

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

July 25, 2013

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

Chester:	Margaret (Peggy) Wilson, Martha Wallace (E)
Deep River:	Nancy Fischbach, Amy Petrone (E)
East Haddam:	Harvey Thomas, Emmett Lyman (E)
Essex:	Claire Matthew (E), Wally Schieferdecker
Fenwick:	Ethel Davies, Borough Warden (E)
Haddam:	Susan Bement, Derek Turner (E)
Lyme:	J. Melvin Woody, Lisa Niccolai
Old Lyme:	Peter Cable, Suzanne Thompson
Old Saybrook:	Madge Fish, Belinda Ahern (E)
Former MRPA:	Raul Debrigard, Stasia DeMichele (E)
Former CRERPA:	Two vacancies
DEEP:	David Blatt
Staff:	None present.
Guests:	Liz Glidden, Haddam Town Planner

Call to Order

Chairman Melvin **Woody** called the regular meeting of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission to order at RiverCOG offices located at 145 Dennison Road, Essex at 7:30p.

Approval of 6/27/13 Regular Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Fish**, the minutes were approved unanimously. **Thomas** and **Cable** abstain.

Discussion

Liz Glidden discussed concepts for a 12.9 acre parcel located on Higganum Cove in Haddam. Some of the wetlands associated with a former industrial site are considered contaminated (sufficient PCB contamination to require even hiking trails to be remediated). The site was explained to be #10 on a list of 15 Superfund sites in the state. The parcel was abandoned by the owner years ago with the taxes being left unpaid. The property represents an opportunity for the Town to acquire the parcel by foreclosure. A new state law, which became effective on July 1, 2013, allows for transfer of the property without the requirement of reclaiming the site prior to transfer.

The EPA has "interest" in the site and it was reported that there is a small chance that the parcel would qualify for some funds.

Three parcels across Higganum Cove, known as the "McCane" parcels are on the market. The parcels total 22 acres and are listed for \$435,000. If Haddam were to acquire the McCane parcels and foreclose on the contaminated property, the ownership would include all the land bounding Higganum Cove. The Town, however, would likely not be looking to bond the purchase.

Gateway members suggested that Glidden return to the Commission for a seed money request when project is somewhat more delineated. **Niccolai** suggested that Glidden contact the state's open space land and watershed acquisition group (David Styger), the Trust for Public Land, Jim Ventres because of his experience with state and open space acquisition, to the USF&WS (but probably wrong side of the river) and funding for flood prone properties and funds related to climate change impacts.

Correspondence/Staff Report

Staff reported that CT River Museum Ex.Dir. Jerry Roberts has resigned to pursue investigation of the history of the British Raid on Essex in 1814.

Federal Government has put a “hold” on further Blueway designations due to questions over individual property rights impacts.

Saybrook Outer Light is currently open for bid for ownership by private entities or individuals. A legislative approval is required for lease of the land upon which the lighthouse sits.

Regarding Klar property, members discussed language presented via email by Attorney Charles Andres of New Haven. Members requested that Downes send a formal letter to DEEP Analyst Beth Brothers proposing the reversion language suggested by Andres. Motion by **Wilson**, seconded by **Cable**. Approved unanimously. **Blatt** abstained. The members of the Commission authorized the Executive Committee to authorize the spending up to double the original amount for legal services by Attorney Andres. Motion by **Thomas**, seconded by **Wilson**. **Blatt** abstained.

Discussion of CYCP update. Members requested that Downes send McHutchison the most updated roster of GW members.

Treasurer’s Report

- a.) **Wilson** reported that the overall portfolio value is down slightly due to the depressed bond market. The balance is currently approximately 54% are currently in equities.
- b.) **Wilson** reported that there are changes to two holdings:
 - (1) one investment came due and was reinvested in a similar investment
 - (2) treasury funds were transferred to a corporate bond fund.
- c.) **Wilson** reported that investigation continues on insurance alternatives.
- d.) **Wilson** reported that the monthly bill for staffing services amounts to \$1,357.40, which included \$814.44 of overhead and \$542.96 worth of staff hours. Motion to approve the payment by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Schieferdecker**, passed unanimously.

