



145 Dennison Road
Essex, CT 06426
860/581-8554 FAX: 860/581-8543
www.rivercog.org

Chester, Clinton, Cromwell,
Deep River, Durham, East Haddam,
East Hampton, Essex, Haddam,
Killingworth, Lyme, Middlefield,
Middletown, Old Lyme,
Old Saybrook, Portland, Westbrook

**Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments
and Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization**

APPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, December 6, 2017

RiverCOG Members:

Chester: Lauren Gister *
Clinton: Christine Goupil
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore *
Deep River: Angus McDonald, Jr. *
Durham: Laura Francis *
East Haddam: Emmett Lyman *
East Hampton: Michael Maniscalco *
Essex: Norm Needleman
Haddam: Lizz Milardo *
Killingworth: Cathy Iino *
Lyme: Steve Mattson
Middlefield: Ed Bailey *
Middletown: Daniel Drew
Old Lyme: Bonnie Reemsnyder *
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna *
Portland: Susan Bransfield *
Westbrook: Noel Bishop *

MPO Members:

Middlesex Chamber of Commerce: Darlene Briggs *
Estuary Transit District: Joe Comerford *
Middletown Area Transit: Lisa Seymour *

Others Present:

Pat Bandzes, Eversource
David Bingham, MD, CLCV
Darin Offerdahl, CPA, MACW
Grayson Wright, CTDOT
Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office
Dan Giungi, CCM
Nancy Fischbach, CT River Gateway Commission
Jordan Giaconia, CT Land Conservation Council

* Members Present

Staff Present:

Samuel Gold, AICP
Judy Snyder
Rob Haramut
Jon Curtis
Margot Burns
Janice Ehle/Meyer
Paula Fernald

1. CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, PUBLIC SPEAKING

Bonnie Reemsnyder called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Portland Public Library. Roll call was taken by Sam Gold, Executive Director and guests were introduced. Mr. Gold announced that two staff members are leaving the RiverCOG, Rick Grant, Transportation Planner, is retiring and Nate Hougrand has accepted a planning position with the City of New Haven. Ms. Reemsnyder wished them well and thanked them for their service.

David Bingham, MD, Co-Chair Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Dr. Bingham stated that he is here on behalf of the CT Land Conservation Council. Preservation of the character of the town is always a top priority goal in every town's Plan of Conservation and Development. The Land Conservation Council helps the land trusts work with municipalities who have prioritized land conservation and stewardship. To prepare for this in the past the land conservation council has supported a state policy which enables towns to fund land protection and stewardship with a conveyance fee of up to 1% on the buyers to pay. Other states surrounding Connecticut has done this with great success.

Tony Salvatore said that if there is proposed legislation could he forward that to the Chairman and we could discuss it at our next meeting and perhaps vote to support it if the members agreed.

2. FY17 RIVERCOG AUDITOR'S REPORT – DARIN OFFERDAHL, CPA, MACW (MOTION)

Darin Offerdahl presented the members with copies of the FY17 audit. He reviewed the sections of the audit and stated that an in-depth, (highest level) audit was conducted because the RiverCOG receives state and federal monies. There were no findings and the audit was favorable.

Bonnie Reemsnyder thanked Mr. Offerdahl for his review of the audit and the Executive Director and staff for making this possible. She asked if any of the members had any questions or comments. There being none the following motion was made.

Upon motion of Anthony Salvatore, seconded by Laura Francis, it was unanimously voted to accept the Lower CT River Valley Council of Governments audited financial statement for the year ending June 30, 2017.

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3. LCRVMPO BUSINESS

a. Approval of Minutes of the October 25, 2017 LCRVCOG and LCRVMPO Meeting

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Ed Bailey, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2017 meeting.

b. Approval of Executive Committee 2018 Meeting Dates (motion)

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Lauren Gister, it was unanimously voted to approve the 2018 meeting dates for the RiverCOG Executive Committee as presented: January 16th, February 20th, March 20th, April 17th, May 15th, June 19th, July 17th, September 18th, October 16th, and November 27th.

c. Approval of COG/MPO 2018 Meeting Dates (motion)

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Susan Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to approve the 2018 meeting dates for the RiverCOG and MPO as presented: January 24th (State Capitol), February 28th, March 28th, April 25th, May 23rd, June 27th, July 25th, September 26th, October 24th, and December 5th.

d. Transportation Updates

1. 2018 TIP Amendment 1 – Replace bridge 06887 along Route 151 over Shady Brook, project 0040-0144, East Haddam (motion)

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Susan Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to approve the 2018 TIP Amendment 1 – Replace bridge 06887 along Route 151 over Shady Brook, project 0040-0144, East Haddam.

