



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 SPECIAL MEETING

Friday, November 13, 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: Joe Samolis *
Old Lyme: Tim Griswold *
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna *
Portland: Susan Bransfield
Westbrook: Noel Bishop *

*present

MPO Members:

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

Others Present:

Chris Holden, City of Middletown Public Works Deputy Director
John Jenkins, Durham Public Works
Chris Corsa, Haddam Public Works
Bill Russo, City of Middletown Public Works Director

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Torrance Downes
Eliza LoPresti
Robert Haramut
Janice Ehle/Meyer

RiverCOG

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 - None

2. **LOTICIP Cost Increase Greater Than 20%, Saybrook Road Middletown**

The project's cost increase is about 37% from preliminary to final design based on a few smaller changes in the overall project. The cost is projected to go from 2.4 to 3.3 million dollars. There is more than enough in the FY19 budget to cover the increase.

Mr. Samolis moved to approve the cost increase for the Saybrook Road, Middletown LOTICIP project; second by Ms. Gister. Vote was unanimous in favor.

3. **Discussion on Public Works Departments in the Time of Covid-19**

It was suggested that in order to deal with public works (PW) crews out of commission because of illness or quarantine that there be mutual aid agreements between towns. It was noted that this could be hard because no PW departments are overstaffed but maybe if some towns get hit with weather and others don't help could be procured in that way. Another suggestion was that RiverCOG manage a master contract for backup.

Mr. Corsa of Haddam PW noted that they have been contacting local contractors for possible coverage and that it may be a little late for a master contract though he likes that idea.

Chairman Salvatore asked if there would need to be an agreement for mutual aid between towns. Mr. Gold mentioned questions of insurance. Ms. Iino mentioned union contracts and if anything special needs to be done about that in order for employees to work in another town. Mr. Gold suggested investigation to expedite a local agreement. There are current statutes for mutual aid for first responders. It was suggested that the Governor's office could issue an EO for PW departments to be recognized as emergency response during the winter. Mr. Holden noted that that is already defined under Federal Law. It was noted that illness of PW crews may not qualify as an emergency like a storm would. Mr. Gold will check with Attorney Mednick on the questions above.

Mr. Fortuna asked about exchanging contractual labor rates; there followed a discussion on how mutual aid may be paid. Mr. Griswold noted that the PW crews would need to become familiarized with routes in a town they may be exchanging services with. Mr. Gold suggested towns have ready a packet of information for incoming supplemental work force.

The state has contracts with outside vendors as well, though we are not sure of their excess capacity. It was suggested that the state could give municipalities access to those contracts. Mr. Holden noted that in the past they wouldn't allow municipalities to piggy back on to their vendors because they are on-call for CT DOT.

Mr. Jenkins of Durham asked about rapid testing for PW departments for a possibility of going back to work after a test.

Chairman Salvatore asked that if Mr. Gold gets information from the attorney that we call a special meeting to discuss. Ms. Gister noted that we should confirm that the state recognizes the federal designation of PW departments as emergency responders with Ms. Iino noting that the sickness might be the emergency, it may not be a weather emergency that precipitates extra help.

4. **Other Business**

Mr. Bishop asked which towns were in the red zone for Covid cases. At the time of this meeting most were.

Mr. Gold stated that letters of congratulation were sent to legislators that won their races yesterday inviting them to the RiverCOG legislative meeting on December 15 at 9:00 am. He asked that anyone with ideas for the legislative agenda please email him.

5. **Adjournment**

Ms. Gister moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 AM, second by Mr. Griswold. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti