

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

Rules of Procedure Committee Meeting Minutes

January 19, 2022

Attendance: Bill Webb (Chairman), Marilyn Gleeson, Jenny Kitsen, Misha Semenov, David Blatt, 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. Other potential issues could be raised as well under Old Business, and New Business.

Addressing the proposed light pollution definition, Semenov asked if “and” should be revised to read “or” in the final sentence. Blatt suggested the use of “or”. The committee approved the revision and the draft definition and standards, recommending that the document be presented to the Commission for approval at its next meeting on January 27, 2022 with the caveat that it be reviewed by counsel as the next step. After counsel review, the new language would be vetted with town staff and town zoning authorities before being scheduled for a Gateway public hearing and Gateway adoption.

Webb raised the article appearing in the CT Post on Westport’s effort to develop tree cutting regulations, forwarded to members by Blatt. It was pointed out that the regulations Westport is looking at have restrictions on tree removal in property setbacks but not the overall property. On waterfront properties, Gateway’s Required Vegetated Buffer prohibits cutting within the 50 feet adjacent to the river, coves and marshes.

On the subject of information to be distributed to the public, Blatt offered that a Best Practices booklet would be advisable to produce. The booklet, in electronic form, would be included on the Gateway website. Webb wondered if Judy Preston might have some suggestions for an approach for tree cutting. (Preston developed an intricate tree cutting scheme for the Required Vegetative buffer before the Commission decided to prohibit cutting of trees altogether, with the exception of clearing a 5 foot path for accessing the riverfront).

Downes brought up the completed list of riverfront property owners (including mailing addresses) Gleeson suggested that welcome letters could be sent to any new property owners if there was a way to keep up with the turnover of those properties.

Webb summarized that the meeting covered subjects including the lighting standards, tree cutting, the Westport tree cutting article and the concept of developing a best practices booklet and queried if a standing meeting of the Rules Committee the Wednesday before the week of the Gateway monthly meeting would be advisable. A decision on a standing meeting was deferred to another time.

Downes raised the question of whether or not the committee should consider language regarding the limiting of the size (and internal lighting?) of cupolas should be raised at this time. Members felt that the light pollution definition and the added review standard should stand alone.

Upon a motion by Blatt, the meeting was adjourned at 6:16pm.

Respectfully submitted,
J H Torrance Downes, Staff