

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

September 24, 2020

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

Chester:	Tom Brelsford , <i>Jenny Kitsen</i>
Deep River:	Jerry Roberts, Conal Sampson
East Haddam:	<i>Crary Brownell, Joel R. Ide</i>
<i>Essex:</i>	Claire Mathews, Misha Semenov
<i>Fenwick:</i>	<i>Newton Brainerd, Borough Warden</i>
<i>Haddam:</i>	Susan Bement, Mike Farina
Lyme:	J. Melvin Woody, Wendy Hill
Old Lyme:	Suzanne Thompson, Greg Futoma
Old Saybrook:	Bill Webb, Tom Gezo
<i>Regional Rep:</i>	Raul Debrigard (joined at 8:40pm)
DEEP:	David Blatt
Staff:	J H Torrance Downes
Guests:	Alisha Milardo, Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center

Call to Order

This meeting was convened using the Zoom online platform. The agenda was formally posted in all eight member towns as required with information directing interested members of the public to join the meeting online. Chairman **Thompson** called the online regular meeting of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission to order at 7:04pm.

Approval of 8/27/20 Regular Meeting Minutes

Mathews offered a correction for the treasurer's report, indicating that the \$2,558.91 amount cited refers to the *total staffing bill*, not a "mileage charge". Upon a motion by **Ide**, seconded by **Mathews**, the corrected minutes were approved unanimously.

Discussion of Potential Grant Request

Alisha Milardo, Director of the Connecticut Audubon's Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center discussed a project that they expect to ask the Gateway Commission to grant support,. The project, entitled the "*100 Tons Invasives Species Removal Community Project*", will encompass education, advocacy, and research. The project will target terrestrial and aquatic invasive plants, protect habitats (native plant and animal communities), and raise community awareness of native species. The intended project timeline includes a January 2021 launch, public trainings held from March through September of 2021, field removal of invasive plants in October of 2021, and review/analysis and reporting from October through December of 2021. The two-year projected cost totals \$228,164, with the Gateway Commission being asked to contribute \$25,000 in the first year and \$25,000 in the second year, a total of \$50,000. Members asked many questions concerning the project including how collected invasives will be disposed of, whether the collection is "botanical", the goals and long-term sustainability, scientific support and how much community "knowledge" will be required (invasives can be removed improperly and cause a proliferation in some cases – knotweed), whether climate change will be part of the education and involvement of the Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station (CAES). Milardo explained that the project will include NOAA and the EPA as partners and advisory board participation from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI). The effort will be concentrated in the lower CONNECTICUT River from Haddam south to Long Island Sound. Following more questions and discussion, **Webb** reported that the Commission may not be able to vote on providing funds before December as the ad hoc committee addressing grant applications is still in process. **Woody** opined that this project would require a formal application.

Correspondence and Staff Report

Downes briefly summarized the staff report, which includes short explanations of several Essex development applications, Conservation Zone maps, the upcoming CIPWG symposium and included the text of a thankyou email

from the local National Estuarine Research Reserve committee member, John Forbis.

Chairman's Report

Thompson reported that the Commission and its committees have accomplished a lot in the last month, but she was unable to convene a meeting of the chairs of all those committees as intended. The Commission approved a "lean" operating budget. The chair intends to convene a meeting in October to discuss strategic planning and will report to RiverCOG on perceived staffing needs.

Committee Reports

Financial/Treasurers Report.

Matthews reported that the Commission's portfolio totals at the end of August of 2020 remained unchanged from the end of July 2020. Stock values were quite volatile, primarily because of the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy. Financial consultants recommend "riding out" the volatile market conditions because the Gateway portfolio is conservative, well-managed and safe.

Matthews reported that the staffing bill for RiverCOG, totaled \$3,052.14 (JHTD, \$1177.08; Paula Fernald, \$87.48; Overhead, \$1,787.58). **Ide** moved to pay the staffing bill, **Bement** seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Rules and Procedure Committee.

Webb reported that the Governance Committee has not met in the last month because committee members have spent their time meeting with the ad hoc committee reviewing grant application development.

Community Relations/Communications Committee.

Gezo provided a short review of committee activities, reporting that the committee last met on Monday, September 14, 2020.

Ad Hoc Grants Subcommittee:

Webb reported that the committee will coordinate with other committees to get all points of view. The ad hoc committee does not think that it is the right committee to review grant requests in the future and that a standing committee should be established to serve that function. **Webb** recommended that a "land regulation committee" should also be formed. He indicated that he wants to call a Rules and Procedures Committee meeting to develop R&P language to form these committees. **Roberts** commented that a conflict of interest declaration is required from members dealing with grant applications. **Thompson** reminded the Rules and Procedures Committee that there are still references to the CONNECTICUT River Land Trust that need to be removed.

Debrigard joined the meeting at 8:40pm.

New Business: **Roberts** reported that the property owner at 110 River Road, commonly referred to as the "switchback property", has removed more trees on the hillside, re-opening the gap in the tree cover that had partially filled in since the original construction of that driveway. **Roberts** also informed Commission colleagues that he was going to remove several large pine trees that are damaged/diseased in front of his Merriwold Lane property, but will be replacing those trees with larger replacement trees to compensate for the loss. Members further discussed the issue of whether and how to regulate tree cutting that seriously effects the traditional river scene. **Bement** said she thinks that the Haddam subdivision regulations include some provision limiting tree cutting. Downes offered to poll members in the eight Gateway town Planning and Zoning Commissions and/or their staffs regarding whether they would consider stronger tree cutting regulations and to report back on this topic at the October 22, 2020 meeting. **Blatt** commented that it might be a good opportunity to ask about whether towns might be willing to consider a standard addressing maximum dwelling size limits. this

Old Business: **Gezo** noted that he received a thank you note from Penny Rezendes of the Friends of North Cove group that received a grant from the Gateway Commission for phragmites removal in Old Saybrook in which she reported that they reached their funding goals, which will allow for "full matching". They will include the

participation of the Gateway Commission in their publicity.

Adjournment: **Bement** moved that the meeting adjourn. **Matthews** seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:09pm.