



**CT River Gateway Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes – Hybrid
Meeting Thursday, February 22, 2024
7:00 PM RiverCOG
Conference Room and via Zoom**

Present: **Chester:** Misha Semënov-Leiva, Tom Brelsford (Alternate)(Arrived at 7:33); **Deep River:** Jerry Roberts; **Haddam:** Mike Farina (Secretary), Erin Ortega (Alternate); **Old Lyme:** Suzanne Thompson (Chair), Greg Futoma (Alternate); **Old Saybrook:** Diane Stober (Treasurer), **RiverCOG North:** Raul de Brigard, Alan Ponanski (Alternate); **CT DEEP:** Kathleen Perzanowski; **Ex Officio:** Melvin Woody

Absent: **East Haddam:** Crary Brownell, Debbie Langdon; **Fenwick:** Newt Brainard; **Lyme:** Susan Fox; **Old Saybrook:** William Webb (Vice Chair); **RiverCOG South:** Judy Preston;

Staff support present: Susie Beckman (RiverCOG)

I. Agenda

1. Call to Order: Chair Thompson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. Approval of Agenda

Approval of February 22, 2024 Regular Meeting Agenda as presented.

A **motion** was made by J. Roberts, seconded by M. Farina, to approve the Regular Meeting Agenda.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, M. Farina, E. Ortega, S. Thompson, G. Futoma, D. Stober, R. de Brigard, A. Ponanski, K. Perzanowski, M. Woody; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 11-0-0.

3. Approval of the January 25, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

A **motion** was made by J. Roberts, seconded by G. Futoma, to approve the January 25, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, M. Farina, E. Ortega, S. Thompson, G. Futoma, D. Stober, R. de Brigard, A. Ponanski, K. Perzanowski, M. Woody; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 11-0-0.

4. Public Comment

Neal Parron – Haddam Neck: Inquiring if the Commission will be making the annual ride up the River to survey how the properties have changed? Mr. Parron commented that he has witnessed a slow expansion of housing along the River with local Zoning Regulations and ZBA's allowing for this expansion. The Chairwoman validated Mr. Parron's concerns, stating that the local governments need to work with the Gateway Commission to bring these projects before the board. Mr. Parron suggested that Commission needs to educate the property owners on the regulations of Gateway and their purpose.

5. Review of Referrals & Preliminary Discussions

a. Old Saybrook – Proposed Zoning Amendments – House Keeping

Ms. Beckman noted that the proposed amendment to the zoning regulations is mostly housekeeping measures and do not impact the Gateway Conservation Zone. Ms. Beckman noted the only impact in the Gateway zone is the regulation concerning roof decks, which she states, Old Saybrook is making a little more conservative, which would be in the Gateway Commission’s favor.

A **motion** was made by R. de Brigard, seconded by G. Futoma, that the CRGC does not have any objections to this proposal. A letter is to be sent to Old Saybrook Zoning Commission stating this.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, M. Farina, S. Thompson, D. Stober, R. de Brigard, K. Perzanowski, **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; The motion **passed**, 7-0-0.

b. Essex – 10 Collins Lane – Variance

Engineer Joe Wren and Designer Denise Von Dassel presented for the applicant and homeowner Andy Guziewicz was in attendance. Mr. Guziewicz made comments asking for the support of the Commission.

Mr. Wren stated that the proposed work does not expand the gross floor area with the existing deck being reconstructed. Pavement on the driveway will be removed and replaced with pervious pea stone materials, other areas will be converted to grass and landscaped areas. The proposed stone patio will be of pervious materials. The proposed pool area is within the 100 ft setback and no landscaping is proposed within the 50 ft vegetative buffer. Current design of fencing will remain. Landscape plan is indigenous plantings. Plantings screen pool area and raised patio. Whole house is within the 100ft review area.

Ms. Von Dassel stated that there is no expansion of the building. The reconstructed north and east side of deck will be reduced to less than half the current width on north side, with a reduced width on the west side corner. The east side near cove stays the same. Exterior staircase is being removed from second floor roof deck on the southeast corner of the house. Exterior changes on the east side are to bring back historical elements of the structure. The Commission recommended the use of non-reflective glass on the cove side and noted that any lighting should be Dark Skies-compliant. The Commission asked if the raised patio plantings allow the pool to be seen during the winter months? Mr. Wren responded by going over the landscape plan, pointing out the deciduous plantings. There are no plans to upgrade lighting.

The Commission stated that the new construction is within 100 ft setback, natural contour of land is changing because of a wall needed to establish a level ground for the pool patio. Mr. Wren stated that there will be no grading or contouring, wall will be built into the natural contour of the land to create a level area for the pool. Alternate locations were discussed, because of zoning and health regulations other placements of the pool are not feasible. Area left of the house is the septic area.

Public comment, John Foster 8 Collins Lane, is concerned with landscaping. Proposed trees can grow thirty to forty feet in height would block view of the River and cast shadow over patio. Property owner and Commission discussed proposed trees, and the view of the property from the river.

A **motion** was made by J. Roberts, seconded by R. de Brigard, to write a letter stating: As policy, the CT River Gateway Commission does not approve structures inside the 100' setback. There are aspects of the plan that the Commission appreciates, such as the landscaping plan and the inclusion of pervious surfaces, the Commission does not support new structure including pools within the 100 ft setback.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, M. Farina, S. Thompson, D. Stober, R. de Brigard, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; The motion **passed**, 7-0-0.

