

# CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

June 25, 2015

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

<b>Chester:</b>	<b>Margaret (Peggy) Wilson, Martha Wallace</b>
<b>Deep River:</b>	<b>Nancy Fischbach, <i>Vacancy</i></b>
<b>East Haddam:</b>	<b>Harvey Thomas, <i>Emmett Lyman (E)</i></b>
<b>Essex:</b>	<b>Claire Matthews (E), Jerri MacMillian (E)</b>
<b>Fenwick:</b>	<b>Ethel Davies, <i>Borough Warden (E)</i></b>
<b>Haddam:</b>	<b>Susan Bement, <i>Derek Turner</i></b>
<b>Lyme:</b>	<b>J. Melvin Woody (E), Emily Bjornberg</b>
<b>Old Lyme:</b>	<b>Peter Cable, Suzanne Thompson</b>
<b>Old Saybrook:</b>	<b>Madge Fish (E), Belinda Ahern</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>	Kate Cotton (Deep River, potential GW member)

### Call to Order

Vice Chairman **Thompson** 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 5/28/15 Regular Meeting Minutes

**Wilson** corrected draft minutes by indicating that the report of the Land Committee erroneously identified that three properties weren't discussed for purchase, rather one was discussed for possible purchase while two were discussed as easements by donation. Upon a motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Wilson**, the 5/28/15 minutes were unanimously approved as corrected.

### Treasurer's Report

**Wilson** presented a proposed budget for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2015 and reminded members that the budget is a guideline. The budget showed a decrease to investment fees, a decrease to contributions (a one-time contribution for the purchase of "The Preserve" wouldn't occur in the coming fiscal year) and the elimination of insurance fees due to the fact that Gateway holds no land at this time. Increases were included for costs for the Outreach Committee for items such as entry fee for fairs, materials and costs associated with amendment of the Gateway standards, and increase funding was included for the annual boat trip to cover the possibility of a longer trip beginning in Old Saybrook, as was the case in 2015.

Upon a motion by **Thomas**, seconded by **Cable**, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the budget. reported that the staffing bill for the month totaled \$2312.36. Motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement** to approve the payment of the staffing bill, which was passed unanimously

(**Debrigard** arrives 7:39pm)

Bills were submitted for payment. \$1,165.17 (staffing services), \$135.93 (boat trip food, **Fischbach**), \$118.96 (boat trip drinks, JHTD), and \$1,400 (CT River Expeditions, aka Riverquest). The bill for the M&J Bus shuttling bus for the boat trip for \$212.50 was paid and pre-approved in May, 2015.

Motion to pay bills by **Bement**, seconded by **Ahern**, passed unanimously.

## Correspondence and Staff Report

Chester Point Marina, Reapplication for Special Permit. Members will recall that CPM received approval to demolish a long, narrow structure on the marina site and reconstruct in essentially the same footprint a two-story structure. The new structure will include historic (previously existing) uses, marine-related uses and a seasonal restaurant. CPM wasn't able to commence the project in the timeframe expected. The zoning regulations of the Town of Chester require approved uses to exist one year following the filing of a Memorandum of Decision on a Special Exception. The regulations include no provision for an extension. As a result of not commencing in time to comply with the one year period and the lack of an ability to extend the approval, CPM must resubmit the application for approval. Engineer Tom Metcalf submits that the project is unchanged. **JHTD to send same letter as was previously submitted.**

Old Saybrook ZEO, Thank you note for boat trip.

TPL. Letter to "save the date" for a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Thursday, August 13<sup>th</sup>.

CT Fund for the Environment. Request for Gateway Commission to become a member of the Herring Alliance. **Motion by Wilson, seconded by Bement to send \$50 for membership.**

CRWC Newsletter

CLCC Thank you letter for GW support. Seeking membership contribution (GW has participated in the CLCC Wesleyan workshops but hasn't actually joined the organization as a member).

Hamburg Fair Changes. The following message was received from the Hamburg Fair contact after the GW application was submitted:

Torrace, unfortunately there have been some changes made at the Hamburg Fair. The space under the entertainment tent has been taken back by the entertainment committee and will not be used by commercial vendors. (which is the category you fell under). Your choice now is to rent a 10x10 space for \$125 and you will have to provide your own tent, table etc. Perhaps you can join up with another non-profit and share a space. Sorry for the news. I did not receive a check with your application so I will not be returning anything to you.

Thank you for your interest. ~Allyson Cotton

Landscape Architectural Communications. Honor Award, Milone & MacBroom. M&M developed a manual intended to provide lakefront landowners a guide for establishing and maintaining vegetated buffer zones. The manual addresses requirements of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and provides ecologically sensitive and sustainable alternatives for stabilizing shoreline banks and creating healthy, diverse, vegetative buffers. The online manual can be downloaded using <http://online.flipbuilder.com/hjpi/kxqg/> The recommendations and information can be easily transferred to a riverine environment.

Land Investment Group has proposed a change to "age-restricted development" regulations in Chester to allow three bedroom units where one and two-bedroom units are currently permitted. In an effort to avoid Gateway involvement, the petitioner was convinced that any GW-related concerns including whether or not a three bedroom unit could add significant visual bulk could be avoided by prohibiting the three bedroom choice from the Conservation Zone. This is that path that the petitioner followed.

