



145 Dennison Road
Essex, CT 06426
Phone: 860-581-8554
contact@ctrivergateway.org
www.ctrivergateway.org

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

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES MARCH 26, 2026

Present: **Chester:** Tom Brelsford (Alternate) (left 8:20 PM); **Deep River:** Jerry Roberts, John Cunningham (Alternate); **East Haddam:** Debbie Langdon, Philip Barlow (Alternate); **Essex:** Peter Fleischer, James Hiller (Alternate); **Haddam:** Raul de Brigard; **Lyme:** Lisa Wadge (Alternate); **Old Lyme:** Greg Futoma (Alternate); **Old Saybrook:** William Webb (Vice Chair), Ellen FitzGerald (Alternate); **RiverCOG North:** Alan Ponanski (Alternate); **RiverCOG South:** Anne Redfield (Alternate); **CT DEEP:** Kathleen Perzanowski.

Also Present: Bobby Ghinder (137 Kirtland Drive), Abigail Adams (A2Land), Mike Ott, P.E., Attorney Marjorie Shansky, Mike Picard

Absent: **Chester:** Misha Semënov-Leiva; **Fenwick:** Newt Brainard; **Haddam:** Mike Farina (Secretary), Erin Ortega (Treasurer and Alternate); **Lyme:** Susan Fox; **Old Lyme:** Suzanne Thompson (Chair); **RiverCOG South:** Gail Reynolds; **Ex Officio:** Melvin Woody.

Staff support present: Susie Beckman, RiverCOG Staff, Amy Huot, Clerk

1. Call to Order: Vice Chair Webb called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.
2. Roll Call
3. Seating of Alternates: Tom Brelsford (Chester, left 8:20 PM), Lisa Wadge (Lyme), Greg Futoma (Old Lyme), Alan Ponanski (RiverCOG North), Anne Redfield (RiverCOG South)
4. Approval of Agenda

A **motion** was made by A. Ponanski, seconded by L. Wadge, to **APPROVE** the agenda.

Voting in favor: T. Brelsford, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, P. Fleischer, R. de Brigard, L. Wadge, G. Futoma, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, A. Redfield, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 11-0-0.

5. Approval of Minutes: February 26 CRGC Regular Meeting

A **motion** was made by T. Brelsford, seconded by A. Ponanski, to **APPROVE** the February 26, 2026 CRGC Regular Meeting minutes.

Voting in favor: T. Brelsford, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, P. Fleischer, R. de Brigard, L. Wadge, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, A. Redfield, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** G. Futoma. The motion **passed**, 10-0-1.

6. Public Comment

Mr. Bobby Ghinder expressed concern about development at the Mt. Saint John property. Mr. Ghinder referred the Commission to an email he sent earlier. He further commented that trees were being removed along the waterfront. Mr. Roberts offered to have an informal discussion with the new property owners about the plans for the property and offer to work with them on this project where possible.

7. Review of Referrals & Preliminary Discussions

a. Zoning Map Amendment – PPD 91 Sheffield St., Old Saybrook

Attorney Margery Shansky presented the application. The planned development district will have a zone change (currently Marine Industrial). Development will start after the zoning change and development plan approval. The map change only applies to 10 acres in the PPD/MI area. The Old Saybrook Harbor Management Plan calls for marine industrial zoning when possible. However, the Harbor Management team did not find any issues with the plan and issued a letter of approval. Attorney Shansky commented that the proposal is not in conflict with Gateway Standards.

A **motion** was made by R. de Brigard, seconded by T. Brelsford, to write a letter stating that the changes are consistent with the Gateway Standards, and this is a good use of the property.

Voting in favor: T. Brelsford, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, P. Fleischer, R. de Brigard, L. Wadge, G. Futoma, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, A. Redfield, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 11-0-0.

b. Special Exception – 91 Sheffield St., Old Saybrook

Mr. Mike Ott, P.E., presented the site plan. The site is 10 acres and borders wetlands. The riparian buffer is 100 feet from the tidal wetland boundary and the structural setback. Mr. Ott commented that the project received approval from the Old Saybrook Wetlands Commission. There is also a special flood hazard area zone, which crosses over sections of two existing buildings. The buildings will be demolished, and those areas will be restored.

Mr. Ott presented the work proposed on two other buildings on the property. There will be approximately 18 inches of fill around specific corners of both buildings. Mr. Ott further noted that the dock is being designed to conform to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protections (CT DEEP) standards.

Mr. Ott commented that the lighting will be building mounted and dark sky compliant. The dock will not be lit. Landscape Architect Abigail Adams presented the landscape plan. Bartlett Tree Experts inspected trees on the property, and most of the trees being removed were based on Bartlett's recommendation. To offset the invasive plant and the recommended tree removal, there is an extensive landscaping plan focused on native species. All phragmites will be removed from the property.

Mr. Michael Picard, a principal of 91 Sheffield, commented that replacement trees are further inland; trees by the water are mostly existing and not new plantings.

A **motion** was made by L. Wadge, seconded by A. Ponanski, to write a letter stating the CT River Gateway Commission (CRGC) approves the well thought out plan and that the plan generally meets the CRGC requirements with the amendments provided in the meeting. Please keep older trees, to the extent possible, and ensure the only lighting installed will be attached to the buildings and will be dark

sky compliant.

