

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 26, 2020

Present/Absent: [Excused absence (E); Unexcused absence (U)]

Chester: **Margaret (Peggy) Wilson , Jenny Kitsen**

Deep River: *Vacancy, Conal Sampson*

East Haddam: **Crary Brownell, Joel Ide**

Essex: **Claire Mathews, Misha Semenov**

Fenwick: *Newton Brainerd, Borough Warden*

Haddam: **Susan Bement, Mike Farina**

Lyme: **J. Melvin Woody, Wendy Hill**

Old Lyme: **Suzanne Thompson (7:08p), Greg Futoma**

Old Saybrook: *Bill Webb (E), Tom Gezo*

Regional Rep: **Raul Debrigard**

DEEP: **David Blatt**

Staff: **J H Torrance Downes**

Guests: Greg Bugbee and Summer Stebbins, CT Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES); Margot Burns, RiverCOG; Kelsey Wentling, CT River Conservancy

Call to Order

This meeting was convened using the Zoom online platform. The agenda was formally posted in all eight Gateway member towns as required with information directing interested members of the public to join the meeting online. Chairman Suzanne **Thompson** called the online regular meeting of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission to order at 7:00pm.

Approval of 9/26/19 and 2/27/20 Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the 9/26/19 minutes by **Ide**, seconded by **Farina**, passed unanimously.

Woody commented that he had numerous revisions to offer on the February 27, 2020 minutes, none of which were substantive. **Debrigard** commented that a quote attributed to him should be corrected. Motion to approve the 2/27/20 minutes as amended and as corrected by **Woody**, seconded by **Gezo**, passed unanimously.

Presentation of Invasives Plant Survey in the Lower Connecticut River.

Greg Bugbee and Summer Stebbins of the CT Agricultural Experiment Station participated in the online meeting presenting a power point summarizing the survey conducted during the summer of 2019. Gateway provided a \$20,000 grant toward the costs of that effort. The Eight Mile Wild and Scenic Watershed organization provided an additional \$5,000. The presented information included background information on hydrilla (and other invasive plants) that appear in Connecticut waterways and lakes, including the Connecticut River. Hydrilla, the focus of their work, has been identified in the Connecticut River from just above the Massachusetts border south to Essex in the lower Connecticut River. The discussion included an explanation of the partners that are part of the process in trying to identify locations of hydrilla and determine how best to combat the spread. Suggestions of other partners that may be interested in the effort were provided to Bugbee by Gateway members. Maps were presented that can be accessed from the CAES website and by using the following online address: <https://arcg.is/ePiau>

Following the presentation, Kelsey Wentling, River Steward for the Connecticut River Conservancy, reported on CRC efforts with respect to invasive plants in the Connecticut River and programs and in which efforts she's been involved. One of the goals of the CRC is to insure that there is a consistent effort to address invasive plants within the entire Connecticut River and not just the State of Connecticut. Gateway members welcomed her to attend meetings as she is able.

Correspondence and Staff Report

The Items of Interest Report included a paragraph describing some background on the presentation just seen by members.

Chairman's Report

Thompson expressed her gratitude for the efforts of members to continue Gateway business remotely during recent weeks. She noted that committees have continued their work.

Committees Reports

Financial/Treasurers Report. **Matthews** reported on the performance of Gateway investments during recent volatile times in the various markets due to the impacts of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Where all investments have had losses of late, **Matthews** reported that, because of the balancing of Gateway investments, the losses experienced in the Gateway portfolio were significantly less than the losses experienced across the Dow Jones equities. **Matthews** then presented the staffing bill in the amount of \$2,408.77 for payment. A motion to approve payment of the staffing bill was made by **Debrigard** and seconded by **Semenov**. The motion passed unanimously.

Land Committee. **Wilson** reported that little activity has occurred in the land acquisition area. She will contact David Brown of Middlesex County Land Trust and Jim McHutchison before the April Gateway meeting to get an update.

Governance Committee. Chair **Webb** was not present in the online meeting. In his absence, **Matthews** (as a guest in the committee discussion) explained her thoughts on the work several members of the committee conducted on by-law language concern how Gateway funds are to be used going forward. Committee members agreed to have **Webb** be involved in the review of the recommendations before discussion them with the entire Commission. Minutes of the last governance committee meeting and a document explain FOIA considerations regarding the taking of minutes were presented. Further discussion was deferred to the April Gateway meeting, that after an intervening committee meeting.

Public Outreach Committee. **Gezo** presented three documents to members for discussion. First, a document outlining the several events in which Gateway would be involved was presented, noting that all of those events have either been postponed or canceled. Second, the final draft of the Gateway Overview document was presented for review. **Gezo** noted that **Woody** had some further editorial work to conduct and that the document would be presented for Commission approval at a later date. The document, however, *can* be used in its present state, if desired. Third, **Gezo** presented three different versions of a new Gateway logo that have been developed. Members commented and provided additional instructions to Downes for further refinement of the logos. The refinements are to be sent to members on Friday, 3/27/20 so that members could "vote" on which they preferred. **Gezo** reported that the new logo will be used for the upcoming "Tour de Lyme" event occurring in May, 2020. A recommendation was made by the committee to have the Commission provide a donation in the amount of \$500 to support the event. The Gateway logo would be displayed in numerous publicity banners and documents. A motion to approve donating \$500 for the event made by **Debrigard** and seconded by **Brownell** was approved unanimously. Finally, members concluded that the annual boat trip, if not cancelled, should be scheduled for Wednesday, June 10, 2020. Downes will contact the Riverquest folks to confirm that date.

Old Business:

Woody provided a brief update on thoughts had by the ad hoc committee on what would be necessary to move the effort to establish a National Heritage Corridor in the Connecticut River forward, this after having a telephone conference call with several people who were involved with the establishment of the Upper Housatonic River National Heritage Corridor in northwest Connecticut.

New Business: None presented.

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn at 9:07pm by **Bement** was approved unanimously.