Referrals for Commission Discussion

Old Saybrook. Petition to allow the Zoning Commission to “waive” light pole requirements to allow heights up to 20 feet. Current standards, included in Section 62, Access, Circulating, Parking and Loading, restricts light pole heights to 14 feet. The petitioner wants to present that allowing poles up to 20 feet in height will provide “better distribution of light with fewer light fixtures and poles”.

Although this petitioner is interested in a property located far out of the Conservation Zone, the regulation *may* impact the Marine Commercial District and Saybrook Point Districts in town. Pursuant to Section 25-102g CGS, the GW Commission must “approve” or “disapprove” the petition. The proposal is set up to allow the Zoning Commission to decide whether or not the 20 foot height is appropriate at any given property. Depending upon circumstances (visibility from residential properties or visibility from the river or other “sensitive” areas) the OSZC could disallow a request for the 20 foot lights unless they were shielded from view from the property, which is a current requirement of their regulations.

Motion to approve by **Debrigard**, seconded by **Blatt**:

- (1) Exclude riverfront lots from the option of taller light poles;
- (2) Lighting should be shielded from neighbors.

Commission members also questioned the use of the term “waiver” for the option request and suggested using some

other tool. Motion passed unanimously with **Fish** abstaining.

Staff Actions.

Letters of “no opposition” were sent by Downes to the Essex ZBA for five variance appeals as follows:

Stacks, 42 North Main Street (M27 L66)
Reed, 7 North Main Street (M47 L118)
Watson, 34 South Main Street (M46 L48)
Essex Library Association, 33 West Avenue (M32 L21)
Gemelli, 19 Mallard Point (M71 L18-1)

In four of five cases, the view of the proposed work from the river was blocked by either topography or the building to which additions were to be added. One involved such small renovation that visibility was not a concern.

Discussion of Gateway Standards

Fischbach reviewed four revisions to the proposed standards. If the proposed standards meet the approval of GW members, the next step will be to discuss the standards with each of the eight town zoning authorities in the GW compact. Motion by **Bement**, seconded by **Fischbach** to proceed with letters to each of the eight towns in the compact, followed by presentations at each of the eight towns zoning commissions with the meetings scheduled and coordinated and “cc’d” to GW town representatives. Motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Outreach. Outreach chair **Thomas** suggested canceling the cruise for the 2013 calendar year as he has concerns that attendance is inadequate by those who are decision-makers in the conservation zone. Further, the trip is always subject to weather conditions. Finally, **Thomas** feels that the trip is a “poor investment” of GW funds given the attendance question.

Consensus of members is that the scheduling of the trip during the upcoming weeks will be during challenging times in terms of getting desired attendance.

Motion by **Thomas**, seconded by **Schieferdecker** to cancel the 2013 boat trip. Approved with 3 opposing votes. **Fischbach** to advise Captain Yuknat.

Thomas informed members that GW will be moving forward with having a table at the three upcoming local fairs – Hamburg, Chester and Haddam Neck. A fourth event was suggested – the 8-Mile event at Devil’s Hopyard. Motion to authorize entry fees by **Thomas**, seconded by **Wilson**, passed unanimously. A sign-up sheet was suggested for “manning” the table was circulated. **Wilson** noted how much she enjoyed be at the table during last year’s Chester Fair.

Thompson informed members regarding how to get podcasts of her radio broadcasts at www.wliswmrd.net Go to “demand box” for the podcasts on the CT Outdoor Show.

Old Business. None.

New Business. **Debrigard** advised that the CT Siting Council was working on wind turbine regulations, and he strongly urged GW to “be at the table”. **Debrigard** made a motion, seconded by **Fischbach**, to empower the Executive Committee to meet with Downes to be a part of the Siting Council’s process. After a brief discussion, the motion was amended to empower **Debrigard**, rather than the Executive Committee, to work with Downes and pursue the matter. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Upon motion by **Wilson**, seconded by **Fischbach**, and passed unanimously, the meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.