

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

Rules of Procedure Committee Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2022

Attendance: Bill Webb (Chairman), Marilyn Gleeson, Jenny Kitsen, Raul DeBrigard, Misha Semenov, J H Torrance Downes,

Call to Order

This meeting was convened using the Zoom online platform at 5:30pm. The agenda was formally posted in all eight Gateway member towns and on the CT River Gateway Commission website with information directing interested members of the public to join the meeting online.

The meeting was called to discuss Gateway standards concerning lighting and light pollution, and if time allows, tree cutting in the Conservation Zone. Webb first announced that he was willing to step aside from chairmanship or enter into a co-chairmanship, if there was a will for such an arrangement. Webb further requested that when the Grants Committee schedules a meeting, he'd like to be included in the invite.

Light Pollution. The discussion referenced the substantial work performed on lighting by Semenov and the draft definition and reviewed standard offered by Downes. Semenov described two paths. One was the proposal to adopt a light pollution definition and the additional review standard for residential dwellings over 4,000 square feet. The second path would be to work with the eight member towns to have them consider adopting the broader, more detailed work presented by Semenov, based upon "Dark Skies" legislation.

Members recognized that the Sustainable CT effort, that includes dark skies considerations, may be a tool to use to gain support for adopting lighting standards. Gleeson opined that this is a perfect time to be considering lighting standards. Westbrook's substantial lighting regulations were brought up, but it was recognized that those standards were adopted for commercial and industrial uses only. It's recognized that lighting standards for residential uses will likely be considered as "over regulation".

Webb liked the idea of moving forward on two fronts as described. An ally was mentioned in the name of Alan Schein of the Lyme Land Trust. A suggestion was made for the committee to make a short presentation to the Council of Governments, alerting CEOs that Gateway would be pursuing this effort. The CEOs could be asked for their support, even though they would have no role in adoption of either Gateway standards or zoning regulations in general.

Downes recommended that Gateway consider holding a public hearing on the definition and added standard so that, if chosen, the language could be added to the Branse-revised standards that will be taken to the eight member-town Planning & Zoning Commissions. Thompson requested that zoning regulations in the eight towns be reviewed to see if there were already lighting regulations for residential use. Downes commented that, to his knowledge, all existing lighting standards impacted commercial and industrial uses, similar to Westbrook. He indicated, however, that he would confirm that understanding.

It was decided by consensus that, to move the issue along, Downes would recirculate the draft definition and standard to committee members after this meeting. Another meeting would be scheduled for January 19, 2022 at 5:30pm to further discuss the draft.

Webb raised his preference that this committee be empowered to preliminarily review all regulation proposals before they are presented to the Commission, this in addition to the summaries that staff

provides ahead of each regular monthly meeting. The adoption of “criteria” for reviewing such regulation proposals was mentioned as a possibility. Another suggestion was for the committee to draft a written document providing what proposals come to the Commission/Committee and which can be delegated to staff. Downes reminded members that ALL regulation petitions must be acted upon by the Commission, while variance applications do not need Commission action and can be delegated to staff, as has been the practice for numerous years. Blatt offered that it would be wise to “codify” such rules for processing applications and petitions. Debrigard opined that he was all for spelling out such duties. First, however, a “guidance document” should be put together that may or may not be adopted into the Rules of Procedure.

Gleeson offered that perhaps qualifications for new members should be written as well, or a general statement of what kind of ideal background a Gateway Commission member would have. Webb asked if Gleeson could take a shot at writing such a document.

Gleeson mentioned that perhaps it is time to assign committee assignments to members. Webb acknowledged that the Grants Committee is understaffed. Gleeson also looks for clarity with respect to who signs letters on behalf of the Commission.

Upon a motion by Gleeson, seconded by Debrigard, the meeting was adjourned at 6:38pm

Respectfully submitted,
J H Torrance Downes, Staff