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Chester
Deep River
East Haddam
Essex
Haddam
Lyme
Old Lyme
Old Saybrook

DRAFT CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES February 26, 2026

Present: **Chester:** Misha Semënov-Leiva, Tom Brelsford (Alternate); **Deep River:** Jerry Roberts, John Cunningham (Alternate); **Essex:** James Hiller (Alternate); **Haddam:** Mike Farina (Secretary); **Lyme:** Lisa Wadge (Alternate); **Old Lyme:** Suzanne Thompson (Chair); **Old Saybrook:** William Webb (Vice Chair), Ellen FitzGerald (Alternate); **RiverCOG North:** Raul de Brigard, Alan Ponanski (Alternate); **RiverCOG South:** Gail Reynolds; Anne Redfield (Alternate); **CT DEEP:** Kathleen Perzanowski.

Also Present: NA

Absent: **East Haddam:** Debbie Langdon; Philip Barlow (Alternate); **Essex:** Peter Fleischer; **Fenwick:** Newt Brainard; **Haddam:** Erin Ortega (Treasurer and Alternate); **Lyme:** Susan Fox; **Old Lyme:** Greg Futoma (Alternate); **Ex Officio:** Melvin Woody.

Staff support present: Susie Beckman, RiverCOG Staff

Call to Order: Chair Thompson called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

1. Roll Call
2. Seating of Alternates: James Hiller (Essex), Lisa Wadge (Lyme)
3. Approval of Agenda

A **motion** was made by M. Farina, seconded by J. Hiller, to **APPROVE** the agenda, as amended.

Amendment: The Review of Referrals will be modified as follows:

Referrals b and c are removed from the agenda due to postponement request by the applicant.

Amendment: Executive Session is removed.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, L. Wadge, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. deBrigard, G. Reynolds, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

4. Approval of Minutes: 12/4/2025 Regular Meeting

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, seconded by M. Farina, to **APPROVE** the January 22, 2026 CRGC Regular Meeting minutes.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, L. Wadge, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. deBrigard, G. Reynolds, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

5. Public Comment - None

6. Review of Referrals & Preliminary Discussions

a. Zoning Regulation Amendment – Old Lyme

S. Beckman provided an overview of the referred application that was sent to commissioners earlier in the month. Staff recommendation was an administrative review but because there was not time constraint, a commissioner requested the referral be reviewed by the full commission. The application requests an amendment to the uses in the C-30 and C-30S zoning districts. Gateway Standards do not currently regulate uses. No construction or changes to sites are proposed so the amendments do not conflict with Gateway Standards or the mission of CRGC to protect the unique scenic, ecological, scientific and historic value of the CT River and Gateway Conservation Zone.

A **motion** was made by J. Hiller, seconded by W. Webb, to write a letter to the Old Lyme Zoning Commission stating that the CRGC does not oppose the changes if they are adopted as presented because Gateway Standards do not regulate uses and no Gateway Standards are violated by the proposed amendment. The letter will serve as the approval of the regulations. R. deBrigard stated that Gateway Standards may not regulate uses but state statute allows CRGC to regulate uses. CRGC may oppose proposed uses in the future and the letter should not make a definitive statement that Gateway Standards do not regulate uses. The original motion was amended. Mr. Hiller and Mr. Webb accepted the amended motion.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, L. Wadge, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. deBrigard, G. Reynolds, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

7. Correspondence/Staff Report – CT River Conservancy sent a thank you for CRGC’s sponsorship of the Source to Sea Cleanup program.

8. ~~Executive Session~~ – W. Webb provided an update that he and E. FitzGerald talked with Old Saybrook First Selectman. W. Webb recommended talking with Old Saybrook Zoning Commission about clarifying the differences in the Riparian Buffer Setback and Structural Setback, both which are 100ft because there is confusion about being able to use improvements to the Riparian Setback area in exchange for building in the Structural Setback.

