

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 28, 2019

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

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

Deep River: *Nancy Fischbach (E), Kate Cotton (Resigned)*

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

Essex: **Claire Mathews, Mary Ann Pleva (E)**

Fenwick: *Newton Brainerd, Borough Warden*

Haddam: **Susan Bement, Mike Farina**

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

Old Lyme: **Peter Cable, Suzanne Thompson**

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

Regional Rep: **Raul Debrigard**

DEEP: **David Blatt**

Staff: J H Torrance Downes.

Guests: Jeanne Davies CTC&D, Riley Doherty CTC&D, Greg Bugbee CAES, Summer Stebbins CAES, Margot Burns RiverCOG, Christine Palm CT Representative.

Call to Order

Chairman **Thompson** called the regular meeting of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission to order at RiverCOG offices located at 145 Dennison Road, Essex at 7:06pm.

Discussion: Representative Christine Palm. Palm discussed ongoing legislation and what to expect out of the session.

Debrigard commented on the importance of the CT Yankee property and its importance as open space. He briefly described the ongoing effort to protect the property and the fact that there has been little interest expressed in the properties development throughout the years due to limitations including the steep and rocky terrain, oversight of the property by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the many easements which exist. **Bement** commented about her concern over the conveyance tax and how it may further depress the housing market. Palm elected to stay to hear the presentation by Greg Bugbee on Invasive Plants in the Connecticut River.

Presentation: Invasive Hydrilla in the Lower Connecticut River. Greg Bugbee of the CT Agriculture Experiment Station presented a PowerPoint providing information on the invasive plant Hydrilla which has become prolific in more upper reaches of the river. A significant "stand" of Hydrilla is located near Hurd State Park in Haddam/East Hampton with smaller patches located south into the Gateway Conservation Zone. The collaborative is seeking funding for a study designed to identify all invasives in the river from the Massachusetts border south to Long Island Sound. The cost of the study for the entire CT portion of the river is estimated to be \$89,000 while the cost of the portion proposed for the Conservation Zone is \$27,590. It is the \$27,590 that the collaborative seeks from the Gateway Commission.

Grant opportunities are available from the Long Island Sound Foundation, but those funds will only be available – IF a grant application succeeds – in October of 2019, which means those funds won't be available for the 2019 field season, hence the request from Gateway to get started in 2019.

Debrigard asked what the timeline is for a decision on the funding request, to which Bugbee replied April or May, confirming that a decision on potential funding at Gateway's April meeting would be acceptable. Bugbee commented, however, that he thought that a May decision might not give them the time they need to set up the study. He said that there is a seasonal requirement to the work and that, based on the April decision timeline, the survey would be conducted in July and August, 2019. Asked what Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station was, Bugbee explained that it is a grant-funded state agency. CT Resource Conservation & Development Executive Director Jeanne Davies then explained what her agency was and how they fit into the partnership picture. Summarizing, the project is a CT RC&D Environmental Review Team project (ERT). CT RC&D receives some funding

for ERTs, so CT RC&D is a primary partner in this effort. Members requested that a letter be sent to explain the kind of information they'd need to determine how to proceed with the funding request at the next Gateway meeting on April 24, 2019. That information included the need for a concise written "ask" for the required funds, a description of the anticipated path of this effort including whether or not this is a "one-time" request, what deliverables will they provide to Gateway (prepared report with maps of findings) and how efforts may be made to inform the public about invasive plants in the river and how not to spread them.

Approval of 3/28/19 Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes by **Cable**, seconded by **Brownell**, passed unanimously.

Treasurers Report

Matthews presented the Treasurers Report. The report included a summary of donations made at the February meeting, including \$1,000 to the CT River Conservancy, \$500 for sponsorship at the CLCC Land Trust Workshop at Wesleyan University, and \$100 to the East Haddam Land Trust as an annual donation for the EHLT calendar. The donations totaled \$1,600.

The investment portfolio gained additional value in the past month.

Staffing bill presented: \$782.43 (JHTD); \$93.68 (PF); Audited FY 2018 Overhead Charges (\$1,274.83); postage and supplies, \$168. Total \$2,319.00.

Motion to pay RiverCOG staff bill and accept Treasurer's Report, motion by **Matthews**, seconded by **Bement**, passed unanimously.

