



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, June 24, 2020

RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Lauren Gister *
Clinton: Karl Kilduff *
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore *
Deep River: Angus McDonald * (absent from 9:45 – 10:15)
Durham: Laura Francis *
East Haddam: Robert Smith * (9:30)
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 * (until 10:30)
Portland: Susan Bransfield
Westbrook: Noel Bishop *

MPO Members:

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

Others Present:

Brianna DeVivo, Senator Murphy's Office
Edgar Wynkoop, CT DOT
Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor
Laurie McAlwee, South Central Regional Mobility
Tim Myjak, East Haddam
Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office
Kelsey Wentling, CT River Conservancy

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Torrance Downes
Eliza LoPresti
Margot Burns
Robert Haramut
Paula Fernald

RiverCOG

Janice Ehle/Meyer
Caty Fortin (SustainableCT Fellow)
Erin Lindsay (SustainableCT Fellow)

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

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 9:01 A.M. This meeting took place via Zoom.

Roll was called by Sam Gold.

Public Speaking

Ms. McElwee of South Central Mobility Management stated that she is happy to present to municipalities, chambers, businesses, rotaries, etc. about making a safety net to help people who can't afford existing transportation.

Ms. Gister moved to add agenda item 6b – HHW Update; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

2. LCRVMPO Business

a. Approval of Minutes of the May 27, 2020 LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting

Ms. Gister moved to approve the minutes of the May 27, 2020 regular meeting; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. Transportation Updates

- i. **Lower Connecticut River Valley Transit Study** – The project is moving forward. An area in Westbrook has been identified for the shoreline facility. There will likely be service expansion with Sunday service, along the lines of the Xtramile concept. The public involvement portion needs to be carried out.
- ii. **Route 66 Corridor Study** – The draft report will be out in two to three weeks; public approval process will be figured out when it is time.
- iii. **TIP** – The '21 draft TIP is nearly complete, the environmental justice and non-conformity reports are being worked on by CT DOT. There will be a 30-day public comment period after those are incorporated.
- iv. **5310 Program** – This is the Federal Transit Administration program that helps with traditional (elderly and disabled vehicles) and non-traditional (capital and operating primarily for transit districts) grants. Funding in our region includes the adult vocational program in Chester, the Mobility Manager through the Kennedy Center, ETD funding for some of their programs. Applications are due this Friday. Once they are in the board will rank them formally and Mr. Haramut will forward to DOT.
- v. **Safety Plan** – This regional plan is a way to incorporate performance measures to pick projects to be part of the accident reduction program. VN Engineers from New Haven will be doing all the plans for all the regions. This item will be on the agenda for next

month's meeting as VN Engineers would like to give a short presentation about the process.

3. SustainableCT Fellows Katy Fortin & Erin Lindsay

Ms. Fortin and Ms. Lindsay presented an overview of the SustainableCT program and answered questions posed by the Board.

4. LCRVCOG Business

a. FY 2021 Budget

Mr. Gold has not yet received paperwork from OPM on the RSG program so the amount included in the budget is conservative and could change. Potential funding for work the COG is doing toward Covid is not included.

Mr. Bishop moved to adopt the FY 21 Budget; second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. Authorization for FY21 Regional Services Grant

Mr. Cox moved to authorize Mr. Gold to execute documents and agreements for FY21 Regional Services Grant; second by Ms. Gister. Vote was unanimous in favor.

c. Letters of Support for OSWA Grants – East Hampton & Middlefield

East Haddam has a property that is eligible for the grant as well. Mr. Smith discussed the property while Ms. Burns discussed the properties in East Hampton and Middlefield.

Ms. Francis moved that RiverCOG will send letters of recommendation for OSWA grants in East Hampton, East Haddam and Middlefield; second by Mr. Smith. Vote was unanimous in favor.

d. Covid Response and Long-Term Recovery

Middletown and other northern towns will be joining DEMHS region 2 for recovery response. The long-term recovery committee will be used to identify planning needs over the next few years. Ms. Francis noted that they have been charged to look for volunteers from their communities for working groups. There will be forthcoming communication on that.

Ms. Iino stated that a great function for the regional committee to take on would be sourcing for PPE, hand sanitizer, plexiglass, etc. since it can be hard for each town to do on their own. Ms. Francis suggested encouraging the state to put some of things under state contract. Ms. Gister stated that as part of the reopen Chester committee a survey has been sent out town-wide. The most striking finding is that everyone is concerned about obtaining PPE.

e. MIRA Discussion

Mr. Fortuna stated that a RFP went out for renovation of the Hartford trash to energy plant. The low bidder came in at \$145/ton with a 30-year commitment that all 50 towns needed to agree to, which they will not. The board voted to terminate the contract with Sasser Rooney, the current contractor, and is receiving pressure from Hartford not to renovate. There is currently a state mandate to reduce the amount of waste but no programs in place to move that forward.

Ms. Francis asked if we could try to attract some industries to our region such as glass recycling, composting or anaerobic digestion. This was discussed. Ms. Ehle/Meyer stated that two permits have been given for two anaerobic and glass facilities. There is a new grant coming out this week for an anaerobic digester that may generate some interest.

Mr. Fortuna noted that Greenwich instituted a pay as you throw program and that we should watch what happens in that town and perhaps implement this as a region. Ms. Iino stated that there should be mention of this issue in the RPOCD.

f. Regional Election Monitor Program

The Secretary of State attended the CT COG May meeting and stated that for this election cycle they want to engage election support officers for each congressional district. Mr. Gold pushed back on this as some congressional districts, such as Courtney's, contain too many towns for one person to handle. The Secretary of State's larger vision is one of regionalizing elections; CT is the only state that currently does this town by town. Reforms would come after the election.

Ms. Conklin, the region's Election Monitor, reported that the Secretary of State may implement use of the National Guard for this election. They will reach out to the CEOs about this. There is an organization dedicated to fighting voter fraud with a PO Box address in Middlefield that has been sending FOI requests through registrars or CEOs; she is not sure of their overall agenda. The absentee ballot applications should arrive soon. There was a discussion on the ballot boxes that will be provided to each town.

g. Regional Plan of Conservation & Development Update

June 29 will be the kickoff meeting. Mr. Gold asked the CEOs to distribute their invitation to everyone. The project website is live now.

h. Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

CEOs were asked to review and comment on the strategies table provided. Dewberry is currently drafting annexes for each of the towns.

i. Water Chestnut and Hydrilla Update

The 12-Town ERT review application is in. There have been a series of three webinars, the last one will present the findings of the survey done by the CT Agriculture Station. Ms. Burns thinks the Ag Station will be able to finish the survey of the rest of the river from Middletown north this summer. That survey is a critical component for the next step of mitigation and control of hydrilla in the river. The agenda has a link to a workshop put on by NAISMA invasive species management. There has been a grant applied to for an intern from the NAISMA program to come work on the CT River.

The CT River Conservancy has gotten some good funding this year to coordinate and run a water chestnut program in CT, MA and north. Friends of Whalebone Cove is helping to pull plants in the lower river and CT DEEP will probably help in Salmon Cove and other areas. Covid will be impacting some of the volunteer programs.

Ms. Gister stated that there is a proposed motor and trailer ban on Cedar Lake to protect it from invasive species and asked if there is a precedent from other towns.

5. Chairman's & Executive Director's Reports

Mr. Gold reported that as of May 31 RiverCOG is operating within the parameters of its budget. IT services and fringe benefits are a little over but that is covered for elsewhere. He sent his self-evaluation to the executive committee and will send it to the full board.

Mr. Gold asked if the COG would like to make a unified statement about Black Lives Matter and racial issues. Ms. Francis suggested a statement such as that we are committed to equity and inclusion which could be put on our website. She believes a chapter on equity should be included in the RPOCD. Ms. Gister noted that most towns are making statements so the COG probably doesn't have to but that we should state what we stand for.

Mr. Gold also reported that we will be overhauling our Zoom procedures to avoid bombing activity.

Chairman Salvatore explained what Cromwell does to lock down their virtual meetings and asked that if anyone has comments on Mr. Gold's evaluation to send them to him.

6. Other Business

a. DEMHS Update

The 2017 Homeland Security grant will close at the end of this month and be replaced by a new grant that begins on Oct 1 and runs through 2023.

Mr. Gold noted that at a recent REPT meeting there was discussion on procurement policies; guidelines will come to the full board for their consideration at some point.

Ms. Iino stated that the distribution process for PPE for local businesses is a mess – notification happens in various ways, lists don't match up, items are going here and there and have to get to the right people, time lag, etc.

b. HHW Update

Ms. Ehle/Meyer noted that the first event was very busy with 388 households after 2 cancelled satellite collections. The second collection in Essex saw 242 households. At the shredding event in E. Hampton, 50 garbage cans were filled. Usually we do about 35. She will be emailing out for volunteers for events.

7. Adjournment

Ms. Gister moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 a.m.; second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti