

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

October 27, 2022

Present/Absent:

Chester:	Tom Brelsford, Jenny Kitsen
Deep River:	Jerry Roberts, Kathy David
East Haddam:	<i>Crary Brownell, Debbie Langdon</i>
Essex:	Claire Mathews, Misha Semenov-Leiva
<i>Fenwick:</i>	<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, Diane Stober
Regional Reps:	Raul Debrigard (N), Judy Preston (S), (vacancy[N], vacancy [S])
DEEP:	Katie Perzanowski
Staff:	J H Torrance Downes
Guests:	Denise Von Dassel, Nick Foster

Call to Order

The regular monthly meeting of the Gateway Commission was called to order by Chairman Thompson at 7:30pm on the virtual meeting platform Zoom immediately following the adjournment of the Gateway Annual Meeting.

Minutes of the September 22, 2022 Regular Meeting

Upon a motion by Preston, which was seconded by Woody, members of the Commission unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the September 22, 2022 meeting as presented.

Variance Application, 110 Sheffield Street, Old Saybrook Architect Denise Von Dassel and property owner Nick Foster were present to discuss the application. The property proposes the renovation of an existing older home including (1) the demolition and reconstruction with minor enlargement of the North Cove-side porch, (2) the demolition and reconstruction and minor enlargement of the kitchen located on the non-cove-side (inland side) of the structure, (3) the enlargement of a screened-in porch adjacent to the non-cove-side kitchen, (4) the new construction of a 40 square foot portico roof on columns over the front door of the dwelling, and (5) the construction of a 1,216 square foot footprint two-story garage/barn on the inland side of the dwelling that will include space above for an accessory dwelling unit (ADU). Only the cove-side porch and the front door portico structure are the subject of the variance application. The other improvements will be reviewed through a Special Exception application to be submitted at a later time. The Gateway Commission will have the opportunity to review and comment on those additional improvements at that time.

Following the presentation, members expressed their support the way the property owner is retaining the historic features of the dwelling and acknowledged that the water-side porch (which will include a deck on top accessed by new doors on the second level) and the portico are limited in size. As one member said, this project could be considered as an example of how to renovate older structures in the Gateway Conservation Zone in a manner consistent with Gateway's mission of protection of the "traditional" character of the Conservation Zone. Further, the property owner reported that approximately 4,500 square feet of impervious surface in the form of asphalt driveway pavement will have been removed from the site with the overall net impervious surface on the property being reduced, even with the proposed expansions. Matthews reported that her review included using the nine Gateway review standards included in the Zoning Regulations with the proposal being consistent with all nine standards.

Upon a motion by Webb, which was seconded by Matthews, members of the Gateway Commission requested that staff write a letter of no opposition to the granting of the required variance, further indicating support for the way the property owner has approached the project as it is consistent with Gateway's mission to protect that "natural and traditional riverway scene" in the Conservation Zone. The motion was approved unanimously.

Regulations concerning Additional Uses at Properties Educational/Museum Properties located Around the Lyme Street/Halls Road Intersection, Old Lyme The Lyme Academy of Fine Arts, the petitioner in this case, is looking to allow additional uses that will enhance the experience of those who visit and attend these facilities. Such uses include cafes and coffee shops as well as other uses. The proposal states that the new regulations will not impact the requirements of the underlying zoning (including Gateway standards included in Section 4.10 of the Zoning Regulations) and only proposes various new uses and not revisions of Gateway-related standards. As a result, members of the Gateway Commission voted to unanimously "approve" the proposed regulations with the condition that the following statement be included: *"Under no circumstances will any Gateway standards including in Section 4.10, Conservation Zone Requirements, of the Zoning Regulations of Old Lyme be altered or revised through a review and approval by the Old Lyme Zoning Commission."* The regulations can therefore become "effective".

Regulations Concerning the Halls Road Overlay District, Old Lyme. The Halls Road Improvement Committee (HRIC) has submitted regulations for an overlay zone that is intended to guide future development within the Halls Road commercial corridor. The proposal will allow no revisions or modifications of any underlying regulation, including the Gateway Standards included in Section 4.10, Conservation Zone Requirements – Gateway EXCEPT THROUGH A SPECIAL EXCEPTION PROCESS. By a motion of Woody, seconded by Debrigard, members of the Gateway Commission voted to "approve" the regulations pursuant to Section 25-102g CGS with the condition that the following comment be included in the proposed regulation: *"No Gateway standard or regulation included in Section 4.10, Conservation Zone Requirements – Gateway, shall be revised or modified as a part of any Special Permit application approved pursuant to Section 5.14 of these Zoning Regulations."* The motion and second, with the conditional language, was approved unanimously. The regulations can therefore become "effective".

Proposal to Prohibit All Cannabis Uses, Lyme. Determining that the regulation has little impact on Gateway interests as the prohibition impacts uses and not Gateway standards, and upon a motion by Debrigard with a second by Bement, the members of the Gateway Commission unanimously "approved" the proposed regulations pursuant to Section 25-102g CGS. Matthews abstained from voting. The regulations can therefore become "effective".

Proposal to Amend Regulations Concerning the Eightmile River Overlay District (EMROD), Lyme. The Lyme P&Z has proposed new language for the EMROD that will correct, clarify and strengthen the protective intent of these regulations as they apply to the Eightmile River, a national "Wild and Scenic River". The Eightmile River is the tributary that feeds Hamburg Cove, located within the Gateway Conservation Zone, and ultimately the Connecticut River. As a result of the proposal being consistent with the protective mission of the Gateway Commission, and upon a motion by Woody which was seconded by Matthews, members of the Gateway Commission voted to "approve" the regulation proposal pursuant to Section 25-102g CGS. The regulations can therefore become "effective".

Monthly Staff Report

- (a) Staff briefly discussed some of the reported items. Members requested that the plant list provided by Judy Preston for the enforcement action at the riverfront beach at the mouth of the Chester Creek. Staff will forward the list as requested.

(b) Nine-Lot Subdivision, 16 Neck Road, Old Lyme

Futoma reported on the subdivision application at 16 Neck Road in Old Lyme. The subdivision will have frontage on the Connecticut River and concern was expressed over the removal of the trees on the river-facing hillside. On behalf of the Gateway Commission, staff had sent a letter requesting that the Planning Commission request a 100 foot conservation easement applied at the riverfront, effectively doubling the 50 foot Gateway Required Vegetation Buffer. Gateway's request for the conservation easement was countered by a request for "fee-in-lieu of" open space from the Old Lyme Open Space Commission. The Planning Commission, with support from the applicant, required the 75 foot conservation easement.

Chairman's Report

A report was provided during the Annual Meeting.

Finance Committee Report

Matthews reported that expenses are increasing while the portfolio value is decreasing. Market conditions impacting the portfolio were described as continuing to be volatile.

The bill for RiverCOG services was reported as \$5,374.07. A bill from Halloran & Sage in the amount of \$74 was presented for payment. An invoice totaling \$1,632 was presented for payment on behalf of W-Design and an invoice totaling \$810 was presented for payment on behalf of Community Consultants, both consultants working on the Gateway Commission's marketing project. The total amount of bills proposed for payment is \$7,890.57. Upon a motion by Matthews, which was seconded by Bement, the bills were unanimously approved for payment.

Communications and Outreach Committee

Futoma has presented a written report during the Annual Meeting. A thank you was expressed to Staff and Susan Bement for their work in organizing and carrying out the October 20, 2022 boat trip, which was delayed a week due to weather. The CT Land Conservation Council has announced its plans for the land trust workshops to be held on March 25, 2023 in Middletown. Executive Director Amy Patterson has requested suggestions for workshops. Futoma suggested that the Commission could present a workshop on light pollution based upon the work of Misha Semënov-Leiva and the Rules Committee.

Rules Committee

Webb reported that the committee is working on a revised Gateway standard for the 15% coverage limit on properties in the Conservation Zone. Where the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission had proposed a standard that provided leeway to the 15% limit, Gateway had requested that they hold off adopting that "loser" standard. The Zoning Commission adopted the standard, agreeing to work with Gateway on a revised version that Gateway will develop and propose to all eight Gateway towns.

Land Committee

No report. Preston provided information on an Old Saybrook Land Trust fundraiser to be held on November 12, 2022 and said she will forward invitations to Gateway members.

Grants Committee

On behalf of the committee Roberts reported on the need for the committee to finalize documents that will support Gateway's grants efforts and requested the assistance from Rules Committee members, Thompson and Matthews.

Old Business

Matthews reported that the Essex Zoning Board of Appeals approved a revised application for property at 50 Crosstrees Hill Road. The Gateway Commission found that the proposed pergola was acceptable with

conditions while the glass “green house” was eliminated from the application by the applicant, knowing that Gateway had recommended the denial of that part of the application.

Thompson raised the issue of bringing the Gateway Handbook up to date and requested the formation of an ad hoc committee to take on that task. Matthews agreed to assist Thompson.

Webb reported that he had a productive conversation with Old Saybrook ZBA and Zoning Commission chairs on the October 20, 2022 boat trip.

Debrigard requested that the most recent list of committee assignments be circulated to members.

New Business

None.

Upon a motion by Bement, which was seconded by Preston, the meeting was adjourned at 9:04pm.

Respectfully submitted,

J. H. Torrance Downes, Staff to the Gateway Commission

Gateway Meeting Schedule for 2023

January 26, 2023

February 23, 2023

March 23, 2023

April 27, 2023

May 25, 2023

June 22, 2023

July 27, 2023

August 24, 2023

September 28, 2023

October 26, 2023

(Regular and Annual Meetings)

December 7, 2023

Finance Committee Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2021/2022

I'm happy to report that Dianne Stober, recently appointed alternate commissioner from Old Saybrook, agreed to join the Finance Committee. She has a strong background in finance and has already added value to the team.

The finance committee monitored expenses, reviewed our books and accounts and reported monthly on the same to the full commission.

They met quarterly to review, discuss and make changes to the commission's portfolio with our investment advisors. The portfolio is conservatively balanced and performing as expected during a serious market downturn

They solicited budget recommendations for the 22/23 fiscal year in May of 2022, prepared a budget and submitted it to the committee for approval at its July meeting.

Documents related to commission expenses, investment portfolio and budget are held by the Treasurer and available for review by request.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire K. Matthews
Treasurer, Finance Committee Chair

Communications Committee
Report for Connecticut River Gateway Commission Annual Meeting
October 27, 2022

A continuation of the Commission's comprehensive marketing program to increase awareness of the agency mission and to inspire protection of the estuary occupied considerable committee time during the fiscal year.

The new Connecticut Gateway Commission website – now containing over 60 discrete pages in its draft form – has required a great deal of volunteer time. A relatively small amount of content remains before a public launch. The “work group” process has evolved into ad hoc task completion by Commissioners and RiverCOG staff. A searchable Conservation Zone map is done, and a layer showing river access and view points will be added.

The Commission's <http://ctrivergateway.org> domain was renewed. When the draft site goes live, it will be hosted on Flywheel, better suited than currently used HostGator for WordPress generated updates.

The Committee adopted a social media posting policy in January 2022. A new Commission presence on Facebook and Instagram is now active at the URLs shown. The committee chair attended a workshop on social media posting strategy.

<https://www.facebook.com/ctrivergateway>
<https://www.instagram.com/ctrivergateway/>

A new Gateway land conservation brochure is done and will be posted on the Internet for download. Copies may be printed as needed in the future.

Additional work on the marketing program will include updating and expanding the Commission's current PowerPoint presentation.

The Communications Committee recommended that the Commission provide support for various events held by partners during the fiscal year. The Commission voted to financially sponsor the CT Land Conservation Council's (CLCC) 2022 workshops (formerly its conference) held from May 12 through May 19, 2022. Additional supported events include the Lyme Land Conservation Trust's Tour de Lyme and the Connecticut River Conservancy's (CRC) “Source to Sea” clean-up. The Committee will develop a policy to review 2023 sponsorship requests.

The Commission's annual boat trip was held on October 20, 2022. An earlier cruise date was canceled due to inclement weather. Nearly 40 people traveled on the Connecticut River Museum's boat on a crisp autumn afternoon. Participants included town CEOs from Chester, East Haddam, Old Lyme and Old Saybrook, various town planning and zoning officials, and representatives from CLCC, The Nature Conservancy, CRC, the CT Forest & Park Association, NERR and land trusts.

Gateway Commission
Rules Committee Yearly Written Statement
11/4/2022

2022/2021 was a busy year for the Rules Committee.

Our major focus was to revisit the Gateway Standards, accepting language changes and clarifications recommended by Mark Branse of Halloran and Sage - no changes in substance - and addressing light pollution, and to arrange meetings with all member towns to introduce the new language and to get feedback. As part of the exercise, Torrance Downs provided draft implementation of the changes into each member town's zoning regulations, which provided a first step for town language that reflects the Standards, should they choose to work with it. The next step, after we hear from all the towns, will be to hold another public meeting.

Another focus this year was to work towards a multiyear budget request to cover Rules committee recommended projects. The request, informal, was forwarded to the Finance Committee. More important than the \$s was the discussion of what projects were important to the Rules committee in it's support of the Commission goals and mandate.

This year the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission reduced density requirements below the Gateway minimum standards in parts of Old Saybrook within the conservation zone where the Gateway Commission typically does find that the requested density variance does not affect the Gateway Commission mission but the ZBA afterwards may struggle to establish hardship. Other towns have requested similar flexibility. The rules committee this year will work with the member towns to develop new language for the Standards that accommodate these needs for flexibility while maintaining the Gateway mission. Old Saybrook will update its zoning rules to comply with the new language.