



**CT River Gateway Commission  
Regular Meeting Minutes – Hybrid  
Meeting Thursday, May 23, 2024  
7:00 PM RiverCOG  
Conference Room and via Zoom**

**Present:** **Chester:** Misha Semënov-Leiva; **Deep River:** Jerry Roberts; **Essex:** Jim Hiller (Alternate); **Haddam:** Mike Farina (Secretary); **Lyme:** Susan Fox; **Old Lyme:** Suzanne Thompson (Chair), Greg Futoma (Alternate); **Old Saybrook:** William Webb (Vice Chair), Diane Stober (Treasurer); **RiverCOG North:** Alan Ponanski (Alternate)(also seated for East Haddam); **RiverCOG South:** Dr. Clayton Penniman; **Ex Officio:** Melvin Woody

**Absent:** **Chester:** Tom Brelsford (Alternate); **Essex:** Peter Fleischer; **East Haddam:** Crary Brownell, Debbie Langdon; **Fenwick:** Newt Brainard; **Haddam:** Erin Ortega (Alternate); **RiverCOG North:** Raul de Brigard; **CT DEEP:** Kathleen Perzanowski

**Staff support present:** Susie Beckman (RiverCOG), Sarah Makowicki (Clerk)

## **I. Agenda**

1. Call to Order: Chair Thompson called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM.

2. Approval of the April 25, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

A **motion** was made by A. Ponanski, seconded by C. Penniman, to approve the April 25, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes as presented.

**Voting in favor:** M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 9-0-0.

3. Guest Speaker

Leo Smith - CT Chapter DarkSky International

Spoke on the CT building code changes that relate to dark sky compliance. The input on the new code changes is due by September. Sierra Club CT, Lights Out CT, CT Audubon and CT Chapter of Dark Sky International recommend these proposed changes and are seeking public support. Materials will be emailed to all Commissioners after the meeting.

4. Public Comment

No public was present.

5. Review of Referrals & Preliminary Discussions

a. Deep River- Gateway Exemption Overlay Zone Text & Map Amendment

The CRGC discussed the latest iteration of the overlay zone. The newest version of the overlay includes an area to the east of the Turnpike Industrial Zone to Book Hill Rd and North to Rattling Valley Rd. The area is outside of the 50' Riparian Buffer and 100' Structural Setback. However, the topography of the area is such that a portion of the mapped area is visible from the CT River, including Post & Pratt Coves. Deep River Planning & Zoning Commission will discuss the new amendment changes with CRGC on June 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6pm. The Commission will respond to Deep River P&Z by letter stating that CRGC is looking forward to the planned meeting on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and the Commission supports the Rules Committee letter dated May 14, 2024.

A **motion** was made by S. Thompson, seconded by J. Roberts, that a letter be sent to the Deep River P & Z Commission stating that CRGC is looking forward to the planned meeting on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and the Commission supports the Rules Committee letter dated May 14, 2024.

**Voting in favor:** M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 9-0-0

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, seconded by A. Ponanski, that Attorney Matt Willis advise CRGC on language in the proposed amendment, payment not exceeding \$400. Also, up to \$2000 be allocated to RiverCOG for a study to determine what topography can and cannot be seen within the proposed Gateway Exemption Zone.

**Voting in favor:** M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 9-0-0

b. Essex – 65 South Main Street

Denise Von Dassell, Designer presented the application along with the builder Chet Blue. The property and structure are outside of the 50' Riparian Setback and 100' Structural Setback. Ms. Von Dassell stated that she believed that the structure would not be seen from South Cove. Also stating, that the structure blends in well with the existing neighborhood. Commission member Mr. Roberts stated that the 31' height of the structure will be seen from South Cove. Ms. Von Dassell stated that the vegetation surrounding the lot are on neighboring properties. The Commission responded that they hoped to see landscaping, including native species, on the final site plan being submitted to Essex Planning and Zoning Board. Vice Chair Mr. Webb went over section 101J.4 which is review criteria for construction in the Gateway Conservation Zone. Ms. Von Dassell agreed with the Commission members that the site plan and proposed structure met the criteria.

A **motion** was made by S. Thompson, seconded by W. Webb, to write a letter of approval of the site plan with recommendations including the addition of a landscaping plan.

**Voting in favor:** M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 9-0-0

c. Essex – CT River Museum, Special Exception

John Bennett, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for CT River Museum presented to the Commission. The museum is proposing a 120 s.f. shed for marine storage. The structure will be secured to pilings and have flood vents to be flood resistant. The shed will be located behind a fenced area and blend into the existing structures with white siding.

A **motion** was made by J. Hiller, seconded by C. Penniman, to send a letter that states that CRGC does not object to the site plan as presented because it meets the Exception criteria of 101E.1 of Essex Zoning Regulations for Gateway Conservation District.

**Voting in favor:** M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 9-0-0

d. Old Saybrook – 55 Sheffield Street

The applicants were not present at the meeting, Ms. Beckman explained the application to the Commission. She stated that the Old Saybrook Elderly Housing complex is proposing an open air pavilion that is within the 100' Riparian and Structural Setback. Fifty-five Sheffield Street complex is an existing non-conforming lot, they are asking the ZBA for a variance in order to build the pavilion. After discussion the Commission felt that any new structure within the 100' setback does not conform to the CRGC Standards and recommended that the applicants search for a non-structural option.

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, seconded by J. Roberts, to write a letter stating the CT River Gateway Commission does not approve of a new structure being built within the 100' Riparian and Structural Setbacks. Adding a recommendation that the applicants search out non-structural options.

**Voting in favor:** M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 9-0-0

5. Correspondence/Staff Report

Ms. Beckman reported that there were three admin reviews last month, Essex 5 Scholes Ln and 3 Crosstrees Hill Rd, also, Old Saybrook regulations text amendment. These are summarized in the Staff Report.

6. Chairman's Report

Chair Thompson reported that the Commission is planning a social get together at Essex Corinthian Yacht Club for June 13<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm.

7. Old Business - None

8. New Business - None

## 9. Committee Reports

### a. Treasurer – Approve Bills

Ms. Stober presented the most recent bills.

A **motion** was made by A. Ponanski, seconded by C. Penniman, to pay the bills. The bills are as follows: RiverCOG: \$5299 for April services, Holloran & Sage: \$400, UConn Clear Training for Commissioners: \$135.

**Voting in favor:** M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 9-0-0

To prepare a budget to present in June, Ms. Stober discussed budget recommendations.

### b. Communications – Update

Mr. Futoma discussed the potential for a Fall Boat Cruise. A deposit should be made before the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Futoma stated that Katie Perzanowski and Sarah Makowicki received training for Wordpress and the website.

Ms. Thompson added that the planned riparian buffer presentation with Dr. Penniman will be **re-**scheduled for the Fall with the Old Lyme Conservation Commission.

### c. Rules of Procedures – Update

Mr. Ponanski said the Rules Committee will meet before the discussion with the Deep River Zoning Commission on June 3. He will provide an update at the June CRGC regular meeting.

### d. Land Committee - Executive Session.

No updates.

## 10. Adjournment

A **motion** was made by A. Ponanski seconded by C. Penniman to adjourn the meeting.

**Voting in favor:** M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 9-0-0

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 PM.

CT River Gateway Commission Regular Meeting, May 23, 2024 Minutes – cont.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Makowicki, Clerk

**The next regular meeting of the Gateway Commission is scheduled for Thursday, June 27, 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.