9. Chairman’s Report

a. S. Thompson reported on Senate Bill 151 in the CT Legislature Housing Committee that would significantly reduce setbacks in certain areas with the goal of encouraging the development of starter homes. RiverCOG submitted testimony against. W. Webb contacted Senator Marx, who sponsored the bill, to discuss the implications for the Gateway Commission goals to protect the Gateway Conservation Zone. Senator Marx has been invited to attend a CRGC meeting and to meet with Sam Gold, Executive Director of RiverCOG, to discuss how to meet her goals without compromising CRGC’s mission.

b. S. Thompson reported on Bill 5334 that will establish a statewide requirement of a 10ft Riparian Buffer protection area along wetlands and waterways. Commissioners were encouraged write testimony in support of Riparian Buffer protections and recommend larger buffer areas referencing CRGC success with protecting 50ft of Riparian Buffer.

c. CLCC Conference registration can be done online and have CRGC invoiced for

registration fees. S. Beckman sent the registration link and will resend. So far, S. Thompson and A. Ponanski have used the CRGC sponsor tickets, G. Reynolds is attending as a CT Botanical Society workshop speaker, G. Futoma and A. Redfield are attending half-day for town commissions and R. de Brigard has registered.

10. Committee Reports

d. Finance - Approve Bills

A **motion** was made by A. Ponanski, seconded by R. de Brigard, to pay the following bills. Amy Huet: \$126.50 (5.5 hours to complete January 22, 2026 minutes); RiverCOG: \$6,052.10 (for hours billed in January 2026); Connecticut River Museum: \$500 (Bronze Sponsorship of the Environmental Summit); Halloran and Sage: sent a reimbursement of \$840.00 for overpayment in August.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, L. Wadge, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. deBrigard, G. Reynolds, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

e. Communications – Update

G. Reynolds reported the Communications Committee will begin providing stories to local news outlets. Commissioners are requested to share information about the news outlets in their communities that should receive stories. CRGC historic documents digitization is also being explored along with the costs. RiverCOG shared information about an opportunity to use Laserfiche to digitize CRGC documents currently stored on paper. A volunteer is needed to go through 13 boxes of documents to determine what to keep and how to organize it. Someone will need to be hired to do the digitization. RiverCOG has offered its copier-scanner for use.

f. Rules of Procedures – Updates

A. Ponanski reported the Committee will be requesting an opinion from CRGC Attorney Matt Willis regarding CRGC’s authority to define items such as structures that may be defined differently in each town, to require certain documentation that may not be required by towns for applications and to create additional response options such as “insufficient application.” An estimate of the costs to have the attorney review will be brought to the full commission in March. An internal document is being created to organize and provide a quick overview of referred applications including what documentation is missing and whether applications meet Gateway Standards. S. Thompson requested M. Willis provide training and a refresher to commissioners regarding CRGC statutes and authority as well as Gateway Standards.

g. Land – Update

R. deBrigard reported the Committee is considering a mapping project to identify developable land that CRGC could target for preservation. J. Roberts recommended contacting the town land trusts for recommendations on properties that are targeted for preservation. Preventing clear cutting of trees is also being discussed by the Committee. This may require collaboration with the Rules of Procedures Committee.

11. Old Business - None

12. New Business

W. Webb discussed a potential application from Old Saybrook that includes affordable housing. The

applicant may use the Incentive Housing Zone (IHZ) overlay option that is available but needs an adjustment to the Gateway Standard for coverage to make the project viable. The other option to the developer is to use the 8-30g appeal statute, which would bypass CRGC and town Zoning regulations. The developer is amendable to using the IHZ overlay if CRGC is willing to discuss relaxing the coverage standard. CRGC is willing to consider relaxing the Gateway Standards under special circumstances to allow affordable housing. S. Beckman and W. Webb will determine the process to review relaxing and adopting standards for that purpose.

13. Adjournment

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, seconded by J. Hiller, to adjourn the meeting.

Voting in favor: M. Semenov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, L. Wadge, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. deBrigard, G. Reynolds, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susie Beckman, Administrative Support Staff to CRGC

The next regular meeting of the Gateway Commission is scheduled for

Thursday, March 26, 2026 at 7pm