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

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 22, 2026

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

Absent: Chester: Tom Brelsford (Alternate); **Fenwick:** Newt Brainard; **East Haddam:** Debbie Langdon, Philip Barlow (Alternate); **Haddam:** Erin Ortega (Treasurer and Alternate); **Lyme:** Ray Fusco (Alternate); **RiverCOG South**: Anne Redfield (Alternate)

Staff support present: Sarah Makowicki, CRGC Staff

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Thompson called the meeting to order at 7:36 PM.
2. **Roll Call**
3. **Seating of Alternates:** None
4. **Approval of Agenda:**

   A **motion** was made by G. Futoma, Seconded J. Roberts, to approve the agenda. The Review of Referrals was updated to move Old Lyme Text Amendment, a prior approval, from Old Business on the agenda to Referrals, item 7e.

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

5. **Approval of Minutes:** 9/24/2026 Regular Meeting

   A **motion** was made by W. Webb, Seconded by J. Hiller, to approve the September 24, 2026 Regular Meeting minutes.

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

6. **Public Comment: No comments from the public.**

7. **Review of Referrals & Preliminary Discussions**

a. **Special Exception – 5 Barnes Rd, Old Saybrook**

Mr. Brown presented for the applicant Mr. Manafort, who was also present. The special exception request is to allow for the removal of an existing storage building (approx. 768 s.f.) and construct a 768 s.f. (20' height) storage building in a new location. The Commission discussed location of the new storage shed, stating that existing buildings and structures will block the new structure from the River, but will be visible from the marina's inlet. Ms. Wadge asked to see architectural renderings, but the applicant only had a photo of an existing building on the property that they are matching and the building plans of the proposed structure. Mr. Webb asked if the comments about vegetation made by Old Saybrook town engineer Jeff Jacobson were addressed. Mr. Brown stated that, yes, all comments were addressed. Ms. Makowicki shared the document with Mr. Jacobson's comments and the applicant's responses with the Commission.

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, Seconded J. Roberts, to send a letter to the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission stating that the Commission does not oppose the Special Exception for 5 Barnes Ave.

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

b. **Variance – 50 Crosstrees Hill, Essex**

Applicants Patrick and Susanna Smith presented the application to the Commission. The variance request is to allow for the installation of a 15'x24' inground pool and bluestone paver patio in an existing lawn area with existing retaining wall, which is within the 50' Riparian Buffer. The Commission was previously referred a similar application for this property and discussed why they were not in favor of that application and if the changes were significant enough to change that opinion. The applicants proposed an alternate location for the pool.

Motion was made by P. Fleischer, Seconded J. Roberts, to send a letter to the Essex ZBA stating that the Commission finds that the application for 50 Crosstrees Hill does not comply with the following Gateway Standards:

(1) 101E. GATEWAY BUFFER AREA. Anything to the contrary in these Regulations notwithstanding, no building or other improvement shall be located within one hundred (100) feet of the coastal jurisdiction line, as defined in the Connecticut General Statutes, of the Connecticut River or any of its tributaries or associated wetlands, or the portion of the Falls River easterly, or downstream, of River Road.

Therefore the Commission objects to the proposed application for 50 Crosstrees Hill.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, P. Fleischer, M. Farina, L. Wadge, S. Thompson, W. Webb, G. Reynolds, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** R. de Brigard; **Abstaining:** None. The motion passed, 9-1-0.

c. **Variance and Special Exception: 505 Main St., Old Saybrook**

Ms. Nanai and Ms. Foulke from Point One Architects. The applicant is proposing to demolish the existing

5-bedroom year-round dwelling and construct a new FEMA compliant 5-bedroom year-round dwelling, install a new 100% CT public health code-compliant septic system and other associated improvements on the subject lot. The proposed gross total floor area is 8,214 s.f. (gross) (7,288 s.f. net). This necessitates a Special Exception due to the total floor area exceeding thirty-five hundred (3,500) square feet. The applicant is requesting a variance of Par 58.2/58.6 (riparian buffer setback/100' required/84.2' to utility platform, 84.3' to garage/house, 84.6' to porch, 94.3' to deck steps and 96.3' to deck proposed to permit the construction of an 8,214 s.f. house at 505 Main Street. The Commission discussed the reduction of non-conformity by moving the structure closer to the street and the difference in visual bulk from the existing to the new structure.