21 Merriwold Lane, Deep River. A site visit was scheduled with an architect and two real estate agents on Wednesday, June 17th regarding a possible renovation project on the steep hillside above River Road in Deep River. The project will hinge on the retention of trees. An interesting side-discussion ensued as the agents and architect noted the modern structure in a clearing of trees located on Joshuatown Road across the river in Lyme. This was the property where the architect-owner Stephen Jacobs cleared far more trees than permitted in the special permit approval issued by the Lyme P&Z, an Inland Wetlands permit issued by the IWWC and then recommended by Downes in a special permit review letter provided to the P&Z. Members may recall that the owner went to great lengths to show what the structure would look like by "photoshopping" the structure in the hillside on several large photographs to show how the structure blended in to the hillside. From the river, the tree clearing doesn't create a *huge* visual impact (Downes viewed the site from the river on Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>), but from up the hillside in Deep River, the tree clearing is *much* more evident. This further confirms GW's insistence that the standards protect not only view from the river, but from the GW member towns *across* the river as well. This impact was clear to the architect and agents and drove home the point of GW preservation efforts. The Sotheby agent asked if Downes could talk to their agents about GW protections in the near future, to which he agreed.

## Staff Actions

Johnny Cake Hill Road, Old Lyme. Proposed construction of a detached garage in a location significantly set back from the river and in a location blocked from view by the existing residential structure. No opposition letter sent 6/3/15.

Noyes Road, Old Lyme. Proposed construction of a small shed in a location blocked from river view by intervening structures and significant tree cover. No opposition letter sent 6/3/15.

North Main Street, Essex. Replacement of a carport that is insignificant in size and in a location that is largely unseen from the

river or its tributaries. No opposition letter sent 6/3/15.

#### Applications/Petitions to be Reviewed by Commission

Old Saybrook. Subdivision regulations regarding "community water". Commission found the adoption of the regulations would create no adverse visual impact to the "natural and traditional riverway scene" and therefore approved the petition pursuant to Section 25-102g CGS.

#### Committee Reports

##### a. Land.

No activity reported since last GW meeting on May 28, 2015. The Commission thanked and recognized Deep River alternate Sam Shaw for his time on the Commission and his expertise during the acquisition of the Sogge property and expressed hope that he will remain engaged with Commission activities and potential land acquisition in Haddam Neck.

A short discussion ensued regarding the need for a checklist for land acquisition, a checklist of criteria to evaluate land. **Blatt** indicated that he thought he had forwarded such a list in the past (he forwarded the list of criteria to **Debrigard** and JHTD on June 26, 2015). In addition, members recalled that **Lyman** had forwarded to Gateway such a list that is used by the East Haddam Land Trust for such evaluation.

A question was asked regarding whether or not **Woody** was able to contact Haddam Land Trust president Bill Cowan in order to discuss the letter sent by the HLT to Gateway dated May 11, 2015. Downes reported that, according to an email received from **Woody**, he had not been able to contact Cowan prior to **Woody's** departure for a trip despite several attempts.

##### b. Outreach/Community Relations.

**Bjornberg** will be taking over the chairmanship of the committee from Thomas and will attempt to schedule a meeting of the committee prior to GW's next meeting scheduled for Thursday, July 23, 2015.

Downes reported on the Shoreline Management Manual produced by Milone & MacBroom in March, 2014. Members instructed Downes to find out about obtaining copies for Gateway and for possible distribution amongst GW member towns.

Discussion continued regarding the three agricultural fairs attended by the Gateway Commission. Agreed was the opinion that there is likely less to gain by attendance at the fairs than at area farmer's markets. It was suggested that contact should be made with the organizer of the Chester Farmer's Market as a start. Although members agreed that GW might not want to participate in the Hamburg and Chester Fairs, it was agreed that GW should continue participating in the Haddam Neck Fair. It was agreed that the Outreach Committee would meet prior to the July Gateway meeting and propose a plan for how to proceed with this outreach effort.

Downes reported on outreach efforts that occur as a part of the day-to-day GW business which occurs during site visits. One particular visit to a property on Merriwold Lane in Deep River provided an opportunity to explain GW policies to two real estate agents who work in the lower river valley as well as a local architect with whom Gateway has never worked. One issue of discussion was the new dwelling constructed by Architect Stephen Jacobs across the river on Joshuatown Road in Lyme. The modern design is quite visible in an opening of trees. Downes had met with Jacobs and provided guidance regarding GW protections, including discussing the importance of retaining trees as a visual buffer. Mr. Jacobs, after receiving a Special Exception approval from the Lyme P&Z, removed more trees than were approved on a good portion of partially visible hillside creating an "opening" in the tree canopy that is very visible, especially from the Deep River hillside off Merriwold Lane. The facts of the Jacobs situation were explained to the architect and the two agents in hope of further emphasizing the importance of Gateway review and standards. One of the agents (Southeby) asked if Downes would be willing to come speak to their agents about the Gateway mission, which he said he would, likely in the fall. Downes also took the opportunity to explain the remediation that the Town of Lyme has required of Jacobs and

the as of yet unresolved issue of unauthorized relocation of a solar array in what may be a more visible location as seen from the river.

Finally, **Thomas** was thanked for his chairmanship of the Outreach Committee. He, in turn, thanks the committee members for their service.

c. Governance Committee.

**Fischbach** reported that she and Downes will be scheduling to meet with Attorney Mark Branse to review the proposed standards.

d. Committees, General.

Vice Chairman **Thompson** took the opportunity to request a review of the committee membership list.

Old Business.

None.

New Business.

Members raised several issues including asking Downes to find out about new property owners on Winterbury Lane at the Essex/Deep River border, contacting Liz Glidden about participation in the Haddam P&Z's development of new sign regulations. After discussing that the Executive Director of the CT River Museum attended the June boat trip, it was suggested that Gateway should get to know the new Executive Director at Goodspeed Opera.

Adjournment

Upon motion by **Bement**, seconded by **Bjornberg**, and passed unanimously, the meeting adjourned at 8:24 pm.