

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

October 24, 2020

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

Chester:	Tom Brelsford , Jenny Kitsen
Deep River:	Jerry Roberts, Conal Sampson
East Haddam:	<i>Crary Brownell, Joel R. Ide</i>
Essex:	Claire Mathews, Misha Semenov
Fenwick:	<i>Newton Brainerd, Borough Warden</i>
Haddam:	Susan Bement, Mike Farina
Lyme:	J. Melvin Woody, Wendy Hill
Old Lyme:	Suzanne Thompson, Greg Futoma
Old Saybrook:	Bill Webb, Tom Gezo (joined at 7:22pm)
Regional Rep:	Raul Debrigard
DEEP:	David Blatt
Staff:	J H Torrance Downes
Guests:	Scot Samuelson, Joe Wren, Sal Sapia, Jr. (15 Academy Lane)

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 7:32pm immediately following the adjournment of the Annual Meeting.

Approval of September 24, 2020 Minutes

Mathews requested a small correction, stating that reference to the Rules and Procedure committee should be consistent (sometimes referred to as the Rules of Procedures Committee, sometimes as the Rules and Procedures Committee – the latter is how the committee is referenced in the Rules and Procedures document). **Ide** commented that, with respect to the cutting of damaged trees at the home of **Roberts**, the 80-foot trees will be replaced with “healthy” trees, not “larger” trees. A motion was made by **Ide**, which was seconded by **Mathews**, to approve the regular meeting minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Pre-application Discussion, 15 Academy Lane. A discussion of proposed construction at 15 Academy Lane on the Lieutenant River in Old Lyme occurred, led by Joe Wren, Scot Samuelson and Sal Sapia, Jr., representatives of owner the property. The project application for variances has not been submitted to the town as of yet, hence the pre-application discussion. In addition to the existing single-family structure, the property owner will seek variances to construct a 1½ story carriage house/garage, and an in-ground pool with finished pool house. The two new structures are proposed for location toward the rear of the property nearest Lieutenant River Lane (away from the river) in locations that obscured from the building’s visibility due to their location and existing tree cover, especially near the river at the southwest corner of the property. The representatives indicated that the trees that provide the visual buffering would remain, and new vegetation would be planted around a new driveway adjacent to the carriage house. The variance application will be submitted to the Old Lyme ZBA in the near future at which time a formal referral will be made to the Gateway Commission pursuant to Section 25-102h CGS.

Staff Report

Downes summarized the report as presented to members. The report included an update of the Bombaci dock project, noting that the Essex Harbor Management Commission had made a finding of the project being “inconsistent” with the town’s harbor management plan on October 15, 2020. **Blatt** updated members stating that

as of October 22, 2020, NO formal application for a structures and dredging permit for the project had been submitted to DEEP. Downes followed the summary by showing photos of the Deep River hillside project where trees have been removed taken from the property looking north up the river. A photo was also shown of the Abbotts house on River Road, taken late this summer.

Petition to Revise Essex Zoning Regulations for Lots in Essex Village Split by Two Zoning Districts

Downes presented photos and a map demonstrating which Essex Village lots are impacted by the proposal (most of the Essex Village properties were *not* split by a zoning district line and were not impacted by this proposal). The regulation change would allow split lots in the Village Residential District to have slightly eased standards for certain setbacks, coverage and height to adjust for the fact that they are bisected by two zoning districts with differing bulk standards. Essex representatives **Matthews** and **Semenov** agreed that the proposed changes would not appreciably impact the scenic view of those properties, recognizing that the area is a dense village setting. **Webb** commented that, although he would defer to other members, he didn't agree with approving the change as Gateway would be "giving up" something for no reason, in this case allowing lesser standards when he felt there was no good reason to do so. **Roberts** agreed with **Webb** stating that, from his knowledge of historic factors, he objected to allowing any more disruption of those historic properties through any more development.

Upon a request for a quorum call, the following votes for approval were registered: **Chester**, Yes; **Deep River**, Abstain; **Essex**, Yes; **Haddam**, Yes; **East Haddam**, Yes; **Lyme**, Yes; **Old Lyme**, Yes; **Old Saybrook**, Yes. **Roberts**, the lone abstaining vote, indicated that it's difficult to make decisions when supporting documents are only provided at the meeting and not before. Downes commented that a good deal of time was spent preparing documents (maps and photos) that were shared and discussed prior to the meeting with the two Essex representatives. Downes asked members to consider if there was a better or different way to review these kinds of applications. Sending the documents to all members ahead of time didn't seem appropriate. **Webb** thanked Downes for the work he did in preparation for this decision.

Chairman's Report. **Thompson** reported that she attended the virtual Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) virtual workshop, noting that the recording was available for those unable to attend. Gateway's name was promoted. **Roberts** and **Debrigard** listened in to the workshop.

Finance Committee: Members of the finance committee held a quarterly meeting with Essex Financial on October 9, 2020, on which **Matthews** reported. **Matthews** then reviewed the monthly treasurers report. Summarizing, the portfolio value has been averaging around slightly more than \$2MM for several months. She reported that six high-tech firms are "carrying" the market at this time. EF recommended several changes which were put in place by concurrence of the finance committee.

The staff bill was presented for payment in the amount of \$,3617.99. Broken down, JHTD \$1,430.96, \$68.04 PF \$2,118.99 Overhead. Upon a motion by **Bement**, seconded by **Woody**, the staffing bill was approved for payment unanimously. Downes reported that the agency's overhead rate would be decreasing for the current FY20/21 fiscal year.

Land Committee. **Futoma** reported that no meeting was held during the month of October. In preparing the written report for the annual meeting, **Futoma** was able to review the past year's activity with other land committee members. **Debrigard** referred to a meeting to be held next week with US Fish & Wildlife.

Rules and Procedures Committee. **Webb** asked for display of the proposed changes in the Rules and Procedures (R&P) document, which he quickly reviewed point-by-point. Section 7 of the R&P requires that changes to R&P are to be presented one month prior to a vote, which will occur at the December 3, 2020 meeting. Members considered this review of proposed changes as those required in Section 7. A short discussion was held about the change of the name of the "Outreach" committee. Some disagreement existed over the proper name. It was decided that the name

will be Communications and Outreach Committee. Language is introduced for a Grants Committee. **Woody** commented that it is dangerous to have two competing committees dealing with distribution of funds around the community (Land Committee and Grants Committee). **Webb** clarified that the Grants Committee will not deal with land fund distribution so there won't be a conflict and asked if there was any way to clarify with the addition of a word so as to resolve that concern. As no suggestion was forthcoming, **Webb** finished his review of the document.

Communications and Public Outreach Committee. **Gezo** discussed his committee report which included an updated overview brochure and an updated PowerPoint based upon one recently developed by **Thompson**. Additions and deletions to the Power Point can be made to accommodate specific audiences. If members have updates or additions to proposed for the Power Point, they can contact **Gezo** directly. **Hill** will review and amend according to her design capabilities. Finally, an RFP request was put together for design and webmaster work that was being recommended by the committee

Grants Ad Hoc Subcommittee. **Webb** provided no report as time was spent during the last month on the Rules and Procedures Committee work. The subcommittee will try to meet one more time or allow a newly formed Grants Committee to carry the work forward.

Old Business.

Thompson reported that Alisha Milardo of the Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center (RTPEC) is to come back before commission at its December 3, 2020 meeting with updates on recent grant request proposal and for advice on how to make application. **Roberts** requested that the situation not repeat where Milardo presents a request and members are asked to vote the same evening with the requestor present. **Roberts** reminded **Thompson** that Milardo hadn't submitted a detailed budget as had been requested at that previous meeting. **Thompson** will remind Milardo of the need for that detailed budget, and reminded members that the Commission isn't obligated to act quickly.

New Business. None.

Adjournment: **Bement** moved for adjournment with **Woody** seconding the motion which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10pm.