Correspondence Report

- Report on Essex Zoning Regulations. The Essex hearing for the new standards took place on Monday, January 28, 2019. The Zoning Commission approved and adopted the new standards, but didn't set an "effective date". ZEO Joe Budrow informed JHTD that the new standards are "in the book", having become effective on March 1, 2019.
- Annual Boat Trip. Four dates for the annual boat trip have been reserved. Wednesdays and Thursdays, June 5th and 6th, and 12th and 13th. At the March meeting it is expected that members will choose a date. Attendee lists from 2017 and 2018 were distributed to members to aid in your thought processes regarding invitations. As with the past few years, it's assumed that the invitee's list will focus on architects, site engineers, land use attorneys primarily, and then on some local officials who perhaps haven't been on the trip before (e.g. Steve Mattson, First Selectman, Lyme)
- Representative Christine Palm. Christine contacted GW and asked if she could come to the March meeting. She was told GW would be delighted to have her. She's indicated she noticed the discussion on invasive plants in the CT River and, as a member of the Environment Committee, has interest in that topic. In email correspondence, she was alerted to look for an invitation for the annual boat trip. Finally, she will likely want a minute or two to introduce herself. Members may want to vote to amend the agenda to include that if you want it noted in the minutes that way.

Special Exception for Commission Review.

Deep River, Conners, 189 River Road. The Applicant, through representatives Chris Arelt (Architect) and Bob Doane (Site Engineer) have seen this development proposal twice before. Commission members have been positive regarding design aspects of both the residential structure and a planned renovation of a boat house. This Special Permit application only proposes the construction of the residential structure. An application for the boat house will be presented at a later date. **Debrigard** noted that the design (which in every substantial way is identical to previously seen preliminary proposals) was very "traditional" especially in light of recent designs submitted for properties located within the Conservation Zone. A member commented that the façade included a significant amount of windows, but no significant concerns were expressed. Wilson recommended that a letter to the Deep River Planning & Zoning Commission make a suggestion asking the property owner to consider a darker color than that proposed. That request was separate and apart from the determination that the proposal appeared consistent with the standards of the Gateway Commission.

Regulation Review and Approval pursuant to Section 25-102 G CGS

Old Saybrook, Lini Holdings, LLC. Proposal to modify zoning regulations regarding requirements regarding the necessity of the presence of an “innkeeper” in every bed & breakfast. Specifically, “...*the owner of a bed & breakfast transient lodging is not required to live in the dwelling where the bed and breakfast transient lodging is adjacent to a building that the owner occupies as his or her primary place of residence...*”. Although Gateway members recognized that the regulation proposal was submitted for a pair of properties located outside of the Gateway Conservation Zone (Main Street, Old Saybrook), it would impact other districts with properties which *are* located within the Conservation Zone. Members also recognized that the proposal regarded a *use* provision that would not impact the “natural and traditional river scene”. As a result, a motion was made by **Bement**, seconded by **Wilson**, to approve the regulation pursuant to Section 25-102g CGS as there would be no adverse impact on the river scene.

Variance Applications Reviewed by Staff: None to present.

Committees Reports

Land Committee. No report of significance.

Governance Committee. **Thompson** recognized the need to convene a meeting attended by **Fischbach, Thompson, Webb** and Downes to discuss leadership of the Governance Committee moving forward. Efforts will continue to convene such meeting.

Public Outreach Committee. It was reported that Cotton, chair of the Outreach Committee, has chosen to resign from the Commission and wishes members well moving forward. Discussion then turned to the annual boat trip with a decision being necessary on the selection of a date. Members voted to select Wednesday, June 12th to hold the trip as with the selection of a different day (trips have taken place on Thursdays) other partners who may not have been able to attend on Thursdays may attend. Further discussion necessary on who’ll assist with refreshment acquisition.

Old Business:

None to report.

New Business:

Members took up discussion of the proposal for the study of invasive plants in the Connecticut River. Suggestions for funding included thoughts about matching grants (Wilson) and the possibility of the provision of “seed” funding (e.g. the initial funding) where such a grant would hopefully entice others to follow with funding of their own. Ide commented that a price tag of \$27,590 seemed to be a “good price” for such a survey in the Conservation Zone. Wilson commented that the Commission should be careful of “full funding”.

Members decided to have Downes send a letter that said that members were prepared to make a grant at some level, but additional information was needed including a clear funding “ask” that described proposed costs for the study in the Conservation Zone and in the Connecticut portion of the river as a whole. Members were also looking for information on what organizations have been contacted or will be contacted as partners and what the Commission could expect with respect to assistance from those other organizations. It was assumed that Jeanne Davies of Connecticut RC&D, the coordinating partner (the project is, at its core, an “ERT” – environmental review team – project that includes some level of RC&D funding), would return to Gateway’s next meeting on Thursday, April 25, 2019.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by **Bement** passed unanimously. 8:55pm