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, seconded by P. Fleischer to send a letter to the Old Saybrook ZBA stating that the Commission finds that the application for 505 Main Street does not comply with the Gateway Standards, but the Commission does not object to the application based on the following:

The proposed structure is placed so that the maximum encroachment into the 100' Structural Setback is reduced; the footprint and volume within the setback is mitigated, reducing the overall non-conformities.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, M. Farina, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, G. Reynolds, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** L. Wadge, J. Roberts; **Abstaining:** P. Fleischer. The motion passed, 7-2-1.

A **motion** was made by L. Wadge, seconded by W. Webb to send a letter to the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission stating that the Commission finds that the Special Exception for 505 Main Street does not conform to the following review criteria:

Sect, III, J., 4.:

(e) Building forms are to be scaled to the particular environmental setting to avoid excessively massive forms that fail to enhance the hillside character. Massing of structural elements such as large roof areas are to be broken up to approximate natural slopes.

(g) Site design is to preserve the existing natural landscape where possible and include new landscaping which is compatible with existing natural vegetation, the scenic character of the area, and increases visual buffering between the building and the Connecticut River within the Gateway Conservation Zone; due to the increased bulk.

Based on this, the Commission recommends:

Modifications, such as angling the garage, to reduce the visual bulk and be reconfigured out of the 100' setback. If these recommendations are taken into consideration, the building would not require a variance.

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

d. **Variance and Special Exception: 15 South Main St., Essex**

Attorney Cassella, Mr. Doane, and Ms. Von Dassel presented for the applicant. The applicant is proposing to remove the detached garage; tear down and reconstruct 15 S. Main St.; retain and remodel with a new foundation 13 S. Main St. No Gateway Standards are violated; therefore, a variance from Gateway Standards is not required. Essex Zoning Regulations require all structures within the Coastal Management Zone to be subject to a Coastal Site Plan Review.

A **motion** was made by J. Hiller, seconded by L. Wadge, to send a letter to the Essex ZBA stating that the Commission defers to the Board because the application for 15 South Main Street complies with Gateway Standards therefore, there is no objection to the proposed application for a variance.

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

A **motion** was made by L. Wadge, seconded by P. Fleischer, to send a letter to the Zoning Commission stating that the Commission finds that the Special Exception conforms to the CT River Gateway criteria. Also, the impact of the development requested in the application will not have significant adverse impact on protection and development of the Gateway Conservation Zone; therefore, there is no objection to the proposed application for a Special Permit.

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

e. **Old Lyme Text Amendment-**

Ms. Makowicki presented the text amendment to the Commission, stating that they have previously seen and commented on the amendment. There has been no change to the content of the amendment.

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, seconded by L. Wadge to resend the letter from July 2024 to the Old Lyme Zoning Commission.

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

8. **Public Hearing** – Adoption of Incentive Housing Zone (IHZ) Regulation Text into CRGC Standards

Chair Thompson opened the public hearing. The Commission will send notification of the text amendment of the standards to member towns for any input

A **motion** was made by R. de Brigard , seconded by P. Fleischer, to continue the public hearing until the December 3, 2026 meeting.

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

9. Correspondence/Staff Report

Ms. Makowicki provided an update on the following:

Ms. Makowicki commented that an administration approval was done for 33 Main Street, for the Griswold Inn to demolish and replace part of a building used for staff accommodations on the property.

10. **Chairman's Report:** No other comments or updates.

11. Committee Reports

a. Finance - Approve Bills:

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, seconded by J. Hiller, to pay the following bills: Halloran and Sage: $810.00, RiverCOG September staff support: $3056.92 (including purchase of laptop for $914.59), Ms. Makowicki's October hours: $4402.64, and Ms. Hout's Hours: $143.75. Total Bills: $8413.31.

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

b. Rules of Procedures – Update

The Committee is working on collecting more information on the Chester cell tower issue, and will report back to the Commission at the next meeting.

c. Communications – Update

d. Land – Update: None.

12. Old Business: Mr. Fleischer asked that a Water Quality Ad Hoc Committee be formally convened.

A motion was made by P. Fleischer, seconded by L. Wadge to convene the Water Quality Ad Hoc Committee.

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

13. New Business: None

14. Old Business:

Motion was made by J. Roberts and seconded by W. Webb that CRGC is to write a letter to Borough of Fenwick, congratulating them on US General Services Administration selecting them as recipient of Lynde Point Lighthouse. We welcome the opportunity to work with them/comment on their proposal for public information and access.

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

15. Adjournment

A motion was made by W. Webb, seconded by L. Wadge, to adjourn the meeting.
Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, P. Fleischer, M. Farina, L. Wadge, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, G. Reynolds, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion passed, 10-0-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Makowicki, CRGC Staff

The next regular meeting of the Gateway Commission is scheduled for

Thursday, December 3, 2026 at 7pm