



Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

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Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments And Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, March 25, 2020

RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Lauren Gister *
Clinton: Karl Kilduff *
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore *
Deep River: Angus McDonald *
Durham: Laura Francis *
East Haddam: Robert Smith *
East Hampton: David Cox *
Essex: Norm Needleman
Haddam: Robert McGarry *
Killingworth: Cathy Iino *
Lyme: Steve Mattson *
Middlefield: Ed Bailey *
Middletown: Ben Florsheim *
Old Lyme: Tim Griswold
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna *
Portland: Susan Bransfield
Westbrook: Noel Bishop *

MPO Members:

Middlesex Chamber of Commerce: Darlene Briggs *
Estuary & Middletown Are Transit Districts: Joe Comerford *

Others Present:

Cathy Lezon, Eversource
Pat Bandzes, Eversource
Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office
Briana Devivo, Senator Murphy's Office
Catherine Dube, COST
Scott Choquette, Dewberry
Kelsey Wentling, CT River Conservancy
Eric Shortell, Federal Highway Administration

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Janice Ehle/Meyer
Torrance Downes
Eliza LoPresti
Paula Fernald

RiverCOG

Margot Burns
Megan Jouflas
Robert Haramut

1. Call to Order, Roll Call/Introductions, Public Speaking

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. This meeting took place virtually by phone and video conference.

Roll was called by Sam Gold.

2. Discussion of COVID19 Response

Ellen Graham of Senator Blumenthal's office and Brianna DeVivo of Senator Murphy's office gave details on a federal aid package that is hopefully being voted on today. When more details are known they will pass along the information.

3. LCRVMPO Business

a. Approval of Minutes of the February 26, 2020 LCRVCOG and LCRVMPO Meeting and the March 13, 2020 Emergency LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting

Mr. Bishop moved to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2020 regular meeting; second by Ms. Gister. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Cox moved to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2020 emergency meeting; second by Ms. Iino. Ms. Francis, Mr. McDonald and Mr. Smith abstained.

b. TIP Amendment 2018 #37 Asset, bridge, and pavement management group funding, statewide, project numbers 170-3559, 170-3560, 170-3561

Ms. Francis moved to approve TIP Amendment #37; second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.

c. TIP Amendment 2018 #38 Traffic signal LED re-lamping, District 1, project number 171-0458

Ms. Gister moved to approve TIP Amendment #38; second by Mr. Bailey. Vote was unanimous in favor.

d. TIP Amendment 2018 #39, replace bridge #02929 over Deep River, project 122-0103

Ms. Francis moved to approve TIP Amendment #39; second by Mr. McGarry. Vote was unanimous in favor.

e. TIP Amendment 2018 #40, Statewide transportation demand management project 170-3562

Mr. Bailey moved to approve TIP Amendment #40; second by Mr. Bishop. Vote was unanimous in favor.

f. 2019 List of Granted and Obligated Projects

MPOs are required to annually publish the list granted the previous fiscal year. These are only TIP-related projects and do not include any state funded programs such as LOTCIP of state bridge.

Ms. Francis asked about the anticipated date of the Route 68 construction. Mr. Haramut answered that at this time the engineering has been funded, construction will probably not be started for at least two to three years.

g. **2021 Draft TIP Update**

The update is about 75% done. Hopefully CT DOT will have the air quality by early April, after that it will go out to public involvement with the goal of board endorsement at the May meeting.

h. **Other Transportation Updates**

- i. **Route 66 Corridor Study** – The consultant has mostly completed the study. Meetings that were scheduled are being pushed out due to the Covid-19 pandemic. CT DOT has granted an extension beyond June because of this.
- ii. **Lower Connecticut River Valley Transit Study** – A draft report is being written by the consultants. The public involvement meetings are sidelined due to current events though other work will be continuing. There is one alternate option that has pretty much been endorsed. The ETD board met and was focused on whether a merger with MAT will benefit the existing 9-Town transit. CT DOT wants the merger and finances may be held if they don't merge. All want the service that exists to only improve.
- iii. **Transit District Update** – Bus services are still running though there is a loss of ridership. Middletown is down about 50%, the shoreline is down about 80%. In Middletown a terminal has been closed. The State went fare free last Friday, now there are groups of people wanting to ride because it is free and there is nothing else to do (particularly in Middletown). They may try to limit the number of people on a bus. Bus operators do not have masks but there are other supplies that are dwindling.

4. LCRVCOG Business

a. **Appointment of Henry, Raymond & Thompson as Auditors for FY 2020**

Mr. Bishop moved and Ms. Iino seconded to appoint Henry, Raymond & Thompson as auditors for FY2020. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Discussion: This is the last year of a three-year contract. OPM asks for annual authorization.

b. **RiverCOG Hacking Update**

Some items are still outstanding such as remote access and implementing some of the new security protocols. A draft report about the hacking has gone to the Executive Committee and Attorney Mednick for review. RiverCOG will need to pay a deductible on our insurance policy.

Ms. Iino moved to expend \$10,000 to pay the insurance deductible; second by Ms. Gister. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Discussion: The final report will be publicly accessible by FOIA so it should not release information that may be harmful to the COG. There is an obligation to pay the \$10,000 as this is the deductible on the policy. This will be funded out of the cash reserves of the current year's dues.

Mr. Gold noted that RiverCOG has been holding daily Zoom staff meetings and we are happy to provide training as needed. Additionally, if others have a service that they use that they like better please share with RiverCOG staff. Ms. Iino asked if the Zoom meetings are publicly accessible. They are as long as the public has the phone number which should be on a meeting agenda.

c. Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

Ms. Burns stated that there will be a committee meeting on April 22 after the COG meeting. Public outreach will begin with a survey that will be on the RiverCOG website and will be sent out by email along with other information that needs to be gone over by the April meeting.

Scott Choquette of Dewberry, the consultants for this project, described the meeting that will take place. Now it will be a shorter virtual Zoom meeting with break out sessions, possibly at a later time. The preliminary findings of the risk and vulnerability assessment will be presented and strategies will be developed based on these findings. The plan is to still move forward on schedule. Public meetings are required so those will need to be reevaluated. The goal is to have the plan approved by late summer when hurricanes tend to hit.

d. Regional Plan of Conservation and Development update

There are similar challenges to public outreach for the regional plan. The original idea of hosting a meeting in person in each town will probably be changed to virtual meetings of some sort. The focus is now on document production so that the project doesn't fall behind.

e. Household Hazardous Waste Collections

The satellite collection in Clinton on Sat. March 28 is being postponed. The next event is scheduled for May. Ms. Ehle/Meyer is working with DEEP to figure out what will happen for the future of haz waste during this pandemic.

5. Chairman's & Executive Director's Reports

Chairman Salvatore asked each town to discuss their responses to the Covid-19 pandemic as far as town hall (and other town entity) closures and employees.

6. Other Business

Ms. Ehle/Meyer mentioned that the Regional Agriculture Commission asked her to generate a list of regional farmers to send around to the towns to highlight that they are local and growing great stuff for easy pick up during this time.

Ms. Iino noted that there has been an executive order about regional school districts being able to pass a budget without a public vote which could be problematic.

a. DEMHS Update

Mr. Downes reported that the 2017 homeland security grant is in the process of being closed out. REPT and quarterly meetings have been cancelled.

Ms. Francis noted that DEMHS has sent out documents on how to apply for assistance when this is over.

7. Adjournment

Ms. Gister moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 a.m.; second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti