



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, September 23, 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:

Brianna DeVivo, Senator Murphy's Office
Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office
Cathy Lezon, Eversource
Jake Manke, DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator
Pat Bandzes, Eversource
Edgar Wynkoop, CT DOT
Bill Villano, Workforce Alliance
Pat Bandzes, Eversource
Julia McGrath, Congressman Courtney's Office
Garrett Eucalitto, CT DOT
Mary Beth Wojenski, CT DOT
Jessica Muirhead, CRCOG
Tim Myjak, Chamber of Commerce

RiverCOG

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Torrance Downes
Eliza LoPresti
Margot Burns
Robert Haramut
Megan Jouflas
Janice Ehle/Meyer

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

Vice Chairman Gister called the meeting to order at 9:03 A.M. This meeting took place via Zoom.

Roll was called by Sam Gold.

Public Speaking

Julia McGrath from Congressman Courtney's office will send a written update to the CEOs today.

Brianna DeVivo from Sen. Murphy's office stated that the House passed a continuing resolution to fund the government until December 11, 2020.

Mr. Fortuna moved to add three items to the agenda: Item 4e) FY18 TIP amendment #42, MAT facility rehab/improvements, Additions to Item 5b) Westbrook & Portland Community Connectivity Grant Support Letter Requests; second by Mr. Smith. Vote was unanimous in favor.

2. Deputy Commissioner of CT DOT – Garrett Eucalitto

Deputy Commissioner Eucalitto introduced himself and gave a brief presentation on CT DOT during Covid-19 (attached to these minutes).

Comments and questions to Deputy Commissioner Eucalitto included Mr. Gold mentioning the project of a connection between the Airline and Farmington Canal trails, though this has not been funded. He is hoping that the timeline for corridor studies can be expedited.

Mr. McDonald asked about the status of the property acquisition for the bus facility identified in the Transit Integration Study, as there have been significant roadblocks. Mr. Bishop echoed the same sentiment.

Ms. Iino asked about roadside mowing as there is some invasive grass that should be mowed before fall; Mr. Eucalitto asked her to let him know of the specific route and he will look into it.

Ms. Gister asked about the increase in traffic fatalities mentioned in Mr. Eucalitto's presentation. He stated that is due to excessive speeding and increased DUIs involving both alcohol and drugs. The DOT is preparing a report to go public to raise awareness of this issue.

Mr. Bishop asked if police have shown reluctance to give traffic citations due to the Police Accountability bill. Mr. Eucalitto replied that there was a drop in citations at the beginning of the

pandemic, most likely due to virus fears. The most recent data since the bill was passed is not yet available.

Ms. Francis asked if there would be a change to winter operations due to the virus. The answer is that there should not be. CT DOT is now working on spacing for each garage and protections and testing plans for the employees.

Mr. Griswold asked for a contact person for the Community Connectivity grant program. That is Craig Babowicz (craig.babowicz@ct.gov) and www.ctconnectivity.com. Mr. Gold asked if there is a preference to towns that haven't been funded in the past by the grant Mr. Eucalitto answered that there is not, but if a town has been given a grant and not yet spent the money they are not eligible for this round. Ms. Gister asked if the criteria has changed. He stated that it had not but that a focus on equity for areas underserved by transportation was added and that the pot of money is smaller this year. Ms. Bransfield asked if there was a policy about full-funding for the grant request. Mr. Eucalitto replied that there is not, though it depends on the submission.

Mr. Comerford stated that the transit districts appreciated CT DOT's leadership through Covid times.

3. **CRCOG Purchasing Council – Jessica Muirhead**

Jessica Muirhead, Sr. Program Manager for the Capitol Region gave a presentation on that program (attached to these minutes). Post-presentation Ms. Bransfield mentioned that the ezIQC job order contracting construction program has been used by Portland successfully but has been rejected by the state for STEAP grants.

4. **LCRVMPO Business**

a. **Approval of Minutes of the August 26, 2020 LCRVCOG & MPO Special Meeting**

Ms. Francis moved to approve the minutes of the August 26, 2020 special meeting; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. **Resolution of Support Safety Management Measures**

Mr. Cox moved to adopt the resolution for endorsement of targets for safety performance measures established by CT DOT; second by Mr. Smith. Vote was unanimous in favor.

c. **2021 Draft TIP Update**

The formal public comment period for the draft began August 24 and ends October 9 and a virtual public information meeting was held on September 16. Mr. Haramut hopes to have the draft back to the board for endorsement at the October meeting.

d. **Other Transportation Updates**

Mr. Haramut stated that the deadline for community connectivity grants is October 16 and that VN Engineers is in the process of conducting meetings with each town for the regional safety plan.

Mr. Comerford stated that ETD is resuming fare collection as of November 1.

Mr. Gold informed everyone that the BUILD grant application for the Haddam and East Haddam walkway on the swing bridge was rejected. CT received only \$400,000 total from that program

while more rural states received the full \$25 million. The swing bridge rehab project may be pushed out so that provides another opportunity to try again.

e. FY18 TIP amendment #42, MAT facility rehab/improvements

There was some question as to what this TIP study was for. Rose Etuka at CT DOT was reached and she explained that this TIP amendment is for rehab at the downtown terminal.

