

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 23, 2017

Present/Absent: [Excused absence (E); Unexcused absence (U)]

Chester:	Margaret (Peggy) Wilson, Errol Horner
Deep River:	Nancy Fischbach (E), Kate Cotton
East Haddam:	Harvey Thomas (E), Crary Brownell
Essex:	Claire Matthew, Jerri MacMillian
Fenwick:	Fran Adams, Borough Warden
Haddam:	Susan Bement, Chip Frey
Lyme:	J. Melvin Woody, Emily Bjornberg
Old Lyme:	Peter Cable (E), Suzanne Thompson
Old Saybrook:	Madge Fish, Belinda Ahern
Regional Rep:	Raul Debrigard
DEEP:	Sue Jacobson
Staff:	J. H. Torrance Downes
Guests:	Whitey Wilson

Call to Order

Chairman **Woody** called the regular meeting of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission to order at RiverCOG offices located at 145 Dennison Road, Essex at 7:33 pm.

Approval of 2/23/17 Regular Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by **Wilson**, seconded by **Bjornberg**, the 2/23/17 regular meeting minutes were approved unanimously with **Brownell** and **Bement** abstaining.

Treasurers Report

Bills: Wilson reported that a bill is presented for payment for February staffing in the amount of \$2,152.08. Motion by **Bement**, seconded by **Matthews** to approve, passed unanimously.

Items of Interest Report

Goodspeed Airport Scenic Easement/Campbell Hudson.

Allyson Clarke of DEEP was in contact to review some questions she had with the scenic easement language. Issues included the need for Mellon to have the area that the Town could use to repair or expand the Town's waste water facility clearly shown on the plan. Other issues include incidental language clarification.

Phragmites Eradication Partnership, Lords Cove, Lyme.

During the past month, the partners learned that the Lord Cove marsh system is an identified "nature preserve" in addition to be a management area which is bound by specific DEEP regulations. Upon research, those regulations were discovered by partnership member and wetlands biologist Rich Snarski. One regulation requirement: before any activities can be conducted in such a preserve, a Management Plan must first be established, which doesn't presently exist. Those regulations, however, *do* indicate that activities that had been conducted in the past can be continued without a management plan. In that cutting has historically been conducted in that marsh by the State of Connecticut, it was presumed that the mowing that needed to be done quickly could go forward. USF&WS, however, needed a letter of permission from the CTDEEP before they would go onto State land to cut phragmites. Downes offered to facilitate and forward the regulations up to Hartford (those involved weren't aware of those particular regulations) where the appropriate manager and staff confirmed that the mowing could occur. As a result, the DEEP issued the required letter of permission for mowing on State land to the US&WS. Another successful multi-level governmental coordination effort. The project is moving forward after the possibility of coming to a halt.

Committee Reports

Land Committee **Wilson** reported that, according to David Brown of Middlesex Land Trust, the US Fish & Wildlife Service is close to finalizing the purchase of the Brainerd Quarry Preserve property. Once purchased from MxLT, funds will come to Gateway according to the agreement made between Gateway and MxLT.

Outreach Committee

Bjornberg, as chair of the Outreach Committee, reported that members of the committee had met prior to the regular Gateway meeting and had determined that it would like to move forward with the hiring of a press agent who can guide Gateway's desire to issue press releases and to be more promotional in general. It was acknowledged that it is tough to "get traction" in local media. **Bjornberg** asked for Gateway consensus that the committee can issue an RFI/RFQ (request for information, request for qualifications). **Wilson** asked what level of funding might be involved, to which **Thompson** responded that an hourly rate might be expected to be \$20 to \$25 per hour. That estimate provided an idea about funds if several hours a month might be necessary. **Cotton** asked if the promotional efforts were to be centralized in the eight GW towns or beyond. In preparing the RFI/RFQ, **Frey** recommended not including information of what GW might be willing to pay. Once the proposal is finalized by the Outreach Committee, **Bjornberg** said that it would come back before the Commission for final approval before being issued. **Matthews** reminded Commission members that it's important to know what is to be accomplished. **Wilson** suggested concern about how much information would eventually go into press releases, especially with respect to Gateway's conservation fund. Outreach will proceed and return to the Commission with a recommendation.

Wilson asked if there was any information available on the property known as the Fetski property, located on the river side of Injun Hollow Road near the Brainerd Quarry property, to which **Bement** indicated that there was not.

Governance Committee

No report on standards.

Old Business . None.

New Business. None.

Adjournment. Upon motion by **Bement** and **Wilson**, the meeting adjourned at 8:10p.



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Chester
Deep River
East Haddam
Essex
Haddam
Lyme
Old Lyme
Old Saybrook

February 24, 2017

NOTE: Letter sent, NOT a draft.

Representative Daniel Fox
Senator Gary Winfield
Senator Michael A. McLachlan
Government Administrations and Elections Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2200
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

SUBJECT: Support of Senate Joint Resolution 39 (SJ39), “Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Protect Real Property Held or Controlled by the State”

Dear Representative Fox, Senator Winfield and Senator McLachlan:

This testimony is being submitted in strong support of Senate Joint Resolution 39 concerning the protection of real property held or controlled by the State of Connecticut. The Connecticut River Gateway Commission, enabled through Connecticut State Statute Sections 25-102a through 102s, was directly and adversely impacted by the event that “triggered” the need for this amendment, the now infamous “Tylerville Swap”.

The Gateway Commission’s 43 year mission of protection in the lower Connecticut River includes a land acquisition component whereby Gateway, with partners and by itself, acquires undeveloped land along the hillsides of the Gateway Conservation Zone in fee and in the form of scenic and conservation easements. Once acquired, Gateway then transfers to land and easements to conservation partners including the State of Connecticut and local land trusts. The Commission has been involved in the conservation of over 1,000 acres of land in the lower Connecticut River Valley, providing over \$1 million dollars of grants to do so.

Because of the trust placed in the Gateway Commission by private donors to act as a conservation partner in the lower river, members took great exception to the “Tylerville Swap”, sending many letters of opposition to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the State Legislature and Governor Malloy as well as providing testimony to the General Assembly in an attempt to stop what was seen as an attack on the conservation community’s ability to securely protect open space from development. Because of that proposed “swap”, Gateway heard from many constituents and potential donors who indicated that they would not donate land to Gateway and the State again because of the possibility that their preservation efforts could be undone with a vote of the State Legislature.

Although the “swap” didn’t occur, Gateway has been supportive of efforts to formalize a review

process that it hopes will prevent such a plan from ever coming forth again. Or, if such a plan *does* come forth, it will be fully vetted in the "light of day" before consideration of transferring land placed in conservation for purposes other than such preservation.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and anticipated support of this Constitutional Amendment.

For the Commission,

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

J. H. Torrance Downes
Deputy Director, RiverCOG
Staff to the Connecticut River Gateway
Commission

Copies to:

Representative Devin Carney, 23rd General Assembly District
Representative Robert Siegrist, 36th General Assembly District
Representative Melissa Ziobron, 34th General Assembly District
Senator Art Linares, 33rd Senate District
Senator Paul Formica, 20th Senate District

Dr. Melvin Woody, Chairman, CT River Gateway Commission
Carl Fortuna, First Selectman, Old Saybrook
Bonnie Reemsnyder, First Selectman, Old Lyme
Ralph Eno, First Selectman, Lyme
Norm Needleman, First Selectman, Essex
Angus McDonald, First Selectman, Deep River
Lauren Gister, First Selectman, Chester
Lizz Milardo, First Selectman, Haddam
Emmett Lyman III, First Selectman, East Haddam
Robert Friedmann, Chairman, Old Saybrook Zoning Commission
Jane Cable, Chairman, Old Lyme Zoning Commission
David Tiffany, Chairman, Lyme Planning & Zoning Commission
Larry Shipman, Chairman, Essex Zoning Commission
Melissa Schlag, CFE