



# 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, December 2, 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 \*

\*present

#### MPO Members:

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

#### Others Present:

Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office  
Cathy Lezon, Eversource  
Jake Manke, DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator  
Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor  
Brianna DeVivo, Senator Murphy's Office  
Jonathan Ferrigno, Eversource  
Christine Goupil, Representative House District 35  
Kathryn Faraci, CT DOT

#### Staff Present:

Sam Gold  
Torrance Downes  
Eliza LoPresti

# RiverCOG

Margot Burns  
Robert Haramut  
Megan Jouflas  
Janice Ehle/Meyer  
Paula Fernald

## 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 via Zoom.

Roll was called by Eliza LoPresti.

### Public Speaking

#### a. Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor

Ms. Conklin reported that the election went smoothly overall, statewide. Partly this was due to lessons learned from difficulties in the primaries. The registrar offices are now working on the who voted report which they have 60 days to do. There are three towns that have new registrars, Ms. Conklin will be helping them transition. One town in the COG was chosen for a post-election audit which has already happened.

## 2. LCRVMPO Business

#### a. Approval of Minutes of the October 28, 2020 LCRVCOG & MPO Regular Meeting

*Ms. Gister moved to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2020 regular meeting; second by Mr. Bishop. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

#### b. Approval of Minutes of the November 13, 2020 LCRVCOG & MPO Special Meeting

*Mr. Bailey moved to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2020 special meeting; second by Ms. Bransfield. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

#### c. Approval of the 2021 Regular Meeting Dates

*Mr. Cox moved to approve the regular meeting dates for 2021; second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

#### d. Transit Study Update

Mr. Gold reported that the study wrapped up this week and he received a final copy of the transit service improvement report. Mr. Comerford reported that the MOA negotiations are moving forward. Ms. Francis reported that between the two districts there are no philosophical differences, it all comes down to obtaining funding to make the project a success. CT DOT Deputy Commissioner Eucalitto will make an effort to meet with the transit boards in the near future.

Mr. Bishop asked about the next steps for engaging legislators to help lobby for funds. Mr. Gold replied that they haven't yet been engaged because the focus was on internal negotiation between the two districts. This should be an item on the legislative agenda.

#### e. Route 66 Corridor Study Update

Mr. Haramut reported that the study will wrap up at the end of the month. A web page for the project will be created and a final meeting for the towns will be done if they would like.

### 3. LCRVCOG Business

#### a. 2021 Legislative Agenda

The meeting with legislators will be held on Dec. 15 at 9:00. Mr. Gold asked for ideas from the CEOs on points to include on the agenda. There was discussion on the proposed overhaul of zoning for 8-30g/affordable housing, which Mr. Gold feels is not right to tackle in a short session, which will also be virtual. Ms. Iino suggested a way to address the policy of income-restricted housing. She mentioned that Killingworth has housing that is actually more affordable than it would be were it deemed “affordable” in 8-30g, but since it is not income restricted it doesn’t count toward the town’s percentage of affordable housing inventory.

The Special Transportation Fund (STF) is also going insolvent shortly. Ms. Faraci of CT DOT agreed to share information on STF funding with the CEOs.

#### b. Nominating Committee – COG Officers

Elections can be held at the special meeting on Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> or the regular January 2021 meeting. The nominating committee will be comprised of Laura Francis, Carl Fortuna, Susan Bransfield and David Cox.

#### c. Covid 19 Discussion – Town Hall & Municipal Staffing

Mr. Gold reported that the Governor’s office wants the COGs to help distribute info on testing sites and asked if any towns have had problems with traffic around testing sites. There will be a new testing site at Hammonasset State Park starting this week which will run daily from 8:30-4 through March. Ms. Francis offered up the Durham Fairgrounds as a testing site if needed.

Jake Manke, DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator, reported at this time that the PSAPP to PSAPP hotline replacement project is taking place at no charge to municipalities. This project will allow dispatch centers to talk to each other. Title 32 which is National Guard funding is ending. Gov. Lamont along with 44 other Governors have requested an extension of that, without which we will have a temporary loss of the National Guard. There is a new Chair of ESF 3, Donna Shea, who will start to work on public works issues.

