



**CT River Gateway Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes – Hybrid
Meeting Thursday, October 24, 2024,
7:00 PM RiverCOG
Conference Room and via Zoom**

Present: **Chester:** Misha Semënov-Leiva; **Deep River:** Jerry Roberts; **East Haddam:** Debbie Langdon, **Essex:** Jim Hiller (Alternate); **Haddam:** Mike Farina (Secretary), Erin Ortega (Joined at 7:43) (Alternate); **Old Lyme:** Suzanne Thompson (Chair), Greg Futoma (Alternate); **Old Saybrook:** William Webb (Vice Chair); **Lyme:** Susan Fox, Lisa Wage (Alternate); **RiverCOG North:** Raul de Brigard; Alan Ponanski (Alternate); **RiverCOG South:** Dr. Clayton Penniman; **Ex Officio:** Melvin Woody.

Absent: **Chester:** Tom Brelsford (Alternate); **East Haddam:** Cary Brownell; **Essex:** Peter Fleischer
Fenwick: Newt Brainard; **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 7:03 PM.

2. Roll Call

3. Seating of Alternates

4. Approval of the Agenda

A **motion** was made by M. Farina, seconded by C. Penniman, to approve the October 24, 2024 Regular Meeting Agenda with the addition of under referrals 11 Little Point St, Essex and under Public Hearing to add discussion and voting.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

5. Approval of the September 26, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes.

A **motion** was made by J. Roberts, seconded by C. Penniman, to approve the September 26, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes as presented.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

6. Public Comment

None.

7. Public Hearings

a. Connecticut River Gateway Conservation Zone Standards Amendment

Chairman Thompson asked for a motion to open the public hearing.

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, seconded by J. Hiller, to open the public hearing.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, - 10-0-0.

Chairman Thompson opened Public Comment.

CRGC received a response from Chris Costa, Old Saybrook Town Planner, she stated that she did not oppose and thought that the amendment was appropriate.

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, seconded by J. Hiller, to continue the public hearing until December 5, 2024.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

b. Deep River – Turnpike Industrial District (TID) Regulations Amendment (continued on September 26, 2024)

Chairman Thompson invited public comment. No comments were offered.

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, seconded by C. Penniman, to close the public hearing.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

8. Reviews and Referrals

a. Essex – 17 Riverview St - Variance

Present were the property owner, Tim Ghriskey, and a representative for Hope Proctor, architect. The proposed dormer is not visible from the CT River and is within the existing footprint and does not violate Gateway Standards. The site plan references a proposed pool that was not included in the original application. An addendum to the application was provided by the Town of Essex for the pool, patio and

deck. Commission members discussed the importance of keeping new structures from being constructed in the 100' structural setback.

A **motion** was made by J. Hiller, seconded by W. Webb, to write a to the Essex ZBA for 17 Riverview Street stating that CRGC did not oppose addition of the dormer because it did not violate Gateway Standards. CRGC did, however, oppose construction of a pool, patio and deck within the 100' structural setback.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

b. Old Lyme – 43 Smith Neck, Special Exception Permit

Present were the property owner Jeffery Merriam, Seamas Moran, Civil Engineer, DJ Noys, Waterstreet Landscaping, Robert Cardello, Cardello Architects.

The proposed activity is to demo the existing structure and build a new conforming single-family structure.

The Commission was concerned with the visual impact from the River, especially the amount of exposed glass and the white color of the structure. Mr. Cardello stated that he is familiar with Dark Sky compliant lighting and prefers to use an UV coating on the windows instead of non-reflective glass, because birds fly into non-reflective glass. Mr. Cardello stated the UV coating will eliminate glare seen by humans but birds will recognize that the window is an obstacle. The engineer was questioned about a basement and the terracing of the landscape. The engineer stated fill would be added raising the land 6-8 feet.

The Commission discussed the planting plan with Mr. Noys, stating that existing trees should remain and be on the site plan. The commission expressed appreciation for the effort to use native plants and asked the landscape architect to ensure natives, not cultivars, were used.

A **motion** was made by M. Semënov-Leiva, seconded by W. Webb, to write a letter to the Old Lyme ZC for 43 Smith Neck Rd with the following recommendations to help the structure blend into the surroundings: In order to fit into the River scene, use a muted paint color on the structure to blend in more with the natural environment; reduce the number and size of windows on the River side of the structure; all lighting should be Dark Sky compliant; all windows should have a bird friendly coating that also reduces glare; existing trees should be identified on the site plan and not taken down; native plants, not cultivars, should be used in all landscaping. The Commission appreciates the efforts to use native plants in the landscaping and the architectural design that placed a section of the house perpendicular to the river.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

c. 11 Little Point St. Essex

The application proposes a 64 square foot shed, which is well outside of the 50’ Riparian Buffer setback and the 100’ structural setback. The shed may be visible from the River but is surrounded by existing structures.

A **motion** was made by W. Webb, seconded by J. Hiller, to write a favorable letter to the Essex ZBA for 11 Little Point Street, with the recommendation that the structure be visually buffered on the cemetery side of the property.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, - 10-0-0.

9. Correspondence/Staff Report

Ms. Beckman stated that a summary of the month’s administrative approval was in the staff report.

10. Chairman’s Report – Ms. Thompson thanked the Commission members who volunteered to organize and who attended the River Cruise.

11. Committee Reports

a. Treasurer- Approval of Bills

A **motion** was made by C. Penniman, seconded by M. Farina, to pay the bills. The bills are as follows: RiverCOG: \$6683.71 for September services, CLCC: \$1000, W Design Consulting \$245; Greg Futoma \$250; and Susie Beckman \$19.31.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

b. Communications Committee

The Commission was updated on a joint presentation being planned for the CT Land Conservation Commission conference in March 2025 and Mr. Futoma thanked everyone who participated in the River Cruise.

c. Rules and Procedures

The Committee asked for impacted towns to comment on the cell towers along the River.

12. Old Business – Eversource Projects Ad Hoc Committee

Mr. Webb recused himself from the following discussion.

The Committee asked for additional information from Eversource in a second letter. Of particular interest are alternatives that have been considered to replacing wires that over the river (e.g. has Eversource considered and priced out running wires underneath the river). There has been no response from Eversource on the Commission's second letter. Also, Towns of Haddam and East Haddam have not sent responses to Eversource.

Eversource plans to submit a petition to the CT Siting Council rather than a full application. This may not require a public hearing if the project is not deemed to have substantial or adverse environmental effect.

A **motion** was made by A. Ponanski; seconded by M. Farina, to allocate \$5000 for a special project to seek assistance from an attorney to respond to the Eversource project proposal.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 9-0-0.

13. New Business – Second Haddam Cell Tower proposal

A **motion** was made by W. Webb; seconded by A. Ponanski, to send a second letter with comments on the project.

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

14. Executive Session – Discussion of Litigation Matters

A **motion** was made by A. Ponanski; seconded by C. Penniman, to go into executive session at 9:13.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

A **motion** was made by C. Penniman; seconded by A. Ponanski, to come out of executive session at 9:16.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

12. Adjournment

A **motion** was made by R. de Brigard; seconded by J. Hiller, to adjourn the meeting until December 5, 2024.

Voting in favor: M. Semënov-Leiva, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, J. Hiller, M. Farina, S. Fox, S. Thompson, W. Webb, R. de Brigard, C. Penniman; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, - 10-0-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Makowicki, Clerk

The next regular meeting of the Gateway Commission is scheduled for Thursday, December 5, 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.