5. Correspondence/Staff Report

Ms. Beckman received a call from Lyme Land Trust with a request for a Grant to clean up phragmites in Joshua Creek. The Chairwoman advised Ms. Beckman to respond that at this time the Gateway Commission is not dispersing grants for this type of project. The past Commission grants involving phragmites control were pilot programs and the Commission determined then that it would not be awarding grants to ongoing invasive species control programs. Ms. Beckman advised that the Commission make a policy regarding funds for phragmite cleanup.

Ms. Beckman received a thank you letter from the Connecticut River Conservancy for supporting the Source to Sea cleanup last year, also they have requested support again this year of their efforts. A request has been made for the Conservancy to come to the April meeting to talk with the Commission. The Chairwoman asked that their presentation be restricted to 15 minutes.

The Commission discussed the Communications Committee making policy or criteria as to how Gateway will respond to grants and sponsorships going forward.

Ms. Beckman received a thank you letter from the Connecticut Land Conservation Council for the Commission's sponsorship.

Ms. Beckman received an email from a local teacher informing the Commission that her students were using the Gateway website to discover information on invasive species and found it very helpful. The students recommended additional content for the webpage.

Ms. Beckman informed the Commission on HB5218, Establishing riparian buffers and revision of certain inland wetland provisions.

There were three administrative reviews and an expected application from Essex for Hubbard Park baseball field for the replacement of the concession stand and shed.

Update on property in Chester, the property owners have been notified that they will have to come before the Gateway Commission.

At the recommendation of the Commission, Ms. Beckwith will list administrative approvals handled by staff each month, by address, on meeting Agendas.

6. Chairman's Report

None

7. Old Business

a. Haddam – Cell Tower Siting Ad Hoc Committee Update

Mr. de Brigard updated the Commission and noted that the Connecticut Siting Council (CSC) scheduled a meeting to accept comments on March 20th, which is prior to the Commission’s next regular meeting. The Commission reviewed visuals released by CSC that use a crane to show where the tower would be. Mr. de Brigard advised that the pole being proposed be a lighter color that blends with the sky and be of a non-reflective finish. The letter will be cleaned up and submitted for the record, and cc’d copies sent to Haddam town officials.

A **motion** was made by R. de Brigard, seconded by J. Roberts, that the CRGC members and staff finish and submit letter to the CSC.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, M. Farina, S. Thompson, D. Stober, R. de Brigard, K. Perzanowski, **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; The motion **passed**, 7-0-0.

8. New Business:

Committee Assignments – The Chairman noted that Land Committee still needs a Chair and that an additional member is needed on the Finance Committee. Ms. Beckman will again email all Commissioners the current Committees list.

9. Committee Reports

a. Treasurer –

RiverCOG staff did not submit its monthly bills or work log to Ms. Stober before February 22 so Ms. Stober did not have time to review or present them to the Commission for discussion and approval. Ms. Stober reported the Commission’s return on its holdings for calendar year 2023 was 10.89% according to Essex Financial.

Ms. Beckman forwarded a draft agreement between CRGC and RiverCOG all Commissioners, the Chairwoman asked Commission members to review the contract draft before the next meeting.

b. Communication Committee – Update

Mr. Futoma, Chair, reported expenditures for the Connecticut Land Conservation Council Conference 1) The Commission pay for the two UConn students who are working as interns, cost \$25 each. 2) Purchase a portable display system for CLCC Conference and other events throughout the year, spending up to \$500.

A **motion** was made by G. Futoma, seconded by M. Farina that the Commission pay for the students admission to the conference and purchase a display system with a maximum of \$500.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, T. Brelsford, J. Roberts, M. Farina, E. Ortega, S. Thompson, G. Futoma, D. Stober, R. de Brigard, A. Ponanski, K. Perzanowski, M. Woody; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 12-0-0.

c. Rules of Procedures – Update

Mr. Ponanski, Chair, reported that there was not a quorum present for the Committee’s Wed, Feb. 21 Zoom meeting. The process of allowing for Commission members to comment on administrative reviews before being sent, which was reviewed at the January Commission meeting, is being followed.

Commission Chair Thompson reminded all Commissioners that per Freedom of Information Act, Commissioners should not Reply All on the emails that Ms. Beckman sends out regarding administrative reviews. They are to submit their comments only to Ms. Beckman and Chair Thompson.

d. Land Committee – Update

General Administration Services and National Park Service have not made a determination yet on Lynde Point Lighthouse applications.

10. Adjournment

A **motion** was made by R. de Brigard, seconded by G. Futoma to adjourn the meeting.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, T. Brelsford, J. Roberts, M. Farina, E. Ortega, S. Thompson, G. Futoma, D. Stober, R. de Brigard, A. Ponanski, K. Perzanowski, M. Woody; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 12-0-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Makowicki, Clerk

The next regular meeting of the Gateway Commission is scheduled for Thursday, March 28, 2024, at 7:00 PM.

Minutes are posted in compliance with Connecticut’s Freedom of Information Act. Please note that edits may be made to these minutes prior to their acceptance by the Commission at its next meeting. Any changes will be included within the next meeting’s minutes.