



145 Dennison Road
Essex, CT 06475
Phone: 581-8554
www.ctrivergateway.org

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CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION
Community Relations and Public Outreach
Committee MINUTES

DATE: April 20, 2023

TIME: 4:30pm

- 1) Call to Order – Chair Called the meeting to order at 4:40pm
- 2) Roll Call: Greg Futoma, Chair; Suzanne Thompson; Judy Preston; Debbie Langdon; Melvin Woody; Kathleen Perzanowski; and Susie Beckman, RiverCOG staff.
- 3) Communications/Marketing Assistance
 - a) Hannah Stella of Stella Design & Marketing has been identified as a firm to assist the Gateway Commission with marketing. The Gateway Commission is going into its budgeting cycle and the Communications Committee will recommend budgeting funds for her services which will include social media marketing, press releases, website updates, email newsletters, brochures, and possibly event planning support. Hannah will offer “fresh eyes” on existing marketing materials with the ability to help make sure the Gateway Commission mission and goals are clearly communicated.
 - b) RiverCOG staff will continue to talk with Land Use staff of Gateway Zone member towns and ask what information would be useful for them to find on the website.
- 4) Update on Commission Marketing Project & Budget
 - a) Budget
 - i) Website budget was \$16,500 and is over budget by \$3,500
 - ii) MOU for marketing consulting budget was underspent by \$8,000
 - iii) Balance between both line items leaves \$4,000 for additional services
 - b) Invoices
 - i) three invoices totaling \$9,650 for W Design
 - ii) one invoice for Community Consulting for \$500
 - iii) one invoice for Mr. Ingraham for \$200

MOTION: to present the invoices totaling \$10,350 to the full Gateway Commission for payment. Motion made by: M. Woody. Seconded by: D. Langdon. In Favor: All. Opposed: None. Abstain: None. Motion passed: 6-0-0.

- c) Remaining Tasks
 - i) Dropbox is being transitioned to Gateway Commission ownership with a paid subscription that allows for 2TB of storage space.
 - ii) Website Training – recommended to use the remaining \$4,000 in the budget for training which will have two components
 - (1) Training for simpler updates such as posting agenda & minutes; and
 - (2) Training for more extensive updates such as creating new pages
 - iii) Website hosting has been transitioned to FlyWheel
 - iv) W Design will check website and plug-in performance monthly for \$100, provide updates at \$90 (if she performs the work) or \$65 (if an associate performs the work). Greg suggested checking with the local marketing consultant for skill set and fees for the same work. S. Beckman will talk with RiverCOG staff to determine if they might perform these tasks.
 - v) PowerPoint provided by W Design was a template. Suzanne did not like the design. Suzanne created a new PowerPoint she created as a model. The Committee will ask the new marketing consultant to review the PowerPoint, website and brochure to provide a fresh perspective from someone unfamiliar with the

Gateway Commission to determine if they effectively communicate an overview, mission and tasks.

- vi) A Constant Contact subscription has been purchased for regular communications with target audiences. Website is passively collecting contacts. RiverCOG staff will find email lists used for past communications and events with partners and stakeholders in the Gateway Zone. Additional contacts may include Real Estate agents and others who regularly work with property owners in the Gateway Zone and others.

5) Planning for Gateway Commission's 50th Anniversary

- a) Greg F. will write Gateway Commission story for inclusion in upcoming Events magazines in every Gateway Zone town. Town representatives will be asked to share it with their Chief Elected Officials for inclusion in the magazine.
- b) Events that get participants into locations where the Lower Connecticut River Valley can be viewed and appreciated in combination with educational components about the Gateway Commission mission will be most impactful for communicating our message to target audiences. Ideas include events held at gazebos and other river front locations and the Essex Steam Train & Riverboat. Greg F. is getting a proclamation from the Governor that will be read at an upcoming event.
- c) 50th Anniversary celebration at the Roger Tory Peterson Center in Old Lyme will be proposed to the full Gateway Commission at their April 27 meeting for either August 3 or August 10.
- d) Two upcoming events need to be promoted:
 - i) Gateway Commissioner and Architect Misha Semënov-Leiva will talk about light pollution and how it can impact your health and the environment in the **first of a two-part event** scheduled on **May 3rd from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.**, at the **Old Lyme Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library**.
 - ii) **Part II** of the event will take place at Trail 53 Observatory located in Lyme on **Wednesday, May 17th at 8:00 p.m.** with Alan Sheiness of the Lyme Land Trust.
- e) The Essex Steam Train & Riverboat were suggested as an event. Capacity is 100+. Katie P. will talk with Jerry about an event.

6) CLCC Presentation of Gateway Commission Award

- a) Katie P. will explore a potential event at Gillette Castle Park for the CLCC award presentation in June. This will be an invitation-only event in the early evening.
- b) Target audience: Town Staff & CEOs; Conservation organizations; Land Trust Representatives; Forest & Park Association; and others.

7) Sponsorship Request – The Gateway Commission received a sponsorship request from the CT River Conservancy for their Source to Sea Clean Up event. This is the third year they have made this request and it was funded the two prior years. The Gateway Commission does not currently have a policy regarding sponsorship requests and members agreed they will develop guidelines sponsorships to present to the full Gateway Commission. One recommendation was to ensure sponsorships with other organizations are reciprocated in some way.

MOTION: to grant the CT River Conservancy sponsorship request with the contingency that guidelines are established for future sponsorships. Motion made by: G. Futoma. Seconded by: J. Preston. In Favor: All. Opposed: None. Abstained: None. Motion passed: 6-0-0.

8) Adjournment

MOTION: to adjourn the meeting at 5:56pm. Motion made by: G. Futoma. Seconded by: J. Preston. In Favor: All. Opposed: None. Abstained: None. Motion passed: 6-0-0.