2. 2018 TIP Amendment 2 – Replace bridge 01139 along Route 82 over Eight Mile River project 0040-0145, East Haddam (motion)

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Susan Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to approve the 2018 TIP Amendment 2 – Replace bridge 01139 along Route 82 over Eight Mile River project 0040-0145, East Haddam.

3. 2018 TIP Amendment 3 – Replacement of signs and sign supports along RT 9, 17, project 0172-00473, Dist. 2 (motion)

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Susan Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to approve the 2018 TIP Amendment 3 – Replacement of signs and sign supports along RT 9, 17, project 0172-00473, Dist. 2.

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4. 2018 TIP Amendment 4 – Replacement of signs and sign supports along Route 9, 571 and 5/15, project 0007-0189, Cromwell/Berlin (motion)

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Susan Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to approve the 018 TIP Amendment 4 – Replacement of signs and sign supports along Route 9, 571 and 5/15, project 0007-0189, Cromwell/Berlin.

5. 2018 TIP Amendment 5 – Replace bridge 02713 and 06896 along Route 156 over Four Mile River and Armstrong Brook, project 0104-0175, Old Lyme (motion)

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Susan Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to approve the 2018 TIP Amendment 5 – Replace bridge 02713 and 06896 along Route 156 over Four Mile River and Armstrong Brook, project 0104-0175, Old Lyme.

6. Endorse revised MPO self-certification to reflect current laws and regulations (motion)

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Susan Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to endorse revised MPO self-certification to reflect current laws and regulations.

7. Endorse CTDOT performance measures safety target (motion)

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Susan Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to endorse CTDOT performance measures safety target.

8. Review, prioritize and endorse corridor study applications (motion)

- i. Regional Bus Operations Study

Robert Haramut said that none of the RiverCOG towns submitted applications however he did put together an application for a bus operations study for the region before the November 30th deadline. He would like to meet with Joe Comerford, Lisa Seymour and Sam Gold within the next week to elaborate on that application and submit it to DOT.

Sam Gold said this is a combined application that includes both the Middletown Area Transit and the Estuary Transit Districts. Mr. Haramut is also working on separate applications for both districts that would look at bus operations throughout the region, bus routing, and different ways the bus operations could be optimized. This application will be submitted under the corridor study program.

Laura Francis asked if Mr. Gold is looking for a motion of endorsement. Mr. Gold said yes they are looking for an endorsement of this application. Ms. Francis asked what the focus is. Mr. Gold said that the primary focus is that the Middletown Area Transit's route structure and operations hasn't really changed in four years. A review of how that system can be structured in a way to be more useful for existing ridership, to potential future ridership, and also be connecting to neighboring systems.

Susan Bransfield asked what our chances are and how long will this take. Grayson Wright answered that all of the COGs will be submitting applications. Sam Gold said this would be federally funded for 80% and the RiverCOG would be seeking a 20% match from the state for a transit study.

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Susan Bransfield inquired about the status of the corridor study. Sam Gold stated that the PAL agreements have been received and the scope of work is being worked out with our consultants. Mr. Gold is waiting to hear from OPM to how deeply our funds will be cut. There are components in each study that RiverCOG staff can work on which would include data collection and public involvement.

Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Susan Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to endorse the bus operation corridor study for the Middletown Area Transit and the Estuary Transit Districts.

Cathy Iino asked if the MPO or RiverCOG could write a letter urging, if not demanding, that the Route 81 bus be funded and stated that Killingworth was told the service would start after the budget was passed and still nothing has been done. Ms. Reemsnyder and Mr. Gold agreed that a letter could be sent.

4. LCRVCOG Business

a. Appointment of a Nominating Committee (motion)

Sam Gold asked for three volunteers to serve on the nominating committee for the slate of officers to be presented at the January meeting.

Susan Bransfield, Lauren Gister and Angus McDonald volunteered to serve as the nominating committee.

Upon motion of Cathy Iino, seconded by Lizz Milardo, it was unanimously voted to appoint Susan Bransfield, Lauren Gister and Angus McDonald to serve as the nominating committee.

b. Wetland Mapping Consultant (motion)

Margot Burns stated that this was a grant from 2016 RPIP money and it came out of the GIS committee that had gotten together to do our regional parcel update for 2013. The resolution is to enter into a contract with Milone and MacBroom to complete the wetland mapping project which is using the surveys collected for the 2013 parcel project.

Upon motion of Cathy Iino, seconded by Susan Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to approve the recommendation of Milone and MacBroom as the wetland mapping consultant.

c. RiverCOG Non-Profit Land Trust (motion)

Sam Gold explained the background on this issue. In 2016 the CT River Gateway Commission approached the RiverCOG stating they have a dormant non-profit land trust that they had not used in years and asked if we would be interested in taking it over. Mr. Gold said that he has been working with the Gateway Commission and the officers of the Lower CT River Land Trust to transfer this to the RiverCOG. Mr. Gold said that over the last several years Margot Burns has been working on finding ways for the land trusts in the region to work together. The next step would be to have some kind of non-profit corporation that could help with regional fund raising and be able to bring all the land trusts together to approach big foundations for larger grants. Mr. Gold stated that having a non-profit could possibly help support some of the RiverCOG's activities with supporting land trusts. Presently these activities are funded under the regional services grant. Another great opportunity with having a non-profit is it allows the RiverCOG to potentially go after other grants that are only open to 501(c)(3) organizations.

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There are a number of foundations and grants available that are looking for an incorporated non-profit. In discussions with our attorney and a tax attorney the land trust can engage in other non-profit activities, beyond its certificate of incorporation, as long as those activities are disclosed and explained in the annual 990 IRS filing.

The certificate of incorporation for the non-profit includes the whole region not just on the river corridors and at the present time the non-profit has no assets or liability.

Mr. Gold stated that he has been working with Nancy Fischbach on developing by-laws and then how we would transfer this non-profit from the CT River Gateway Commission to the RiverCOG. The way this would work is the Lower CT River Land Trust would convene a meeting and then their by-laws would be amended. The by-laws would establish each one of the 17 municipalities as RiverCOG members of the land trust and the CT River Gateway Commission would be a member of the land trust and retain a seat on the board of directors. One of the caveats the Gateway Commission has asked for is permanent membership on the board. Therefore the land trust would start off with 18 members.

Mr. Gold said that he has also been negotiating with Melvin Woody, president of the land trust. Mr. Woody wanted a memorandum of understanding between the RiverCOG and the Gateway Commission to memorialize this transfer. However this MOU would not be binding on the non-profit, RiverCOG or the member municipalities. This is about the intentions to use the non-profit for conservation land, preservation projects, but also included in this MOU is the right to use this non-profit for whatever purposes and projects that the future membership board sees fit.

Bonnie Reemsnyder suggested that the members take time to read this and to make a motion to table the decision of the MOU at the next meeting.

Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Noel Bishop, it was voted to table the MOU discussion until the next RiverCOG/MPO meeting.

Nancy Fischbach said that the Gateway was meeting the next day and was hoping to vote on this. The MOU is Melvin Woody's idea because he sits on the Land Trust Exchange and that is who he is looking to protect. Ms. Fischbach stated that she did receive approval from the Attorney General's Office on the transfer. She would like to see this approved before January 1st.

Noel Bishop withdrew his second to the motion and Tony Salvatore withdrew the motion to table the MOU discussion.

Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Noel Bishop, it was unanimously voted to approve the MOU.

Laura Francis said she didn't see it but is there a section in the by-laws that states the directors will serve without receive compensation. She feels that should be included in the by-laws. Nancy Fischbach answered no that issue is not however it is addressed in the Certificate of Incorporation. Sam Gold stated that once the transfer goes through the committee can make any amendments they want to the document.

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Cathy Iino asked if the Lower CT River Land Trust could have their meetings with the COG meetings similar to the MPO. Mr. Gold stated that the meeting could be conducted concurrently.

Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Susan Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to accept the Land Trust.

d. Statement of Support for Permanent Conservation of the CT Yankee Atomic Power Company Property located in Haddam, CT (motion)

Margot Burns said that Amy Patterson, CLCC, works with the CT Yankee Conservation project and is seeking support from the surrounding communities for the conservation of the CY property. She is looking for a resolution in support of this from the RiverCOG.

Lizz Milardo said that the canisters are in the ground at the CY site. As long as they stay there the town of Haddam receives tax revenue, if those canisters were to be relocated off the site and the property became open space/conservation land the revenue would end. This would be a huge increase in taxes for the residents of the town.

Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Laura Francis, it was unanimously voted to table this review pending a review by the municipality until the next RiverCOG/MPO meeting.

e. Household Hazardous Waste Collection Update

Janice Ehle/Meyer presented a proposed budget for an additional collection for the satellite towns. Sam Gold said that this was a possible solution to the long waiting lines at the Middletown collection. Laura Francis stated she is not looking for additional expenses to add to the town's budget. Other members agreed with her.

Bonnie Reemsnyder suggested waiting until next year to see if the waiting time continues to be reduced. The members agreed.

Upon motion of Laura Francis, seconded by Tony Salvatore, it was unanimously voted to table this issue to the January or February meeting.

f. RiverCOG Budget Update

Sam Gold stated that he does not have a budget. He gave a brief history of the funding received from OPM. Mr. Gold said that on Friday he and the other COG directors have a meeting with CT DOT Commissioner Redeker.

Sam Gold recommended that a letter to Secretary Barnes from the members stating their concerns regarding OPM's decision on funding the COGs would be relevant.

Tony Salvatore recommended that the members authorize the chair to write a letter in opposition and to copy the RiverCOG's senators, representatives, COST and CCM so they understand what is going on with regards to our funding. Bonnie Reemsnyder will work with Mr. Gold on that letter.

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Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Lizz Milardo, it was unanimously voted to authorize the chairman to send a letter to Secretary Barnes, OPM stating the COG's opposition to the funding of the COGs.

g. RiverCOG Office Space

The discussion of future office space was tabled until the state budget is decided. It's possible that less space will be needed if staff positions are not filled.

h. RiverCOG 2018 Legislative Agenda

Sam Gold said that the January COG meeting will be at the State Capitol and he will e-mail last year's agenda to the members for their comments and additions to the legislative agenda.

Susan Bransfield suggested that representatives and senators be copied by name on the agenda.

i. Regional Plan Update

Jon Curtis said that he is working on the land use and zoning sections of the plan and has reaching out to the town planners and commission members for their input. The last public meeting has been tentatively scheduled for the last Monday in February at the Deep River Auditorium. A ZOOP meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 19th at the RiverCOG to discuss the new legislation requires every town to develop a 5 year affordable housing plan in accordance with *CT General Statutes* 8-30g.

Laura Francis asked how much of a public input was received from the surveys and workshops. Mr. Curtis stated that we had a good turnout especially for the workshop that was held in Westbrook.

j. GrowSmart Implementation Update

Sam Gold said that we have a contract with Ninigret Partners and he has asked them to put the project on hold until we know what our funding situation is.

5. Executive Session

Bonnie Reemsnyder stated that the members would go into executive session now and Sam Gold would be invited into the first part of this meeting to discuss personnel issues.

Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Lauren Gister, it was unanimously voted to go into executive session.

The following members went into Executive Session at 10:54 a.m.

Lauren Gister, Tony Salvatore, Angus McDonald, Laura Francis, Emmett Lyman, Michael Maniscalco, Lizz Milardo, Cathy Iino, Ed Bailey, Bonnie Reemsnyder, Carl Fortuna, Susan Bransfield and Noel Bishop

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- a. RiverCOG Personnel Issues
 - b. Executive Director's Contract
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6. Out of Executive Session

The Executive Session was adjourned at 11:13 a.m. and the regular meeting was reconvened.

- a. Vote on RiverCOG Executive Director's Contract 2017-2020 (motion)

Upon motion of Cathy Iino, seconded by Ed Bailey, it was unanimously voted to renew Sam Gold, Executive Director's contract for 2017-2020.

7. CHAIRMAN'S AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

a. Regional Election Monitor's Report from Carol Conklin

Sam Gold read Carol Conklin's election monitor's report. Laura Francis asked if the towns were funding this position. Mr. Gold stated no, the funds for this position came from the Secretary of State's office this year. Mr. Gold wrote a one year contract for Carol Conklin with an optional second year and money was reserved from this year to cover those two years. After the next election the funding from the state will end and at that time the towns will decide if they want to continue to fund this position.

Bonnie Reemsnyder thanked the members for their attendance at these meetings. The issues that are discussed are important to all the towns.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Lauren Gister thanked Sam Gold for attending the meeting Tuesday evening.

Tony Salvatore congratulated Susan Bransfield for an excellent year as president of CCM.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Susan Bransfield, seconded by Cathy Iino, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:16 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Snyder
Recording Secretary

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