



Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

145 Dennison Road Essex, CT 06426 | +1 860 581 8554 | www.rivercog.org

Regional Planning Committee

LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Monday, November 23, 2020 – 7:00 pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Members:

Chester	Mike Sanders *
	Cindy Lignar *
Clinton	Alan Kravitz *
	Martin Jaffe
Cromwell	Nick Demetriades *
	Anthony LaCava *
Deep River	Bruce Edgerton *
	Tony Bolduc *
Durham	Frank DeFelice *
East Haddam	Crary Brownell
	Lou Salicrup
East Hampton	Michael Kowalczyk *
Essex	Sandra Childress *
Haddam	Raul deBrigard * (7:25)
	Maurice Adams *
Killingworth	Alec Martin *
	Stephanie Warren
Lyme	Mary Stone
	Humphrey Tyler*
Middlefield	Vacancy
Middletown	Beth Emery *
	Kellin Atherton *
Old Lyme	Harold Thompson
Old Saybrook	Thomas Cox
	Karen Jo Marcolini
Portland	Mary Dickerson *
Westbrook	Bill Neale *
	Marie Farrell

*Members Present

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Torrance Downes
Megan Jouflas
Margot Burns
Eliza LoPresti

RiverRPC

Guests: Francisco Gomes, Fitzgerald & Halliday

1. Call to Order

Chairman DeFelice called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The meeting was conducted via Zoom.

2. Roll Call

3. Seating of Alternates

Sandra Childress (Essex), Maurice Adams (Haddam) and Humphrey Tyler (Lyme) were seated

4. Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Dickerson moved to adopt the agenda; second by Mr. Martin. Vote was unanimous in favor.

5. Public Comments – None

6. Approval of Minutes of Past Meetings

Mr. Neale moved to approve the October 26, 2020 meeting minutes; second by Ms. Emery. Vote was unanimous in favor.

7. Referrals

- a. Town of Salem: Proposal to create a floating zone entitled “Special Events and Limited Accommodation Zone” to allow for event facilities and short-term accommodations within Rural A and Rural B zones. Also, Definition for “Private Event Facility”.**

This referral was not discussed. The meeting of the Salem Planning & Zoning Commission was the previous evening and the language and intent of the referral was changed so that it no longer effects the neighboring towns of East Haddam and Lyme.

8. Regional Plan of Conservation & Development

- a. Revised Schedule**

Ms. Jouflas presented the revised schedule which shows project completion on April 28, 2021.

- b. Framework Recommendations**

There are to be three thematic meetings held by the end of the year. Ms. Jouflas presented ideas for the thematic meetings such as changing demographics, regional branding and visioning and the future land use map. These suggestions were discussed in detail. Comments included the following.

Demographics: Discuss changes in the past year due to the pandemic especially in relation to affordable housing, family size, family lifestyle and how that is evolving. It was suggested that we should come to the table with really strong demographic data to include in this meeting. The data we have is static though we are in a time of transition and dramatic change. More dynamic elements of current changing demographics should be brought in. Infrastructure discussion could be added to this meeting along with what each town is doing as far as affordable housing. It was suggested that traffic be discussed here as well.

Employment and innovation will probably also be discussed during this workshop.

RiverRPC

Branding/visioning: There were concerns that this could become solely about tourism, and suggestions to add in economic development and infrastructure (such as broadband technology and how they relate). This led to a discussion on utilizing Wesleyan and/or other large institutions like Middlesex Healthcare as tech developers/economic hubs for the region. It was noted that some towns in the region are actively trying to attract industry while some are not, so that the branding should not focus only on tourism, but add in why businesses might want to come to our area, which also ties into housing. Hard working and educated populations should be highlighted which can attract business. Recreation, interconnection and regional events should be discussed here. It was noted that many of the elements that make the region good for tourism also make the region a good place to live, which should be highlighted. For this workshop it was suggested to leave the question of visioning more open-ended rather than inserting in the idea of tourism when discussion occurs in the workshop. Selling a lifestyle was discussed rather than a brand with a tunnel vision. It was also suggested that we invite the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce.

Future land use map: affordable housing can be addressed in the future land use map as that will show which towns may be more adaptable to it than others. There was discussion about the location of infrastructure in the region; it was noted that many might know what is in their town but to look at the region as a whole may look differently. There was brief discussion on shared development/investment in development in certain towns and intersectional areas. Interactive layers for presentation of the map were discussed. Mr. Gomes stated that FHI has capability to present interactive maps. It was recommended to include layers for sewers, major highway access, and to learn how much development and where development is taking place in each town.

Mr. Sanders asked how the meetings will lead to plan progress, the answer to which is that the plan will hopefully be informed by recommendations stemming from the meetings. Mr. LaCava suggested focusing on small business revitalization and that economic development could have its own workshop. Mr. Martin noted that topics within each themed meeting will end up blurring into each other as we were able to see even in discussing the topics among the RPC. Mr. Kravitz noted there has been no mention of climate change or other dynamics so far.

AT this time there was further discussion on the timeline and the length of the plan. Ms. Emery suggested adding in photos that include people into our plan. There will be some themes in the plan that are highlighted and will inform the future land use map.

c. Determination of Themes and Invite Lists for Regional Thematic Meetings

The meetings will include Changing Demographics, Branding & Visioning and two meetings on the Future Land Use Map. Meeting dates will published soon. There was a suggestion that the meetings be placed on YouTube and/or our website to solicit comments from people that were not able to attend.

9. Miscellaneous: State, Regional and/or Local Planning Issues

Mr. Gold discussed the state hiring of the Global Resiliency Institute (GRI) to help with Covid resiliency for the long-term recovery plan. They are trying to find ways to help rebuild after Covid

so as to correct some inequities that already existed in the state prior to Covid. Mr. Gold noted that he has concerns that some direct impacts and unmet needs are going to be missed.

Mr. DeFelice discussed the issue of price hikes in electricity bills and asked that if anyone had a large bill to send it up to PURA with a note. Ms. Emery stated that Matt Lesser is being very proactive about this in our region so he can also be communicated with.

Ms. Dickerson asked about where to find real wage data, in relation to value of jobs being lost. Right now the number of lost jobs is being tracked but not the wages attached to those. She suggested asking for this from the Governor's office, which Mr. Gold will do. Mr. deBrigard suggested asking the Middlesex Chamber.

Ms. Dickerson noted that Portland will cover Air b&b type properties by ordinance to prevent grandfathering.

10. Adjournment

Mr. Tyler moved to adjourn at 8:50 pm; Ms. Emery seconded. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti