



# 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

July 28, 2021

#### RiverCOG Members;

Chester: John Guskowski (Proxy for 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: Bob 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 Area Transit Districts: Joe Comerford \*

\*present

#### Others Present:

Brianna DeVivo, Senator Murphy's Office  
Julia McGrath, Congressman Courtney's Office  
Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office  
Sofia DiNatale, Sustainable CT Fellow for RiverCOG  
Megan Schweickert, Sustainable CT Fellow for RiverCOG  
Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor  
Jake Manke, DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator  
Christine Goupil, Representative House District 35  
Laurie McElwee, Mobility Manager, Kennedy Center  
Scott Choquette, Dewberry  
Dan Bourret, Old Lyme  
JoAnn Ricciardeli, Haddam  
Mary Dickerson, Portland  
John Herring, Portland

# RiverCOG

Jim Tripp, Portland  
Ryan Curley, Portland  
Cynthia Clegg, Middlesex Community Foundation  
Elizabeth Disbrow, Killingworth  
Joyce Berardis, Deep River  
Robin Newton, Planner, Durham & Middlefield  
Linda Zimeneski, East Haddam  
Judy Snyder, Portland

**Staff Present:**

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

**1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Introductions**

After a welcome by Ms. Bransfield, Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 12:13 P.M. This meeting was held at Riverfront Park in Portland.

**2. Public Speaking**

**a. Election Monitor Report – Carol Conklin**

Ms. Conklin reported that the Secretary of State consolidated legislative session election-related changes came out the day before this meeting. RiverCOG will receive a copy for distribution. The biggest change is that voter information can no longer be given out. Mr. Gold was asked to serve on a committee to review new election technology.

Laurie McElwee, South Central Mobility Manager, stated that she would like to work with CEOs individually to partner in their communities to let people know how to access transportation. Mr. Comerford noted that Senior Center Directors and those that work with disabled populations need Ms. McElwee's contact information as she is a great resource.

Julia McGrath of Congressman Courtney's office stated that treasury is working on the final rule for ARPA funds, the first tranches of which have been distributed to municipalities. It is permissible for towns to pool funds. There is major need for a restaurant revitalization fund replenishment, only one-third of Connecticut's applications were funded before funding ran out. Shuttered venue grants are almost done being processed.

Brianna DeVivo of Senator Murphy's office reported that the Senate has agreed to a more finalized infrastructure package, part of which includes social service-related changes. There may also be a larger funding of the FEMA Bric program.

Ellen Graham of Senator Blumenthal's office stated that details on the programs mentioned already will be sent out once available.

Ms. Francis asked if the congressional directed funding projects have been announced yet. Ms. DeVivo replied that the submissions are published on the Senator's website but haven't yet been announced publicly.

Ms. Bransfield asked Rep. Goupil if there will be a special session. Ms. Goupil thought there may be one or two more, especially as related to juvenile crime.

### 3. LCRVMPO Business

#### a. Approval of Minutes of June 23, 2021 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Meetings

*Mr. Cox moved to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2021 meeting; second by Mr. Smith. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

#### b. LOTCIP Update

Mr. Haramut reported that two of the projects in Cromwell and Chester are just about complete. The next three projects, which are fully committed and designed, will be the Clinton, Haddam and Middletown projects. The bond commission just allocated 2.7 million to the LOTCIP program so all three of those projects will be completed. The East Hampton and Haddam projects have been reviewed by CT DOT but still need to be designed so construction probably won't occur until 2024. Old Saybrook and Durham projects are well along in design so will likely move ahead with construction in 2023. Long Hill in Clinton and 153 in Essex will probably go to construction in 2025. Mr. Haramut will send out another solicitation in about 18 months.

#### c. Other Transportation Updates

- i. **Bike/Ped Plan:** The two Sustainable CT Fellows have been doing field work in each town center to evaluate bike/ped friendliness. The consultants are working on the existing condition report.
- ii. **Transit District Updates:** Mr. Comerford and Ms. Francis reported that the merger is moving forward and a letter of intent is being finalized now. CT DOT has agreed to all that was put forward through the transportation study. Items that will need to be addressed during the merger are being looked at such as bylaws, personnel policies, governance issues, etc. The employee share agreement has been finalized and the two districts have signed a MOA with each other. Fare collection, personnel, and marketing studies have been funded. Mr. Comerford also mentioned that the park connect program has increased ridership by 25%

A lunch break was called at 12:24 P.M.

The meeting was called to order again at 1:13 P.M

### 4. LCRVCOG Business

#### a. 2021 Lower Connecticut River Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Adoption

*Ms. Iino moved to adopt the 2021 Lower Connecticut River Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan Update; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

Ms. Iino stated that we need to push to get funds for tree removal since that is included in the update. Mr. Choquette of Dewberry mentioned that the BRIC program from FEMA is not disaster-dependent and may be an option for communities to get competitive grants. The program will be available through DEMHS sometime in the fall.

**b. ARPA County Set Aside Request**

This item was previously tabled at the June, 2021 COG meeting.

*Mr. Cox moved to take this item off the table for discussion; second by Mr. Smith. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

Mr. Gold sent a memo explaining that he is requesting authorization to send a letter out to towns regarding starting the scoping of projects with a temporary set-aside. He envisions a sub-committee of CEOs to work on the scope and budget for any proposed projects. Only once that is approved would any money be committed to a project. The next step is for CEOs to get back to Mr. Gold and based on that interest to form a sub-committee as discussed. Key elements that would be included in the letter will be a timeline and a very clear explanation that the funds are not committed until the towns approve participation in a project, this is just a set-aside to develop projects.

Reporting on projects by the towns was discussed, a potential expenditure could be a consultant to work with the towns on handling this. Potential employment of a grant writer was discussed. Also discussed were small business loans through the Middlesex County Revitalization Committee of the Chamber, partnership with Community Foundation of Middlesex County for social service needs.

If 15% of the county funds are set-aside that would be about 4.5 million dollars.

*Ms. Francis moved to approve sending of the letter asking for up to 15% of the ARPA county share funds; second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

*Discussion: Mr. Gold will draft the letter immediately and send it to the Executive Committee. This will be valuable to each CEO to defend the idea to the town. He is working with CCM to get them to endorse the concept as well. They have previously put out ideas of regional projects without endorsing the main concept.*

Ms. Francis asked for a survey for each town's process of approval. Ms. LoPresti distribute that by email.

**c. Update on Dept. of Agriculture Grant for Regional Agriculture Council**

Ms. Ehle/Meyer announced that the grant that the RAC applied for was accepted. The farmers will purchase shared no-till equipment that will help them farm more land.

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

Ms. Joufflas reported that the public comment period closed on June 30, 2021. The RPC discussed how to resolve each comment already and the plan is being finalized now. She is hoping the RPC will vote to approve the plan in August so it can be passed along to the COG.

e. **Regional Housing Plan Update**

The website for the plan is live. There is a survey on housing up on the site, please take it and pass it around. There will be a liaison meeting kickoff in August.

At this time Jake Manke, DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator reported that the pandemic has caused the longest activation in history. This meeting took place on day 513. Dr. Manisha Juthani has been appointed the new Commissioner of the CT Dept. of Public Health, the current Commissioner will become an active advisor to the Governor. We are waiting to hear from the Governor what the latest mask advice from the CDC means to CT as pertaining to new concerns over the Delta variant.

We are still waiting to hear from the EDA for funding for the COGs for their work on long-term recovery. FEMA will be appointing someone to each long-term recovery steering committee to supplement what the state will provide.

Mr. Manke asked that CEOs in Region 2 attend the Homeland Security Grant meeting for the REPT on Aug. 20. The budget needs to be approved. Projects were summarized.

In an effort to familiarize more local resources with what DEMHS does, the Region 2 office will be visiting municipalities to foster relationships. Right now the agency is short 9 people, though Shelly Carter has been hired the operational manager for DEMHS Region 2.

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

No report from either. Chairman Salvatore noted that it has been great to get together in person.

6. **Other Business**

Mr. Downes gave a brief DEMHS report, reiterating that the REPT meeting on Aug. 20 needs to achieve quorum so the budget can be voted on.

Cathy Iino of Killingworth, Rob Smith of East Haddam, Susan Bransfield of Portland, and Noel Bishop of Westbrook are retiring in November.

7. **Adjournment**

*Ms. Francis moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:00 PM, second by Mr. Smith. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Eliza LoPresti