



Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

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

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

DRAFT MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

December 8, 2021

RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Lauren Gister *
Clinton: Karl Kilduff *
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore *
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: Ed Bailey
Middletown: Joe Samolis *
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:

Cynthia Clegg, Middlesex Community Foundation
Anthony Cozza, Westbrook
Rep. Christine Palm
Andy Shatz, Westbrook
Jim Crawford, Westbrook
Chief Vincent DeMaio, Clinton
Michelle Puzzo, UR Community Cares
Grayson Wright, CT DOT
Jonathan Ferrigno, Eversource
Martin Henry, Henry, Thompson & Raymond
Laurie McAlwee, South Central Mobility Manager
Sam Carmody, Eversource
Brianna DeVivo, Sen. Murphy's Office
MD Birmingham, UR Community Cares

RiverCOG

Ellen Graham, Sen. Blumenthal's Office
Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor

Staff Present:

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

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Introductions

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. The meeting was held via Zoom teleconference.

2. Public Speaking

a. Regional Election Monitor Update – Carol Conklin

Ms. Conklin reported quite a few election recounts in the region, they all went smoothly. She discussed redistricting because of the census, requests have been made to the state to host a webinar on redistricting.

Rep. Christine Palm stated that her district did not change due to redistricting. She reported that the Governor does not want to implement a mask mandate. Ms. Burns was thanked for her work on hydrilla, Rep. Palm is hoping to advance legislation for its abatement in the river. She also discussed the updated bottle bill, from which towns will be getting money from producers of nips, she estimates that there will be around \$143,000 for the region. She is wondering if her four towns would like to pool the resources, possibly to hire a recycling coordinator. The money must be used in service to recycling in some way.

Rep. Irene Haines discussed a virtual school model that a committee is looking into for possible implementation in CT. She mentioned that this upcoming legislative session is short. As far as redistricting, the RiverCOG towns of East Haddam and East Hampton are still in her jurisdiction.

Ellen Graham of Sen. Blumenthal's office touched on bills that are being addressed in the senate.

Brianna DeVivo of Sen. Murphy's office discussed the Build Back Better bill and grants through the Long Island Sound Futures fund that will fund projects in CT.

Andy Shatz of Westbrook discussed the Westbrook economic action initiative. This initiative was born from the Shoreline Basic Needs Task Force who wanted to bolster businesses and jobs in the area. They do things like matching local high school students with businesses, using local businesses to engage with educators and offering things like resume writing.

classes. They are engaging with town officials to make impediments to business easier to navigate. They will be back during the January COG meeting to discuss this initiative further and how it can be translated to other towns in the region.

Lauren Gister announced that she has taken a new Town Manager position in Colorado and will be leaving in early January.

3. **Presentation on FY21 RiverCOG Audit – Martin Henry of Henry, Raymond & Thompson**
Martin Henry of Henry, Raymond & Thompson presented the audit findings. Total assets were around \$1.7 million, total liabilities \$200,000. Net assets are around \$1.3 million with restricted assets included of around \$135,000 for HHW. No adjustments were proposed and the financial statements turned over to the firm were very clean. No management letter was written as they did not feel there were any issues to be brought forth.

Ms. Francis moved to accept the auditor's report for fiscal year 2021. Second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

4. **Presentation – UR Community Cares (UCC) – Michelle Puzzo and Chief Vincent DeMaio**
Michelle Puzzo and MD Birmingham, co-founders of UR Community Cares gave a presentation on their program and website. They match community volunteers with older and disabled residents in need of help with specific tasks. Chief DeMaio of the Clinton PD was on hand to discuss how the program is working in his community.
5. **Hazus Data – Margot Burns**
Ms. Burns discussed the Hazus data created for the towns that participated in the Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates earlier in the year. She showed everyone where it resides on the RiverCOG website and offered to come talk to towns about it should there be questions. This is a loss-estimation model that FEMA and the Institute of Building Sciences put together for the towns.
6. **LCRVMPO Business**
 - a. **Approval of Minutes of October 27, 2021 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Meeting**
Mr. Cox moved to approve the minutes of the October 27, 2021 meeting; second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.
 - b. **Approval of Minutes of November 22, 2021 Special LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting**
Mr. Griswold moved to approve the minutes of the November 22, 2021 Special Meeting; second by Ms. Francis. Vote was unanimous in favor.
 - c. **Approval of 2022 Meeting Dates**
Mr. Cox moved to approve the 2022 meeting dates; second by Ms. Francis. Vote was unanimous in favor.
 - d. **2021TIP Amendment #12 – East Haddam 0040-0148, STPR, X6, Replace bridge #02698 on Route 149, PD \$400,000 2022, FD \$250,000 2023, Row \$50,000 2023, CON \$2,500,000 FYI, New Project**
Ms. Francis moved to approve TIP Amendment #12; second by Ms. Haines. Vote was unanimous in favor.

e. Endorse Regional Transportation Safety Plan (RTSP)

Ms. Francis moved to endorse the Regional Transportation Safety Plan; second by Mr. Gister. Vote was unanimous in favor.

f. Other Transportation Updates (Bike/Ped Plan, Corridor Study, Etc.)

Mr. Haramut reported that the Bike/Ped plan consultant is finalizing the first draft.

The CT DOT pushed out answering which corridor studies will be funded until the end of December. The application we have in is for a study on the Air Line connection to the Farmington Canal trail.

Mr. Comerford reported that for the transit integration, Durham and Middlefield will vote to join ETD and once that is done the board will begin operating as a combined board. Funding was received for the positions agreed to by CT DOT. There is an RFP going out for an HR study this week. The state closed on the property on North Main in Middletown in November. The next step is creation of the master plan. Additional funding from relief programs will be received.

7. LCRVCOG Business

a. Election of Officers

The slate of officers is:

Chairman – Anthony Salvatore

Vice Chairman – Tim Griswold

Secretary – Laura Francis

Treasurer – Carl Fortuna

At-Large Member: David Cox

At-Large Member: Robert McGarry

There were no nominations from the floor.

Mr. Cox moved to approve the slate of officers as presented above; second by Ms. Gister. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. Legislative Agenda Discussion

The draft legislative agenda was distributed. If anyone has any additions or changes they should get them in by January 6. Mr. Gold will check with CIRMA and COST to see what they have on their legislative agendas and see how the agendas can support each other.

- i. **Set Date /Time** – January 13th, 2022. 9:00. The regular COG meeting will still be held on Jan. 26, 2022.

c. Update on ARPA Regional Projects

There are three RFPs currently. The RFPs for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the ARPA Reporting Assistance are already out and the RFP for Regional Document Digitization will be out within the next day or two. There is also the idea of having the Middlesex Chamber Revitalization Committee handle regional business loans which is still being developed.

d. Update on Regional Housing Plan

Ms. Joufflas reported that part one of the plan, the regional portion, will be completed in January. Part two, which will be the 8-30j annexes for each participating town will then begin. Each town is being scheduled for a liaison meeting at this time. There will be a second regional public presentation on January 24th which will be a bridge between the two parts of the plan. There will be individual town meetings January through March and the plan is on target to be complete by June 1, 2022.

e. Update on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

As previously stated, the RFP for this project has been released. It was created with input from Jeff Pugliese of the Chamber, Mary Dickerson of Portland and Susan Beckman of Old Saybrook. All three have volunteered to be on the selection committee for the RFP. We still need to obtain Regional Economic Development District (REDD) status from OPM and DECD. We are waiting on letters of support from Middlesex Chamber and MCRC. We would also like to obtain a MOU with those two entities to commemorate that we will work in partnership with them.

Ms. Francis moved to approve the MOU with the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce and the Middlesex Chamber Revitalization Committee; second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.

f. Lower Connecticut River Land Trust Update

The annual meeting will be held Thursday, Dec. 16th. Election of officers will take place at that meeting; there are two positions to be filled. The first part of the initiative with CLCC is finishing up and the group is looking at a second rewrite of bylaws.

g. DEMHS Update

Mr. Downes reported that he will forward a memo regarding information on the grants.

Ms. Francis moved to add an agenda item: Solid Waste Committee; second by Mr. Griswold. Vote was unanimous in favor.

h. Municipal Solid Waste Committee

Ms. Ehle/Meyer needs subcommittee members as two out of three are leaving or have left the COG. Ms. Francis, Mr. McDonald and Mr. Cox volunteered to join Mr. Griswold on the committee.

Ms. Gister moved to approve those listed above to the waste committee; second by Mr. McGarry. Vote was unanimous in favor.

8. Chairman & Executive Director's Reports

Chairman Salvatore wished everyone happy holidays.

Mr. Gold reported that county equivalency for COGs looks like it's moving forward and should be complete by the end of the year. He attended a state economic development summit, during which he met someone from the EDA who talked with him about getting more money to the towns. Mr. Gold also thanked Ms. Fernald for all her hard work on the EDA grant.

9. **Other Business**

None

10. **Adjournment**

Ms. Gister moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:47 A.M., second by Ms. Francis. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti