



# Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

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## Regional Planning Committee

### LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

#### MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Monday, February 28, 2022 – 7:00 pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting

#### Members:

Chester	Elaine Fitzgibbons *
	Cindy Lignar
Clinton	Alan Kravitz *
	Martin Jaffe
Cromwell	Nick Demetriades *
	Anthony LaCava * (7:30)
Deep River	Tony Bolduc *
Durham	Frank DeFelice *
East Haddam	Crary Brownell
East Hampton	Michael Kowalczyk *
Essex	Jane Siris
	Sandra Childress *
Haddam	Raul deBrigard
	Maurice Adams *
Killingworth	Alec Martin
	Stephanie Warren *
Lyme	Mary Stone *
	David Lahm *
Middlefield	Paul Pizzo
Middletown	Catherine Johnson *
	Kellin Atherton *
Old Lyme	Harold Thompson *
Old Saybrook	Douglas McCracken *
	Karen Jo Marcolini
Portland	Vacant
Westbrook	Bill Neale *
	Marie Farrell

\*Members Present

#### Staff Present:

Sam Gold  
Margot Burns  
Rob Haramut  
Kevin Armstrong  
Eliza LoPresti  
Torrance Downes

# RiverRPC

Ben Lovejoy

**Guests:**

Mary Dickerson, Portland

Beth Emery, Bike/Ped Steering Committee

Rory Jacobson, FHI Studio

Ken Livingston, FHI Studio

**1. Call to Order**

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

**2. Roll Call**

Eliza LoPresti called the roll.

**3. Seating of Alternates** –Sandra Childress (Essex) and Stephanie Warren (Killingworth) were seated.

**4. Adoption of Agenda**

*Mr. Kravitz moved to adopt the agenda; second by Mr. Bolduc. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

**5. Public Comment** – None

**6. Approval of the Minutes of Past Meetings**

*Ms. Stone moved to approve the minutes of the January 24, 2022 meeting; second by Mr. Neale. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

**7. Referrals** – None

**8. Bike/Ped Plan Presentation – Rory Jacobson & Ken Livingston of FHI Studio**

The draft plan can be found here: <https://www.rivercog.org/plans/bikeped/>

Comments should be forwarded to Mr. Haramut at [rharamut@rivercog.org](mailto:rharamut@rivercog.org) as soon as possible. The COG will have this plan presented and hopefully adopted at their meeting in March.

Ms. Jacobson and Mr. Livingston presented the plan, answered questions, and took comments, some of which are listed here.

Ms. Stone asked that the plan include Rt. 156 through Old Lyme as it is a route heavily traveled by bicyclists through a commercial area to the beach.

Mr. Neale brought up the ability to bring bikes into affordable housing, a possible future recommendation could include bike locking facilities at train stations.

Mr. Thompson stated that a big concern is that there are not a lot of shoulders for bikers. He asked about including the Tour de Lyme, which is mentioned on Lyme’s municipal summary in the plan. He also asked for more information on the shoreline greenway, which prompted conversation about the proposed connection over the old trolley bed connecting Clinton to Hammonasset and the towns to the west.

**RiverRPC**

Mr. Kravitz would like the plan to look at the narrow shoulders, especially on Rt. 1. He asked what percentage of cyclists identified in the plan are local and who the clients of the plan are. Mr. Gold replied that the end users are people in the municipalities. The main goal is to increase cycling for the general public.

Mr. Kowalczyk asked if the Air Line Trail (ALT) from East Hampton to Portland and beyond is included. Mr. Gold stated that a grant from CT DOT is being received to do a coordinated study on bringing the ALT west to connect through Cheshire with the Farmington Canal Trail, creating a 111 mile loop through Central Connecticut.

Ms. Dickerson stated that Jeanne Davies at CT RC&D is coordinating a grant through twelve towns through the Air Line Trail, but that it will stop at the Arrigoni Bridge.

Ms. Johnson stated that it would be fantastic to extend the Air Line Trail down to New Haven and that the Farmington Canal trail is boring, probably because it was put where a right of way was. The ALT down to New Haven would be interesting. She cited a trail from Providence, RI to Warren, RI, which is exciting because it goes through all types of areas like natural, industrial, and neighborhoods. She would like to be included in discussions on this and offer her professional services to map and walk.

Mr. Gold noted that there is a spur of the ALT going south through Wallingford via Meriden. One of the nodes they want to connect to is the CT Rail station in Meriden, using the opportunity presented through the flood control structure.

Mr. Kravitz asked which towns have used zoning to mandate or encourage the allocation of land for trails where there is potential connectivity? Mr. Gold noted that generally, based on a past CT court case, that you can get a land extraction if it is immediately adjacent to a trail property.

Chairman DeFelice stated that in Durham there are bike lanes in the center of town, which are great. But when the CT DOT replaces guard rails, they put the new ones directly on the asphalt, in front of the existing post and steel cable ones, therefore diminishing the amount of room in the bike lanes. Ms. Jacobson commended Durham on being one of the first to have bike lanes. She will look into oversight on bike lanes at DOT.

In response to a news item posted in the chat by Mr. Atherton, Mr. Gold stated that he worked with legislators years ago to pass a special act directing CT DOT to identify the corridor and do a study on the ALT connection to the Farmington Canal Trail.

## 9. Discussion on Preservation of Stone Walls

The sample ordinance that was shared in fall of 2021 was redistributed prior to this meeting. The ordinance is based off one from Smithfield, RI, where there was a problem of stone wall mining. Since stone walls contain a lot of knowledge and help guide property lines it is important to keep them whole when possible.

Mr. Neale edited this document a little further, changing language about having to repair stone walls with exactly the same materials as used originally, as using concrete as mortar can be problematic. He also suggested adding language about permitting the removal of stone walls for

safety, health, environmental, and/or educational reasons, as the current language never permits removal.

Mr. Thompson asked if there was information on how many stone walls are being relocated. There did not seem to be an answer.

Ms. Stone noted that there is a need for an ordinance because stone walls have traditionally been used as property identifiers, therefore moving them becomes problematic. She suggested that 1920 be the date chosen to define historic stone walls, instead of 1900.

Ms. Warren asked who the ordinance is directed at; Mr. Neale replied that this is a model town ordinance. She also asked how to determine when a wall had been built and how this could be enforced. She mentioned that Killingworth must have something already in place as there was someone that demolished a stone wall to sell the stones and was fined. She will share it with the group once she finds it.

Ms. Dickerson noted that stone walls in New Hampshire are stolen all the time. Stone walls cannot be removed if they are part of the property line and they are treated as fences. She noted that you can tell the age of a stone wall by the type of stone, mortar, and lichen and how far sunk into the ground it is. She also noted the difference between heritage stone walls and abandoned stone walls, which are basically just rocks piled on each other with no linear plan, usually because they needed to be moved from another site.

Ms. Johnson suggested that educational outreach would be better for a stone wall ordinance rather than trying to police it with fines. She noted that in section D there needs to be a number given rather than stating “the minimum necessary.” She asked why this ordinance was being discussed and would like to hear more stories from around the state about the need to protect the walls.

Mr. Lahm thinks the ordinance is an over-reach and over-broad but could be enforced by a monetary daily fine.

Mr. Kowalczyk agrees that people selling their stone walls is a problem in the state. He asked how a town would adopt this. Mr. Kravitz stated it needs to be an ordinance including definition of pre-existing conditions and standards. Mr. Neale noted that this is edited from an ordinance in Smithfield, RI. Mr. Kowalczyk suggested including a guiding cover letter when it is sent to the towns to explain adoption.

## 10. Updates

### a. Regional Housing Plan

Mr. Gold reported that RiverCOG is halfway through the town meetings for the 8-30j specific plans and on track for plan adoption in June. He also noted that he will be briefing Quentin Williams, the co-chair on the housing committee on the plan during a meeting on Friday.

**b. Legislative Update**

Mr. Lovejoy previously distributed a summary of bills he discussed here. Bills currently making their way through legislation include passing the State POCD, removing sunset dates on remote meetings, tax abatements for certain conservation easements, the tax assessment appeals process, rooftop solar in condos/apartments, blighted and neglected property receiverships, extended outdoor dining and MV tax assessments.

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

Mr. Gold explained that the RPC meetings will be in Zoom Webinar format going forward, to make the meetings more secure due “zoom bombing” experienced in other meetings.

Mr. Gold stated that he is working on COG funding issues with the other COG Executive Directors.

Ninigret Partners has been chosen as the firm to oversee the creation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This will be paid for through an EDA grant from the CARES Act. Three other projects will be funded through the same grant; a shared long-term recovery coordinator, online education and co-working space for Middlesex Chamber, and helping the region’s farmers to sell online product.

Chairman DeFelice recognized Ms. Dickerson’s contributions to the RPC, as this is her last meeting.

**12. Adjournment**

*Mr. Bolduc moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 pm; second by Mr. Neale. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Eliza LoPresti