



# Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

145 Dennison Road Essex, CT 06426 | +1 860 581 8554 | [www.rivercog.org](http://www.rivercog.org)

## Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments And Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

### MINUTES OF SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE MEETING

January 13, 2022

#### RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Charlene Janecek  
Clinton: Karl Kilduff \*  
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore \* (until 10:00)  
Deep River: Angus McDonald \*  
Durham: Laura Francis \*  
East Haddam: Irene Haines  
East Hampton: David Cox \*  
Essex: Norm Needleman \*  
Haddam: Bob McGarry \*  
Killingworth: Nancy Gorski \*  
Lyme: Steve Mattson \*  
Middlefield: Bob Yamartino  
Middletown: Ben Florsheim \*  
Old Lyme: Tim Griswold  
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna \*  
Portland: Ryan Curley \*  
Westbrook: John Hall \*

#### MPO Members:

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

\*present

#### Others Present:

Rep. Christine Palm  
Rep. Devin Carney  
Sen. Matt Lesser  
Sen. Paul Formica  
Sen. Norm Needleman  
Brianna DeVivo, Sen. Murphy's Office  
Ellen Graham, Sen. Blumenthal's Office  
Julia McGrath, Rep. Courtney's Office  
Meghan O'Sullivan, Rep. Courtney's Office

#### Staff Present:

Sam Gold  
Torrance Downes  
Eliza LoPresti

**RiverCOG**

Robert Haramut  
Kevin Armstrong  
Janice Ehle/Meyer  
Margot Burns  
Paula Fernald  
Megan Joufflas  
Ben Lovejoy

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

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 9:02 A.M. The meeting was held via Zoom teleconference.

**2. Approval of 2022 Legislative Agenda**

An email was received from Mr. Yamartino about adding in an item on capital reserve funding for school districts. This was discussed. It was felt that until some questions were resolved this item would not be added, but amendments can take place to the legislative agenda in the future.

*Mr. McGarry moved to adopt the 2022 Legislative Agenda; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

**3. Legislative Agenda Discussion with Region's Legislators**

Mr. Lovejoy gave a high-level overview of the items on the legislative agenda to start the discussion.

Rep. Palm noted where items on our agenda intersect with her current work, particularly the areas of retaining young people in the region, abatement of Hydrilla, maintenance of privately owned dams, and dead tree management.

Rep. Carney mentioned he is the co-chair of the future caucus, which is the body working on retaining young people in the state through the millennial action project. He discussed waste management as a large issue for our region. He also mentioned that he is looking at prevailing wage and internet/broadband, particularly in Lyme and Old Lyme.

Sen. Formica mentioned finding ways to keep graduates in the state and help small businesses. He raised the possibility of opportunities for stable funding streams with revenue generated from online gambling. He also discussed solid waste management, the need to move quickly on fixing the issues and that it should be the top priority. Established energy supply and his work on the energy committee with Sen. Needleman was brought up as they look forward to the reality of renewable energy projects. Sen. Formica then asked about the agenda item which discussed the federally deducted payroll tax. After short discussion it was noted that this will be amended/reworded by RiverCOG staff to clarify the purpose.

Sen. Needleman discussed COVID testing and vaccination and the SALT cap referenced above. He discussed waste as an ongoing concern, and that as others mentioned, the state is taking a step backward with trucking waste out. He mentioned that DEEP hopes this is an interim solution and high priority is being placed on anaerobic digestion and pay as you throw options. He then discussed energy and its generation. He gave some background on the risks to the electric grid in the region that may result in rolling brownouts in the event of extreme cold and how that relates to moving forward

with energy-dependent projects and dependency on one fuel type. He also discussed last year's bill that came out of the planning & development committee on accessory dwelling units as relates to affordable housing, which is key to items at the beginning of the legislative agenda, such as retaining young people to the region.

Sen. Lesser has been focusing on insurance issues as the chair of the insurance and real estate committee. He discussed infrastructure funding and projects in our region as well and volunteered as a resource to all present.

Meghan O'Sullivan of Congressman Courtney's office (Washington DC) discussed implementation of the bipartisan infrastructure law. She mentioned the forthcoming state small business credit initiative, which is set to help with raising capital for small businesses. There has been some discussion about another COVID relief package for small businesses, but it is not clear if that will be happening for sure. Treasury has put out the final rule on the state and local funds, there is a great overview guide on the treasury website.

Julia McGrath of Congressman Courtney's office (Connecticut) stated that significant changes in the final rule include now allowing a calculation for FY20 revenue loss or selection of a standard allowance of revenue loss of \$10 million. The majority of CT recipients are under that number, so they can elect to direct the entirety of that to continuation of government services. This can be for capital expenditures or any service that a local government is responsible for.

Chairman Salvatore needed to exit the meeting at 10:00. Mr. Fortuna chaired the meeting from this point forward.

Ellen Graham of Sen. Blumenthal's office stated that the Senate is focusing on voting rights and nominations. He is also interested in the Deer Lake property in Killingworth and is looking at putting together a press conference about this in the next few weeks.

Brianna DeVivo of Sen. Murphy's office stated that they are creating a resource guide on the bipartisan infrastructure bill, she will send that to all. She stated there is conversation about possible federal funding for COVID testing and global vaccines.

Mr. Gold explained that if bills are raised to him by members or if he finds things during the session that hit on agenda items he will create testimony and send it to the Executive Committee for review if there is time.

Mr. Fortuna discussed the energy topics that Sen. Needleman previously discussed. He stated there are serious concerns about the oil supply in New England. Between that and limited gas supply there are concerns. There is no environmentally sound short-term solution to the state's garbage issue at the moment. Shipping garbage out of state will most likely be a ten-year issue.

#### 4. **Regional Housing Plan Public Meeting, January 24, 2022, 7:00 PM**

Ms. Joufflas discussed the public meeting taking place at the time/date stated via Zoom. This presentation will describe the two parts of the plan. Individual town meetings will take place in February and March.

5. **Other Business**

Sen. Needleman discussed the closure of MIRA and the background on such.

Mr. Fortuna asked about opting out of the new public act for affordable housing plans. There are some towns that are creating their own projects as they have received grants to do so. Some towns have opted out of the accessory dwelling unit (ADU) rule, in most cases because they already had ADU regulations on the books that were either different or more permissive. There was also a possible opt out on required parking. Mr. Gold stated that we can find out and report back.

6. **Adjournment**

*Mr. Hall moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:20 am; second by Mr. McGarry. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Eliza LoPresti