Every Thursday at 1:00 there will be a regular Covid Region 2 update, open to all. The vaccine process is imminent and will be run through DPH. There should be a brief on this shortly. CT Alerts/Everbridge program is being ramped back by the Governor’s office. There is a 5-7% opt out rate, which is detrimental to the system. United Way has reported to Mr. Manke that our region has seen an uptick in questions on electricity/utilities and other concerns such as food, housing, shelter. There has been a decrease in mental health calls. Ms. Lezon from Eversource stated that they do have resources and programs to help people that cannot pay due to Covid. She will forward information.

There was discussion on statewide unmet needs. Mr. Gold offered to facilitate connections between CEOs and others as many people may be reaching out to town halls for assistance with food, heating oil, etc. Mr. Manke noted that anything that can’t be handled locally can be entered into a forthcoming unmet needs form that the state will work on.

Mr. Gold noted as a follow up to the special meeting of November that he brought to Atty. Mednick's attention that an executive order for public works departments to have mutual aid agreements such as fire, police, etc. would be helpful for the winter for plowing purposes in case any departments have an outbreak.

**d. Regional Plan of Conservation & Development Update**

There will be thematic workshops over the course of the next month for the public. They will be on demographic change, branding & visioning for our region and the future land use map. Currently Ms. Joufflas is processing comments made by the RPC on the existing conditions report.

**e. Regional Affordable Housing Plan Update**

A semi-final count of towns interested in joining is needed for the RFP process. We will be reaching out again soon to confirm participation and hope to have an RFP out by the end of the year.

**f. Lower Connecticut River Land Trust Update**

The annual meeting will be held on Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 via Zoom. The LCRLT is looking for two board members. During the meeting an ad for Estuary Magazine will be discussed and the Collaboration and Assistance Program with CLCC will be introduced.

**g. Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update**

The plan will hopefully be going to the State for review next week. Ms. Burns is looking at the maps and final edits now. Invasive species is a new part of the NHMP, and the hope is that in January there can be a longer informational session on hydrilla in the river.

**h. DEMHS Update**

Mr. Downes distributed a memo with grant updates. We are still in need of MOAs and resolutions for the 2019 grant from Clinton, Deep River, Middlefield and Old Saybrook.

**i. Household Hazardous Waste Update**

Ms. Ehle-Meyer would like to organize a meeting of the subcommittee to discuss the formula for the slam fund and the interlocal agreement, which is expiring, along with a proposal for work at the facility and legislation for the one-pound propane tanks. We are still awaiting our permit from DEEP. Ms. Iino suggested adding smoke detectors back onto the list for discussion.

**j. Regional Agricultural Council Update**

The RAC is looking to apply for a Dept. of Agriculture viability grant for shared no till farm equipment when the application becomes available. Mr. Smith asked about the equipment that RC&D had from its previous program; Ms. Ehle-Meyer stated that the program expired and the equipment is kept far away from our region and is not very accessible. Ms. Francis asked if we will be allowed to offer the equipment for a rental fee; Ms. Ehle-Meyer stated they will charge a fee for ongoing maintenance, which will depend on the length of the program.

**4. Chairman's & Executive Director's Reports**

Mr. Gold reported that the COGs will most likely be designated as county equivalents. The request will go to the Federal register for public comment next month. He is working on a FAQ sheet with the goal that all CEOs are very well informed in anticipation of questions from the public. He asked that letters of support be submitted during the Federal public comment period. No laws or taxes will be changed due to the designation, this will only aid regional cooperation and make things easier to join in federal programs.

**5. Other Business**

Brianna DeVivo of Senator Murphy's office stated that phase one distribution for the Covid vaccine has been voted on by the CDC for healthcare workers, long-time living facilities, etc., then will move onto to distribution to older citizens, those with pre-existing conditions, other essential workers such as teachers, supermarket employees, etc.). There are still conversations going on about a new relief bill. The general government funding ends on Dec .11<sup>th</sup>, they are hoping for a resolution to fully fund the government beyond that.

Ms. Iino asked if ambulance crews are considered medical personnel. Ms. DeVivo stated she will check the table on the CDC website.

Mr. Gold mentioned that the audit has been slightly delayed and the auditors will present at the special meeting on Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>. He mentioned that the COG's indirect rate has lowered due to staff charging more time to specific projects.

**6. Adjournment**

*Mr. Smith moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:27 AM, second by Mr. Bailey. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Eliza LoPresti