

CONNECTICUT RIVER GATEWAY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

December 1, 2016

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

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

Call to Order

In the absence of both Chairman **Woody** and Vice Chairman **Thompson**, Secretary **Fish** called the regular meeting of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission to order at RiverCOG offices located at 145 Dennison Road, Essex at 7:30 pm.

Approval of 10/26/16 Regular Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement**, the 10/26/16 regular meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Wilson reported that the full audit authorized by the Commission, to be performed by CPA Joe Wollack, is underway. Wollack reported that it is his hope to have the audit completed by the end of December, 2016. **Wilson** also reported that the Essex Financial quarterly fee is posted and is higher than it has been because the funds are higher than they have been. The fees remain lower, however, than those charged by Merrill Lynch in the past. RiverCOG staffing bill: \$2,622.10. Motion to approve payment of bills and acceptance of Treasurers Report by **Fischbach**, seconded by **Bement**, passed unanimously.

Items of Interest Report

Goodspeed Airport Scenic Easement/Campbell Hudson.

In a conversation with Campbell Hudson on Wednesday, November 30, 2016, Downes was told that what should be the final draft of the scenic easement will be available to the Gateway Commission for review at its December 1, 2016 meeting. As discussed in past months, the same easement language has been used, but passive recreations uses that have been discussed including open space, a ball field and some sort of water access structure have been included as activities that are allowable under the easement. Mellon has been very supportive of the Town requests and has accommodated them. **The final draft was made available just prior to the meeting with a copy being provided to Crary Brownell of East Haddam.**

Referendum Question to Amend State Constitution to Better Protect Public Lands

Chairman Woody as requested that the Gateway Commission vote to add it's name to the list of supporters for this referendum question. The following email from Eric Hammerling, Executive Director of CT Forest & Park Association was forwarded by Woody:

Dear Environmental Leader,

You are probably aware that earlier this year the General Assembly passed a resolution that would place a referendum question on the ballot to amend the state constitution to better protect your public lands (state parks, forests, wildlife management areas, state-owned agricultural lands, etc.). This resolution, [Senate Joint Resolution 36/Resolution Act 16-1 \(attached\)](#), has to be passed a second time by the General Assembly to make it on the ballot in 2018. This is a BIG DEAL which would help ensure that public lands are not given away, sold, or traded without adequate public input.

We are circulating the attached letter to get as many organizations and businesses to sign-on as possible.

Please let me know by December 15th whether your organization will sign-on. Thanks!

All the best,

Eric Hammerling, Executive Director Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA)

A motion was made by Wilson, seconded by Fischbach to support the CT Constitutional Amendment known as Senate Joint Resolution 36/Resolution Act 16-1. The motion passed unanimously.

CT RC&D Membership Mission Marketing Initiative. The CT Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc, located out of the UConn Extension Service offices in Haddam, is looking for participation in a short-term “focus group initiative” to search for solutions and ideas for addressing local needs in agriculture, conservation, and economic innovation, especially in underserved rural communities. They are looking to improve the organization’s outreach about its programs to impact diverse and underserved populations in rural areas. The RC&D Executive Director is former RiverCOG Deputy Director Jeanne Davies, whom most of you are familiar with. Information about this request can be sent via email to jdavies@ctrkd.org **Flyer is attached.**

CT River Watershed Council. Annual Report, 2016.

CT River Watershed Council. Brochure summarizing the “Source to Sea” river cleanup effort. Gateway contributed \$1000 to the effort in 2016. Certificate of Appreciation.

CT Land Conservation Council. An application to make a presentation at the March, 2017 CLCC Workshop at Wesleyan University was submitted on Friday, November 19, 2016. The presentation is tentatively entitled “Connecticut River Gateway Commission: A Non-Traditional Avenue for Protecting Land”. The intent is for Melvin Woody to make the initial presentation on Gateway and its land protection program through the years, followed by a discussion on the Commission regulatory powers and procedures. The Commission will hear whether the presentation was selected later this month.

CT Land Conservation Council. The annual request for sponsorship of the 2017 CLCC land protection workshop has been received. Last year (and consistent with previous years), the Commission sponsored the workshop at a level of \$500. In addition, last year members voted to *join* the CLCC for the first time at a level of \$100. Commission members will discuss how to support the CLCC efforts this year given their membership, annual sponsorship and presentation status. Discussion to be taken up under Outreach Committee. **A motion was made by Fischbach, seconded by Bjornberg, to sponsor the CLCC workshop at a level of \$500, consistent with the past several years. Motion passed unanimously.**

Trust for Public Land. Land + People Fall/Winter2016 newsletter booklet.

Connecticut Preservation News. November/December 2016 Newsletter.

Referrals. None presented for review.

Staff Actions. Downes reported that he reviewed a variance application for a Tim McCane application to construct a single family dwelling on his property at 18 Depot Road. The property had previously been offered to the Gateway Commission and other conservation organizations for market price and did not sell. McCane decided to construct on the property instead. Due to the undulating nature of the sandy topography (the site was formerly a gravel pit), the proposed structure required a height variance to accommodate a walk-out basement. Due to the location of the structure to the inland side of the Valley Railroad right-of-way, and the intervening topography elevation and tree cover, a letter of “no opposition” was sent because the structure would not be seen to any significant way from the river, let along the oversized façade.

Committee Reports

Land Committee **Wilson** reported that the McHutchison easement amounting to approximately 2.8 acres has been deeded to the Middlesex Land Trust, which contributes to the “Garminy challenge”). It was also reported that Ms.

Foltz, adjacent property owner and Stanford Brainerd sister, recently passed away. Wilson reported that the MxLT has raised approximately \$14,424 locally, which qualifies for the “full match” from the Garminey challenge.

Outreach Committee

Downes presented several quotes for the reprinting and laminating of canoe and kayak trail guides (quotes attached). Downes will continue to seek quotes with the information being presented to the Outreach Committee for recommendation to the entire Commission.

Governance Committee

Fischbach reported that it appears that there is consensus regarding a set of minimum Gateway standards that were acceptable to the Essex Zoning Commission. It was decided that a tentative schedule would have GW schedule it's public hearing at its February 2017 meeting and presumably approve the standards at that time, unless comments require otherwise. Once **Fischbach** finalizes the draft GW standards according to the discussion with the Essex Zoning Commission, those draft standards will be sent to the other seven Gateway towns summarizing the minor revisions and notifying them of the anticipated schedule. Once GW approves the standards and waits the appropriate time for the appeal period, the towns will be notified that they can move forward to adopt the standards locally. Downes will be formatting the standards for the Essex Zoning Regulations.

Old Business . None.

New Business.

- **Fish** reported that the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission will be reviewing a requested modification of the Dock & Dine Restaurant proposal, signaling that the construction project seems ready to move forward. The building will be smaller.
- **Bement** reported that the Haddam Land Trust is in the process of raising funds for the purchase of Beaver Ledges. Upon a motion by **Bjornberg**, seconded by **Fischbach**, the Commission voted to grant \$5000 to the HLT to use as a matching grant and marketing purposes if they so choose. Passed unanimously.
- Downes reported that he had conversations with Attorney Branse' office and with Milone & MacBroom regarding an upcoming petition to amend the zoning regulations of the Town of Essex to allow a restaurant use in the waterfront district. The petition will be referred to Gateway for approval or disapproval pursuant to Section 25-102g(b) CGS.
- **Frey** asked members about the handling of applications for cell towers and whether there is any local authority. Members agreed that, where the authority used to be shared by towns, that authority now rests with the Siting Council. Without the “hook” to local zoning authority, Gateway has no authority either but can send comments for the Siting Council process.
- **Fish** reported on the Gateway article included in the Old Saybrook Annual Report. Members agreed that the article could be adjusted for other member towns and submitted for publication in each town's “Events” magazine.

Adjournment

Upon motion by **Wilson** and **Bement**, the meeting adjourned at 8:46p.