception Reviews

Downes reported on the review of two variance applications in Essex that did not rise to a level of impact concern. A letter of “no opposition” was sent to the Essex Zoning Board of Appeals. The projects were either small or not visible from the river.

Downes also reported on the review of a Special Exception application of a residential dwelling over 3,500 square feet on Riverside Drive in Old Saybrook. The review was conducted through a meeting with the site engineer and a site inspection at which agreement was reached on which trees would be removed and which trees would remain. These discussions also included the agreement for the property owner to plant shrub vegetation on the north side of the proposed structure in order to “soften” the visual impact as much as possible. The “agreements” were referenced in the review letter sent to the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission.

Downes reported on a “heads-up” regarding possible tree-cutting at a property on Injun Hollow Road in Haddam Neck. The concern was expressed to Town Planner Liz Glidden who described that work as being for preparation of a septic system in closer proximity to the road, further away from the river than the 50 foot riparian “no cut” buffer area. Glidden reported that she would “keep an eye out” for any issues at the property.

Regulation Reviews

East Haddam. Proposal to allow “helistops” in any location in Town, including properties located within the Conservation Zone, by Special Exception. The intent is for quick pick-up type helicopter service, or air “taxi”. The proposal has been discussed by the P&Z for months, but the petition has been submitted by a residential property owner who would intend to be picked up on Monday mornings and flown to New York City, where he’ll return via helicopter to East Haddam on Friday evening. Although the regulation is said to be applying to all locations in East Haddam, the petitioner does not live in the Conservation Zone.

The proposed new section is said to be *intended* to apply to any district, except that review of the zoning regulations reveals that the “helistop” use does not exist anywhere in the book. In this type of circumstance, a petition would also add “helistop” as a special exception use in each district within which it can be permitted, in this case, in every

residential, commercial and industrial district section in the book. The petition, however, includes no such language. It only includes the stand-alone two-page section of standards that would apply to such a use. This, it's said, can be remedied by adding such language to the petition during the public hearing.

Such a facility would look exactly like the heliport "pad" that exists to the rear of the new Middlesex Hospital Emergency Clinic on I-95 at Exit 65, Flat Rock Place. Concern was raised regarding tree removal if such a facility was to be built on a property visible from the river. The answer was that, with a special exception designation, such a possibility was limited; the P&Z likely wouldn't allow it.

The Commission expressed concerns over the permitting of such facilities on properties located within the Gateway Conservation Zone. On hillsides, the rather large area required to be leveled could result in a "cut and fill" process resulting in a benched site and possibly a river-facing retaining wall which could have a visual impact on the river. In addition, significant tree removal might result from such construction. Members of the Commission asked that such concerns be included in a letter of review sent to the East Haddam P&Z with some suggestion that a request to be made to prohibit such use in the Conservation Zone. As a result, this letter will not "approve" or "disapprove" the proposal, but express the concern as stated above. Motion to send a letter expressing the above by **DeBrigard**, seconded by **Bement**, passed unanimously.

Land Committee

Wilson discussed the land acquisition effort in Haddam Neck, now to be known as the "Hillside Project", which is how the Middlesex Land Trust refers to the project. Members, using maps, discussed the five properties and the varying lot sizes, appraised values and site conditions. The Keystone Consulting Group appraisal, which was commissioned by the Haddam Neck Spirit and completed within the past several weeks, shows the appraised value for the five lots to be \$137,000. It was agreed by the land committee – who agreed that these properties met the land acquisition criteria as established by the Commission - to have David Brown of the Middlesex Land Trust and Jim McHutchison of the Haddam Neck Spirit, continue discussions with the property owners to see how things unfold. The two representatives will report back on such communications.

Governance Committee

Downes reported that because of ongoing application reviews, GW representatives would meet with members of the Essex Zoning Commission at their May 16th meeting.

Outreach Committee

Downes reported that GW had a presence at the Wesleyan CLCC workshop held on March 19th. A picture of the table set-up was shown. He also reported was that a request was made of RiverQuest to set aside the dates of June 2nd and June 9th for the annual Gateway boat trip.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

Adjournment

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