



THE CITY OF GROTON

Mayor Marian Galbraith

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Testimony of Marian Galbraith, Mayor of the City of Groton, in support of S.B. No. 345 AN ACT CONCERNING THE WATER TAXI AT THE HERITAGE PARK IN THE TOWNS OF GROTON AND NEW LONDON.

On behalf of the City of Groton, I am pleased to provide testimony in favor of S.B. 345. This legislation will provide funding for a water taxi on the Thames River, creating an economic benefit to our region and, in particular, to Groton and New London.

As a necessary step in the development of the Thames River Heritage Park, the water taxi provides an opportunity for economic diversity and growth. The river is at the core of Groton's development. On its banks we have built and housed submarines for a hundred years. Now we are looking to the river to help us build our tourist industry. The water taxi will provide the infrastructure to connect the historic sites and institutions, events and cultural experiences along the Thames River into a cohesive heritage-based tourist destination, allowing both Groton and New London to enjoy the economic benefits of the tourist industry. A visitor will be able to board the water taxi at convenient locations in Groton and New London and easily access Fort Trumbull, Fort Griswold and, in the future, the Nautilus Museum and the Coast Guard Museum. It will ramp up visitation to the smaller historic institutions found on either side of the river and provide economic opportunities for regional businesses.

How do we know? A demonstration project run over two weekends last September showed that the water taxi will work. The water taxi drew riders not only from Groton and New London, but from towns throughout the region. They visited Fort Trumbull and Fort Griswold, two of Connecticut's State Parks, visited historic homes, and ate at local restaurants. On Thames Street in Groton, one coffee shop owner quadrupled his usual weekend business. The Avery-Copp house, a privately-owned historic home, saw a record number of visitors for one day. Countless riders, even local residents, remarked that they had never been out on the river before or visited the state parks in their own backyards. The water taxi drew them.

The prospect of a water taxi has engendered excitement and expectation in the City of Groton. Historic institutions have renewed hope for their own sustainability. Our business community and economic development specialists anticipate the development of Groton Bank, including Thames Street, a water front street with historic charm. Until forty years ago, Thames Street bustled with business. It was Groton's "main street" and home to scores of small businesses. Now it has the opportunity to enjoy a renaissance. Current business owners have seen the possibility for increased trade and the neighborhood envisions new eateries and small shops which would bring vitality and jobs to our community. Likewise, our residents look forward to

being able to hop on the water taxi to go to the New London train station, to have dinner on Bank Street in New London or go to the theater. Event organizers on both sides of the river envision greater attendance at events like the Connecticut Maritime Festival or Art on Groton Bank. Everywhere I go, residents eagerly ask about the progress of the water taxi.

Almost thirty years ago, when a heritage park was first envisioned for the Thames River, the park infrastructure included a water taxi. Although two of the docks were built, the water taxi never came to fruition and the park, although designated, languished. Last year's demonstration proved the water taxi can become a reality. I urge you to support this legislation and allow us to breathe life into an idea whose time has come.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marian Galbraith".

Marian Galbraith
Mayor, City of Groton