Mr. Bailey moved to approve FY18TIP amendment #42, MAT facility rehab/improvements; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

5. LCRVCOG Business

a. Covid Response and Long-Term Recovery Update

Mr. Gold reported that Mary Glassman is the new head of long-term recovery. GRI Consultants has started their resiliency planning work. The COGs are still unsure of how to bill staff time as OPM has not yet made a decision on funding for the COGs.

Mr. Manke stated that all involved recognize the need to fund the COGs for work. Region 2 was the first region to meet with GRI, they were pleasantly surprised how ahead of the curve we are in the region. The survey to identify unmet needs that was created for Chester by resident Kimberley Megrath will be adapted to be used for the whole state. A new member, Pastor McCluster, was added to the committee to represent the faith-based community. The Federal government has made a large amount of food available, the region will be tasked with making the deliveries of food. A structure for making the deliveries happen is being worked on now. Mr. Manke asked for contact updates when his staff person reaches out to the CEOs.

Ms. Bransfield asked for clarification on which towns were joining Region 2, and if that is a permanent change, as Middletown was previously mentioned. East Hampton, East Haddam, Portland and Cromwell should also be part of Region 2. Lyme and Old Lyme will stay in Region 4. These changes will only be for long-term recovery planning purposes and are not permanent.

b. Community Connectivity Grant Support Letters – Old Saybrook, Portland, Westbrook

The First Selectmen of Old Saybrook, Portland and Westbrook explained their grant projects which were all sidewalk connection projects similar in scope.

Mr. Cox moved to endorse letters of support for the municipalities of Old Saybrook, Portland & Westbrook for their community connectivity grant applications, and that where is applicable and appropriate, the Executive Director writes a director's letter of support as other requests come in. Second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Discussion: After the letters are written the next step is to put the letter in the submittal packet.

c. Regional Plan of Conservation & Development Update

All the municipal meetings with land use commissions have now occurred. There will be a summary written about what was learned and how the RPOCD can support each town. The draft Existing Conditions report will be available shortly. There will be a renegotiation with the consultants as much more work is going to be done in-house.

d. Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

The third planning team meeting will occur on the 29th as well as the second public meeting. There will be a two-week comment period on the draft plan.

e. HHW & MIRA Update

The new HHW vendor, MXI, is working out well. Seven of nine events are complete, only three collections have met the \$13,000 minimum. Because of the busyness of the last collection on 9/19 we will be hiring police to control traffic at the last Essex collection on 10/31. For the 10/3 collection at Middlesex Community College we will need to rent a porta potty as we will not be allowed to access the buildings due to Covid. Volunteers have been an issue this season, for two collections we used MXI employees that we were not charged for.

All four paper shredding events are complete for the season, we are up about 22% in the amount of paper.

Ms. Iino brought up considering needing a new model for the collections since more than half the events did not meet the minimum and then some collections are very overloaded with residents bringing waste.

Mr. Bailey gave a MIRA update; the facility rebuild is off the table and it is now planned that waste will be shipped out of state within the next three years. An organized shut down of the plant is being planned. A report for ideas and strategies to reduce waste should be coming out within the next six months. MIRA will be honoring all municipal contracts.

There is a group formed with the Commissioner of DEEP and chaired by Ms. Francis . DEEP seems to be supporting pay as you throw for towns as a way to reduce waste. Mr. Fortuna encouraged all to join one of the four subcommittees of this group and have interested residents join as well. Ms. Iino suggested a section on waste in the RPOCD.

Ms. Ehle/Meyer noted that there is a water sustainability workshop coming up on 10/15. There is a compost bin and rain barrel sale happening now, the order cut off date is 10/14 for pick up on 10/18. Ms. Iino asked about a survey to find out how many people are composting at home. There was discussion of a regional grant for composting or an anaerobic digester.

f. DEMHS Update

Mr. Downes will create a one-page status update of the grants to send out. The 2019 homeland security grant still needs signed MOAs and resolutions from Old Saybrook, Clinton, Deep River, Haddam and Middlefield.

g. Hydrilla & Water Chestnut Update

DEEP is going to fund the survey for invasive on the northern portion of the river. Our web page has been updated with the mapping that was done for the lower part of the river. The grant that the UNC received from the Aquatic Plant Management Society will be used to fund a graduate student looking at the effects of different herbicides on the hydrilla and eel grass beds. The mapping shows that there is less water chestnut this year than last though there is a lot in the Mettabeset area. Ms. Burns feels it is beyond what can be deal with through volunteers and would like to find some money to get this area cleared.

h. LCRLT Update

The LCRLT was selected as one of two regional land trusts by the CT Land Conservation Council and the Buck Foundation to conduct a feasibility study regarding possible mergers or other structural alignment with other land trusts. There is no fee or match on our end for this study.

6. Chairman's & Executive Director's Reports

Mr. Gold reported that the RSG paperwork was finally received along with the merger bonus. The plan is to use that money for a regional housing plan because of the new 830(j) mandate.

7. Other Business - None

8. Adjournment

Mr. Smith moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:27 AM, second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti