

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION
Communications and Outreach Committee Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2022

Attendance: Greg Futoma, Mike Farina, Judy Preston, Jerry Roberts, Marilyn Gleeson, Wendy Hill, Melvin Woody and J H Torrance Downes

Call to Order

This meeting was convened using the Zoom online platform. The agenda was formally posted in all eight Gateway member towns, with information directing interested members of the public to join the meeting online. Chairman Futoma called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Futoma summarized the busy November, December and January that both he and Commission chair Thompson had with other issues, including open space issues related to Old Lyme. The primary purpose of this meeting is to prepare for the presentation of the draft website to the Commission at its upcoming meeting on January 27, 2022. Futoma noted that the social media campaign has begun and that the committee will be working toward the establishment of an eNewsletter and a communications brochure.

Committee is in the second year of the communications project, which started in March of 2021. Futoma noted that the original motion to enter into an agreement with Community Consultants and W-Design was recorded in minutes as being for \$35,000. The MOU signed by the Commission, however, had a total of \$39,075. Futoma asks for consensus to report this discrepancy at the 1/27/22 meeting to clarify the record. This clarification does not create a situation of adding more funds, just correcting an inconsistency. Members agreed correcting the discrepancy in Commission minutes was required.

Futoma noted that, with the pandemic and busy schedules, the website is taking longer to produce than anticipated.

Futoma turned to the issue of what to call the Gateway Conservation Zone for ease-of-understanding (members know what the term means, but the general public likely does not). Questionnaires were provided on the October boat trip. Responses that came back were mixed with no apparent favorite. The committee has focused on “The Zone”, which works well from a “presentation” point of view and which Woody opined was the “worst of all” choices. Woody indicated that “the Estuary” is a commonly used term, but others opined that the term “estuary” is a technical term that many may not understand. A simpler and “catchy” term should be used.

To keep the meeting on track, the issue of what to call the Conservation Zone was set aside for the moment.

Futoma indicated that much of the website work to date was being done by staff, Futoma and Thompson and that more content development from other committee members would be ideal. Roberts suggested Futoma call him to let him know how he can help, to which Roberts – as the interim Grants Committee chair – could work with Thompson to develop content related to Gateway’s grant program. Roberts was also asked to develop some historical content in that history is his specialty, which he agreed to do.

On grants, Roberts indicated that he produced a 1 ½ page summary of the grants program that Preston requested be distributed to the Communications Committee members (Roberts requested a reminder to do this).

The question of access was raised, river access that would be included in an additional display map.

Gleeson suggested to look beyond “open space”. There is access to the Lieutenant River (Old Lyme) from the Florence Griswold Museum, for instance. There’s direct river access adjacent to the Goodspeed Opera House, there’s Depp River Landing and other locations that could be identified. Futoma mentioned the State kayak ramp at the end of Smith’s Neck Road.

[Roberts leaves at 6:07pm]

Farina informed members that Haddam has a newly formed Cove Committee overseeing town property that extends from near Higganum Village down to the river’s edge at Haddam Cove.

Regarding access opportunities to show on a display, Downes requested that the parcels be suggested in writing and that the use of a recently sent spreadsheet of information was not necessary. If each member could identify 3 or 4 properties in their towns that could be displayed for public access, that would result in a total of 20 to 30 properties.

Gleeson was asked to oversee what will be the “Find a Land Trust” page on the website to be sure appropriate organizations and their contact information be included. Downes reported that the land trusts in all eight Gateway towns as well as the Middlesex Land Trust have already been included.

Hill was asked if she would work on a PowerPoint presentation to use as a general introduction to the Commission and that could be broken down into different presentations depending upon who the presentation would be aimed toward. Hill offered to produce various “Did You Know” pieces.

Farina was asked if he could work on any aspect of the website. As a “fan of the river” and a non-IT person, he acknowledged that he would review as a tech-layperson/fan of the river.

The key will be to reach out to the general public and not necessarily just the conservation community.

As a wrap-up, Futoma reminded committee members that the 1/27/22 presentation of the website will be more about the “look and feel” of the site as its still a work in progress. Commission members will be asked to not to delve into specifics during the review; specifics will be worked through by the committee before final presentation to the Commission. Finally, Downes, who has begun the social media campaign, will display what’s been posted as examples, on Facebook and Instagram.

Upon a motion by Woody, seconded by Preston, the meeting was adjourned at 6:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,
J H Torrance Downes, Staff