

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

July 27, 2017

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

Chester:	Margaret (Peggy) Wilson, Errol Horner
Deep River:	Nancy Fischbach, Kate Cotton
East Haddam:	Harvey Thomas, Crary Brownell (E)
Essex:	Claire Matthews, Jerri MacMillian
Fenwick:	Fran Adams, Borough Warden
Haddam:	Susan Bement, Vacancy
Lyme:	J. Melvin Woody, Wendy Hill
Old Lyme:	Peter Cable, Suzanne Thompson (E)
Old Saybrook:	Madge Fish, Bill Webb
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 7:30 pm.

Introduction

Woody introduced Bill Webb of Old Saybrook, who succeeded Belinda Ahern who resigned from the Commission.

Approval of 6/22/17 Regular Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by **Bement**, seconded by **Cable**, the 6/22/17 regular meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurers Report

Financial Management. **Wilson** reported that members of the Finance Committee with Essex Financial to interview advisors to replace Patrick Gingras. The Committee chose Bob Marcinek and recommended the Commission accept the recommendation, which it did.

Proposed Budget for 2017-2018. The proposed budget was discussed (attached). **Wilson** noted that the funding for staff increased while proposed costs for contractual services and legal fees was reduced. Motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Matthews**, to approve. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report. **Wilson** reported that the report will now include two lines in addition to those currently in the report, Land and Grants in order to separate operating expenses and those associated with land acquisition and grants. **Wilson** noted that a review will be conducted to insure that the operating budget is within approved Gateway spending policies.

Audit/Compilation. **Wilson** reviewed the fact that Joe Wollack, Gateway account, has again confirmed that the Commission does not need a full audit. A summary of a letter of explanation submitted by Wollack was read aloud by **Matthews**. The finance committee will again reconsider the need for an audit as required by Commission bylaws (required at the Annual Meeting). Part of the discussion will be a determination whether GW expenses are as uncomplicated as they usually are, especially since GW conducts no fundraising activities. Motion to approve by **Wilson**, seconded by **Fischbach**, passed unanimously with the exception of a vote of opposition by **Thomas**.

Bills: **Wilson** reported that a bill is presented for payment for July staffing in the amount of \$976.73 (JHTD), \$70.05 (PF) with \$1665.10 (overhead). Also billed is \$253.06 reimbursement to COG for boat trip expenses (COG credit card used at BigY) and \$33.71 in mileage for JHTD. Total bill, \$2,998.64. Motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement**,

passed unanimously.

Introduction: Madge Fish of Old Saybrook introduced new Old Saybrook alternate Bill Webb.

Items of Interest Report

Goodspeed Airport Scenic Easement. Downes reported status of State review of Mellon scenic easement. Final edits are minor according to DEEP Analyst Allyson Clarke. Motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Debrigard**, to authorize Downes to review and approve as appropriate.

Lords Cove Phragmites Eradication Project. Downes reported that herbicide spraying is underway with Rich and Laurie Snarski hand-spraying the more sensitive vegetated areas in close proximity to the tidal creeks. The project is on schedule.

Carlson's Landing, Essex. Still no decision on this development which includes an accessory restaurant use. Concerns expressed by neighbors includes groundwater effluent issues (concern has long been expressed regarding potential septic issues from high density development and restaurant uses in Essex Village) and garbage.

NEC Futures, Kenyon Bypass. It was reported that the Federal Rail Administration has dropped plans for the "Kenyon Bypass" which would have resulted in the construction of either a third lower river bridge or possibly a tunnel under the river as well as the establishment of a new Right-of-Way through much of southeastern Connecticut. Old Lyme and other southeastern CT municipalities and numerous other private and public organizations and entities fought hard to have the Kenyon Bypass removed from the early-stage plan.

New Members. New members present include Wendy Hill (Lyme alternate) and Bill Webb (Old Saybrook alternate).

Old Lyme Town PoCD. Although Gateway has no authority over adoption of this update, Cable described the issue brought forward in the proposed update, which recommends removing hurdles to challenges faced by property owners when trying to comply with FEMA standards for protection of residential structures. In addition, the proposed language seeks to find ways to permit property owners to protect their waterfront properties through the "hardening" of individual property shorelines through structural solutions (walls, rip-rap). Members authorized staff to send an advisory letter to the Old Lyme Planning Commission stating that GW has concerns regarding avoiding the contravention of GW protective standards with respect to visual mass. The comments should go on to state that the need to elevate structures for protective purposes is recognized but protection of the "natural and traditional riverway scene" should be taken into consideration as well. Letter to be drafted for review at August, 2017 meeting.

LTA Conference. Downes relayed information regarding a national Land Trust Alliance conference to be held October 26 -28, 2017 in Denver, CO.

East Haddam Land Trust Calendar. Downes passed around the new calendar. Note that EHLT has indicated that copies are available if GW members are interested.

Staff Review of Variances: None of significance.

Regulation Referrals: None.

Committee Reports

Land.

- (a) **Wilson** described the ongoing efforts for the Hillside Project. A possible opportunity for protection arose with what was described as a tax auction to occur in August for a property of interest. The property was appraised at \$35K with the owner owing approximately \$8000 in taxes. The property is less than three acres. A motion to pledge up to \$35K was forwarded by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement**. The motion passed unanimously.
- (b) **Wilson** reported that it is understood through David Brown that the reimbursement of the funds that went to purchase the Brainard Quarry Preserve site from the USF&WS are potentially going to come available in September.
- (c) The Land Committee will be scheduling a meeting prior to the August 24, 2017 meeting to discuss several land acquisition-related topics with a report being made to the full Commission that evening.

Governance. Fischbach reported that she is continuing the work on the CT River Land Trust transfer. No update on Gateway Standards.

Outreach. Hill will be joining Cotton and the rest of the Outreach Committee (Cotton, Hill, Cable, Woody, Thompson and Thomas) on efforts including a decision on how to produce press releases. As discussed previously, questions to sort through include “What do we want to say about ourselves”, to whom would these press releases be directed, and, what do we want people who hear/see it do about it?

New Business. The RiverCOG Regional Planning Committee Regional PoCD process is starting with two public “kick-off” meetings in Westbrook and Middletown. The Westbrook event is scheduled for August 17, 2017 at the Westbrook Town Hall while the Middletown event is scheduled for 1pm on September 16, 2017 at the Usdan Student Center at Wesleyan University. A survey can be taken online at the website set up for the Regional Plan effort www.rivercogregionalplan.org/survey

Old Business.

RiverCOG made the decision to stay in Centerbrook, at least for the next year. Gateway meetings will therefore continue to be scheduled at 145 Dennison Road in Essex as they have been for the past five years.

Adjournment. Motion to adjourn at 8:55pm by Bement, seconded by Fischbach, passed unanimously.