Voting in favor: T. Brelsford, J. Roberts, D. Langdon, P. Fleischer, R. de Brigard, L. Wadge, G. Futoma, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, A. Redfield, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 11-0-0.

Mr. Brelsford left the meeting at 8:20 PM.

c. Variance – 441 Main St., Old Saybrook

Attorney Edward Cassella presented the variance application. The house was built without permits. The owner is seeking approval from the Old Saybrook Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The project is a second-floor expansion on a single-story structure. Over 90% of the structure is within the setbacks, and the house predates Gateway regulations. Mr. Roberts pointed out that the house is already non-conforming; however, regulations do not allow adding to an existing non-conformity.

A motion was made by R. de Brigard, seconded by P. Fleischer, to write a letter stating the addition does not conform to Gateway Standards because it increases the bulk of a non-conforming building.

Voting in favor: J. Roberts, D. Langdon, P. Fleischer, R. de Brigard, L. Wadge, G. Futoma, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, A. Redfield, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

d. Zoning Amendment – Incentive Housing Zone, Old Saybrook

Attorney Cassella presented the application. The property is 127 Ferry Road, Old Saybrook, with an existing single-family house. The owner would like to explore adding multi-family property in the form of 10-unit townhouses. An alternative to affordable housing is the incentive housing zone. The incentive housing option provides incentives for the developer and incentives to the town. The Old Saybrook Zoning Enforcement Officer, Ms. Chris Costa, would like to see the incentive housing zone approved by the Zoning Commission. To qualify for incentive housing, there must be 10 townhouses per acre or 20 condos per acre. The request is to change the 15% Gateway zone coverage regulation to allow 20% coverage in a Gateway zone.

The second request is for added landscaping and parking requirement flexibility provided that the locations meet the intention. This will go to the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission on May 4th, 2026. Commissioners agreed to wait until the Zoning Commission has made its determination and drafted final language. This subject will be addressed at the next CRGC Regular Meeting, April 23rd, 2026. The Rules Committee suggested this concept, or something similar, could be used in other towns.

A motion was made by W. Webb, seconded by A. Redfield, to write a letter stating we are inclined to support this approach and when the language is finalized, we will make our final determination to whether we will adopt this into Gateway Conservation Zone Standards.

Voting in favor: J. Roberts, D. Langdon, P. Fleischer, R. de Brigard, L. Wadge, G. Futoma, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, A. Redfield, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

8. Correspondence/Staff Report

Chair Thompson has updated the CRGC display and would like it to be displayed at the eight member town Town Halls or Libraries on a rotating basis. Chair Thompson recommended it go to Deep River first. Mr. Roberts will take a picture and ask the library if it can be displayed there.

9. Chairman's Report

10. Committee Reports

a. Finance - Approve Bills

No bills were reviewed and approved during this meeting.

b. Rules of Procedures – Proposal to Clarify Language in Deep River Standards

The Commissioners were requested to support a letter, signed by Chair Thompson, that will be hand delivered to the Chair of the Deep River Zoning Commission requesting that Deep River update their Zoning Regulations Section 14.1.1 that corresponds to the 100-foot setback. The request is to clarify that structures that are not marine-related are not allowed in the 100-foot setback.

A motion was made by W. Webb, seconded by L. Wadge, to approve the letter being sent to the town of Deep River.

Voting in favor: J. Roberts, D. Langdon, P. Fleischer, R. de Brigard, L. Wadge, G. Futoma, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, A. Redfield, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

c. Communications – CLCC Conference Debrief

Mr. Futoma noted that support for the Connecticut River Valley Environmental Summit was approved in a previous meeting. The symposium is May 2nd, 2026, and there is an extra free pass should anyone wish to go.

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council conference: Mr. Futoma and Mr. de Brigard gave a brief overview of the sessions they attended. Of particular interest was a session about affordable housing, and they noted there might be an opportunity for the CRGC to work with the towns on affordable housing initiatives.

d. Land – Update: The Land Committee did not meet.

11. Old Business: None

12. New Business

There was a proposal to tear down the old house located at 125 Shore Road in Old Lyme and construct a new one in the 100-foot setback. The Old Lyme ZBA ultimately approved the house and pool in the 100-foot setback. Mr. Webb commented that the language needs to be updated, so it is clearer to town ZBAs. An offset of non-conformity does not mean a house can be built in the setback.

A motion was made by W. Webb, seconded by J. Roberts, to write a letter to Attorney Matt Willis asking for him to write a letter to the Old Lyme ZBA and ZEO asking that the decision be revisited because the application presented and approved was not submitted to the CRGC. There should be a stay until the CRGC has a chance to review the modifications to the application.

Voting in favor: J. Roberts, D. Langdon, P. Fleischer, R. de Brigard, L. Wadge, G. Futoma, W. Webb, A. Ponanski, A. Redfield, K. Perzanowski; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None. The motion **passed** unanimously, 10-0-0.

13. Adjournment

CT River Gateway Commission_Regular_Meeting Minutes, March 26, 2026 - continued

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Huot, CRGC Clerk