

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

Communications and Outreach Committee Meeting Minutes

July 12, 2022

Attendance: Greg Futoma, Suzanne Thompson, Judy Preston, Wendy Hill, Melvin Woody, Susan Bement, Marilyn Gleeson, Jerry Roberts, Katie Perzanowski and J H Torrance Downes

Call to Order

This meeting was convened using the Zoom online platform at 11:07am. The agenda was formally posted in all eight Gateway member towns, with information directing interested members of the public to join the meeting online.

Staffing. Futoma provided an update on a meeting he, Thompson and Webb had with RiverCOG Executive Director Sam Gold. It is reported that the needs of the Gateway Commission's staffer as seen by the Commission and by Gold align well. Gold reported that he is working on finding the person with the proper experience to succeed Mr. Downes. Downes reported that his date of departure has been moved from October to January of 2023, providing additional time to assign the duties to a new person.

Boat Trip. Members continue to work on planning for the October 13, 2022 boat trip. Downes, based on his new retirement schedule, will be in attendance on the trip. Roberts reminded that First Selectman should be included as the Deep River first selectman was disappointed that he didn't receive an invitation for the 2021 boat trip.

Communications Project Update. Futoma reported the status of the various part of the project, indicating that he continues to work with Judy Anderson and Dorene Warner on the website, a powerpoint presentation and a land brochure.

Gateway Budget Discussion. Discussion included differentiating between operating budget items, project budget items and other "events" such as the Tour de Lyme, the CRC "Source to Sea" cleanup and the CLCC land trust workshops. The ongoing marketing project (website etc), when done, won't necessarily improve visibility, but will provide the tools to market the Commission, which will improve visibility. An upcoming opportunity, for example, is the 2023 "50th Year Celebration".

On communications efforts, Debrigard reminded that he'd like to see the parcel database continued that will provide names and addresses of property owners in the Conservation Zone should Gateway choose to send information/brochures/notices to them. Downes said that he will discuss how difficult this would be and how much time/funds it would take with RiverCOG GIS Specialist Kevin Armstrong. Previously, Armstrong reported that this would not be difficult if the Town Assessors would allow Gateway to connect to their municipal databases. Debrigard asked if Margot Burns still has some sort of list. Downes will pursue this issue with Burns.

Following more discussion, members decided that a funding number for use in the draft budget would be \$10,000 for communications committee work.

Various potential outreach projects were mentioned including a kayak trip from the northern reaches of the Conservation Zone to the mouth, a photo contest, a social media campaign that would present a new topic for five straight weeks, specific "challenges" (have the public let Gateway know if they've kayaked from Haddam Meadows State Park to the mouth of the river). Gleeson mentioned a "scavenger hunt". Roberts reminded of the questions, who does the Commission want to reach and why. Approach initiatives in a positive way – "thank you for turning off your lights" rather than lecturing property owners on why that *should* turn off lights.

Discussion turned to the effort to seek suggestions for viewing spots on the river from Commission members. Gleeson has gotten a few responses, but not many.
Other ideas: "Favorite Spots of Gateway Members".

Upon a motion by Gleeson, the meeting was adjourned at 12:24pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J H Torrance Downes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

J H Torrance Downes, Staff