

# CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

April 28, 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</b>
<b>East Haddam:</b>	<b>Harvey Thomas, Emmett Lyman</b>
<b>Essex:</b>	<b>Claire Matthews, Jerri MacMillian</b>
<b>Fenwick:</b>	<b>Ethel Davies, Borough Warden (E)</b>
<b>Haddam:</b>	<b>Susan Bement, Vacancy</b>
<b>Lyme:</b>	<b>J. Melvin Woody, Emily Bjornberg</b>
<b>Old Lyme:</b>	<b>Peter Cable(E), Suzanne Thompson (E)</b>
<b>Old Saybrook:</b>	<b>Madge Fish, Belinda Ahern (E)</b>
<b>Regional Rep:</b>	<b>Raul Debrigard (arr. 7:35p)</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 3/24/16 Regular Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Matthews**, the 3/24/16 minutes were unanimously approved with corrections as submitted by **Woody**.

### Treasurer's Report

**Matthes** reported that the finance committee met with Patrick Gengras of Essex Financial on April 24, 2016. A discussion regarding rebalancing equities will be held with the Finance Committee before Gateway's May meeting so that a recommendation may be brought to the whole commission. If circumstances warrant, changes may be made prior to the next meeting in which case EFS will communicate with **Wilson** to seek approval.

Bills: \$466.80 JHTD, \$50.75 PF. \$733.21 overhead. \$50 conference reimbursement to **Debrigard**. Total: \$1250.76. Motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement** to approve, passed unanimously.

### Correspondence/Staff Report

#### A. Correspondence/Staff Report

CLCC, Thank you for GW participation in March 19, 2016 workshop at Wesleyan University.

Salmon River Watershed Partnership Annual Newsletter, 2016. Frogs, Haddam Neck "Happenings".

East Haddam Land Trust. Thank you for calendar donation.

Height Regulation, Essex. First Selectman Norm Needleman indicated that the Zoning Commission intends to propose relaxing the existing building height limitation by raising the height maximum to 35 feet from 30 feet. The base for the purpose of this measurement is from "existing natural grade". If approved, the new height measurement would match the Gateway minimum standard. Needleman was told that if such a proposal was submitted, GW would likely "approve" the proposal as it is consistent with the existing minimum Gateway standard. The Zoning Commission hasn't brought this forward as of yet.

2016 Source-To-Sea Clean-up Support Request. Alicea Charamut sent along information in support of the CRWC request for support for the annual river clean-up effort. In the past, Gateway has donated \$1,000 and, at times, had members participate in clean-up. Alicea commented that the Essex Land Trust was involved in clean up last year but indicated that there didn't seem to

be much to clean up. Without a major spring freshet and a washing of debris toward this end of the river, Alicea wondered if there won't be much to clean up again this year. If there is individual interest in joining another clean-up team, members can contact Charamut through email: [acharamut@ctriver.org](mailto:acharamut@ctriver.org)  
CRWC Postcard: Donation Request. "the river makes the valley" card reminding environmental community of "Valley Gives Day" on Tuesday, May 3, 2016.

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

Downes reported on the review of four Essex variance applications and one Old Saybrook variance application that did not rise to a level of impact concern. Letters of "no opposition" were sent to the Essex and Old Saybrook Zoning Board of Appeals. The Essex projects were either small or not visible from the river. The Old Saybrook project (at 25 Reed Court on South Cove) is more visible, at least from South Cove. The letter to the Old Saybrook ZBA requested that they query the Appellant on issues including demonstration of maximum height and confirmation that the structure was indeed 2 ½ stories (it has the appearance of a three plus story structure).

Downes also reported on the submission of the final review letter to the Lyme Planning & Zoning Commission for the Reynolds Subaru site plan.

Regulation Reviews. None.

Site Inspections. Downes reported on-site inspections at 36 Mack Lane, Essex and 25 Reed Court, Old Saybrook. The Mack Lane property will need variances to construct a second story addition that will have a peak height that will match the existing peak height of the main portion of the house. This structure was the subject of a proposed demolition and reconstruction that would have had a visible structure height of over 40 feet due to the method of calculation of height in the Essex Zoning Regulations. Based upon letter of concern sent by Gateway to the Essex Zoning Board of Appeals, the application was denied and the potential buyer decided not to follow through with purchase because of that controversy.

#### Land Committee

**Wilson** discussed the ongoing 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.

The owner of the 10+ acre parcel disagreed with the value of his property expressed in the recent Haddam Spirit appraisal (appraised at \$29,000). Members decided to offer to pay for half of a new *certified* appraisal by reimbursing cost of 50%. Motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement** to pay up to \$1,000 for a certified appraisal, with offer to be made in writing. Unanimously approved.

Discussion then moved to whether or not the properties in question should be purchased "piecemeal" with the possibility of not purchasing *all* properties. Appraisals of the various properties were discussed. **Wilson** reported that Jim McHutchison indicated that "donor" funds may be available for the purchase of the 3.5 acre Halvorson property (one of the properties of interest) on Injun Hollow Road, which is on the market for \$39,700. The Haddam Spirit appraisal values the property at \$35,000. Members discussed the question of whether an option should be offered for 6 months or so, or does authorization of full purchase need to occur first.

Motion to approve proceeding in a "piecemeal" fashion (considering purchase of individual properties rather than the whole of all properties) by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement** passed unanimously. Motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Matthews**, to approve expenditure of up to \$1,000 for purchase of an option on the Halvorson property should the Land Committee and the Middlesex Land Trust determine that such an option is needed to tie up the property. Motion passed unanimously

Members were reminded of the Middlesex Land Trust Annual Meeting to be held Saturday, April 30, 2016 in Haddam Neck that will include a ribbon-cutting and site walk of the Brainerd Quarry Preserve property. Downes to send a letter of congratulations with the comment that it will be assumed that any sign posted at the site will give credit to

the Gateway Commission as a partner in the acquisition.

#### Governance Committee

**Fischbach** reported that Gateway representatives will attend the May 16<sup>th</sup> meeting the Essex Zoning Commission in order to discuss the adoption of Gateway standards. ZEO Joe Budrow reported that based upon discussions occurring that evening, it is not clear whether GW reps will have the chance to discuss the topic and may be “bumped” to the next ZC meeting. To attend: **Fischbach, Matthews, MacMillian** and Downes.

#### Outreach Committee

Downes reported that the Commission needed to decide if an annual boat trip will occur this year as time for planning is shorter than usual. Members voted yes and that the trip should occur on Thursday, June 16<sup>th</sup>. Downes indicated that he will begin sending email invitations. Details of food/beverage would still need to be worked out. Members of the Outreach Committee who were not in attendance will be informed of the decision via email on Friday, April 29, 2016. **Bjornberg**, as Outreach chair, was assigned the duty of delegating responsibilities. Motion to conduct the trip by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement** passed unanimously.

#### Old Business

**Woody** brought up his knowledge of a gathering on the weekend of May 1<sup>st</sup> to support local efforts to fight Alternative 1 of the NEC Future Amtrak high speed rail proposal in Old Lyme. Downes explained the process and RiverCOG’s involvement to this point in time.

#### New Business

**Debrigard** passed out notices of “river makes the valley” promotion/request for donations.

**MacMillian** briefly discussed her concern over the proposed 8-30g CGS affordable housing application that is being considered for property adjacent to the Essex Steam Train property. Members briefly discussed a recent 8-30g application considered and approved by Gateway on the river in Old Saybrook (Marine Village at the Between the Bridges Marina).

#### Adjournment

Upon motion by **Bement**, seconded by **Wilson**, the meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.