



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

June 22, 2022 – 11:30 am

RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Charlene Janecek *
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: Jim Irish
Middletown: Ben Florsheim * (12:30)
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:

Carey Duques, Essex
Brianna DeVivo, Sen. Murphy's Office
Rep. Christine Goupil
Sara Mendillo, Middlesex Chamber of Commerce
Julia McGrath, Rep. Courtney's Office
Ellen Graham, Sen. Blumenthals' Office
Sara Radicsi, CT DOT
Dan Bourret, Portland
Jaquan Samuels, Eversource

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Eliza LoPresti
Robert Haramut

RiverCOG

Kevin Armstrong
Janice Ehle/Meyer
Torrance Downes
Ben Lovejoy
Megan Jouflas
Liam Rimas (Sustainable CT Fellow)

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

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 11:40 A.M. The meeting was held at the East Hampton Town Hall and via Zoom teleconference.

2. **Public Speaking**

Brianna DeVivo of Sen. Murphy's office stated that the Senator submitted for his directed spending requests, they are now on his website. Please reach out to her with questions. She updated that the Senator is working on a bipartisan gun violence prevention bill.

Julia McGrath of Congressman Courtney's office stated that the submission date for community project funding has passed, a RiverCOG and East Hampton project has been pushed forward. They are pushing out info on the IJA bill as it comes available.

Ellen Graham of Sen. Blumenthal's office stated that he is involved with the bipartisan gun legislation and the PACT act to help veterans with diseases caused by toxic exposure.

Rep. Christine Goupil discussed legislation that will impact municipalities such as mental health resources for public schools, absentee voting, fair rent commission, pesticide applications, COG county equivalency, and that there is a lot of grant funding in place for which towns should apply swiftly.

It was announced by Mr. Gold that Ms. Francis of Durham is leaving the COG and the town to work at SCRCOG and that Mr. Mattson of Lyme is retiring.

3. **LCRVMPO Business**

a. **Approval of Minutes of May 25, 2022 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Meeting**

Mr. Fortuna moved to approve the minutes of the May 25, 2022 meeting; second by Mr. Griswold. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. **21 TIP Amendment 17 (motion): Estuary TD, 0478-XXXX, 5307C, X6, New Bus Facility FY22, ALL, FYI, \$15,000,000, Move from FY22 to FYI**

Mr. Fortuna moved to adopt 21 TIP Amendment 17, seconded by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

c. **Endorse Ozone and PM2.5 Air Quality Conformity Determination of the 2019 MTPs and 2021 TIPs as amended (February 2022)** <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DOT/documents/dTDAQM/ConformityDeterminationReportFeb2022-final.pdf>

(motion)

Mr. Fortuna moved to endorse the Air Quality Conformity Determination of the 2019 MTPs and 2021 TIPs as amended; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

d. Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update

The MTP update is about to begin. These plans are updated every four years by the MPOs in the state. The project list needs to go to CT DOT by July 1. Projects can still be included after that date. Once the AQC is out (see above) and the plan is in solid draft form, probably next February, the plan will go out for the formal 30-day comment period. Adoption is being targeted for March 2023.

Because we have recently completed the Regional POCD and Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, and will soon complete the Regional Housing Plan, we will have more to input into the MTP, making this update a major one.

Mr. Gold discussed the LEAN process with CT DOT and the COGs. He was in a subgroup that discussed the process as related to the MTP. They are working to establish a semi-annual meeting with CT DOT and the COGs to get project lists to the state and to communicate more efficiently on corridor studies and in general. In the LEAN process, LOTCIP and corridor studies were also addressed.

i. UPWP Amendment Additional PL in FY23

The UPWP is the document that guides transportation work over two years. There is one more year left in ours but since its adoption the government created and adopted the IJJA law which increased our funding by \$100,000 for fiscal year 2023 by the CT DOT, but without their usual 10% match. We are going to propose an amendment to the UPWP to account for all this; the COG is able to accommodate making up the match. This funding could potentially be used to hire a grant writer to apply for discretionary funding through the IJJA. This level of funding should last for five years. The amendment to the UPWP will come before the COG next month.

e. Other Transportation Updates (SS4A, TRIP, LEAN Process, ALT Study, Etc.)

Mr. Haramut reported that he is still waiting to find out if our safety plan meets the requirements for an action plan so towns can apply for funds under SS4A (Safe Streets for All). It is most likely going to work out that way. This will come before the COG in July. CT DOT cannot apply for this funding because it's federal, but towns and COGs can. Towns can bundle projects through a COG application. The deadline is in September. If the plan is not considered adequate we will need to apply for funds to create and adequate plan.

The Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP) will be through CT DOT with state funds like LOTCIP and TAP combined. To qualify for funding the area must be greater than 50% rural, which includes the Haddams, Lyme, and Killingworth in our region. The solicitation will be out by summer/fall. Mr. Haramut will send preliminary materials; we can submit two applications for our region. He will work with the four eligible towns further on this.

For the Air Line to Farmington Canal study, we are waiting on comments on the draft scope from Mr. Hall of the Jonah Center, Middletown.

f. Update from Transit District

Mr. Comerford reported that a new staff member (shared with the COG) to support the merger implementation will be starting in July. There is a proposed shared agreement between the two entities in which he will work at the COG about one day a week. The agreement is now with the attorney but Mr. Comerford has authorization to enter into it.

Mr. Fortuna moved to authorize RiverCOG to enter into agreement with ETD for the shared staff member in which we lend our new hire to ETD and they pay us for his time; second by Mr. Kilduff. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Discussion: The agreement will specify the term, the hour rate for reimbursement, and clarifies the relationship of the employee that will be an employee of RiverCOG but will work with ETD four out of five days a week for now. When the arrangement ends the position will remain a permanent RiverCOG position, which we can fund because of the increase in PL funding.

Mr. Comerford stated that a brand study is happening; they will float four possible names to the public and pick one to develop their brand around. He is still working on some details for the July 1 merger. There will be changes to the ADA and dial-a-ride programs as of July 1; they will be available over all the towns and do subscription services and senior fares. The taxi voucher program for E. Hampton, Portland, Durham, Middletown will be implemented for 50% supplement as of July 1. There is also a fare study going on with an analysis of the real cost of collecting fares. The HR study is wrapping up and the Xtra mile on-demand service is on a pilot program in Middletown.

Legislation was passed this year that will change the way transit districts are funded in FY24, but he is not sure how yet. The new funding will be frozen at FY23 levels and will probably be competitive, though Middletown may have an advantage because they will prefer to look at towns that serve a population of over 100,000, which ETD falls into.

At this point in time the meeting broke for lunch (12:30 pm) and reconvened at 12:50 pm.

4. LCRVCOG Business

a. Authorization of RiverCOG Executive Director or Chair to enter into FY23 Regional Services Grant agreement with CT OPM (motion)

Ms. Francis moved to authorize RiverCOG's Executive Director or Chairman to enter the FY23 Regional Services Grant agreement with CT OPM; seconded by Mr. Kilduff. Motion passed unanimously.

b. Approval of the DEMHS Authorizing Resolution for 2021 EMPG Grant that Serves New Haven Area Special Services Team (NHASH) (motion)

Ms. Francis moved to approve the DEMHS Authorizing Resolution for the 2021 EMPG Grant that serves the New Haven Area Special Services team (NHASH); seconded by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

c. New Executive Committee Member

Mr. Gold asked that anyone who wants to be on the Executive Committee reach out as there will be a vacancy due to Ms. Francis leaving. We will vote on this at the July meeting.

d. Update on County Equivalency for COGs

COGs are now identified as the entity responsible for money at the federal level. This will be helpful for future legislation that results in federal programs. Census data will now be aggregated within COG boundaries. A possible census data training was discussed. This does not change anything in the state statutes or make COGs county governments.

e. Document Digitization Project Update

Five towns are participating, Westbrook is moving forward most quickly. The door is still open for the consultant to come out and evaluate any town documents at no cost.

f. Small Business & Non-Profit Grants and Loans Through ARPA Funds – Update

We are working with the Chamber and Middlesex Community Foundation. Cromwell is interested in moving forward with the grants for non-profits.

g. HHW Update

The June event was in Old Lyme (for the first time) this past Saturday, it went well. We are still working on the Phase 1 for the facility in Essex. A meeting will be held soon about this.

h. Funds to Towns from Small Alcohol Bottles

Towns have already received money from this program. Many have spent it already; the towns discussed what they have done with it. Ms. Ehle/Meyer noted that there is still an application with DEEP to do a regional food waste program. Regional recycling education was discussed; other regions do it in elementary schools.

i. Possible RFP for MSW Services

We have looked at some sample RFPs from other towns that joined together in the state. Mr. Fortuna noted we can get good activity because many towns need it due to MIRA's closing. We can do one as a group and get a good price. So far we have heard interest from Chester, Durham, Clinton, Old Saybrook, Deep River, and possibly Haddam.

j. Regional Agricultural Council Update

The RAC had a demonstration day for their new no-till farm equipment. Rep. Goupil attended; she thanked Halfinger Farm in Higganum for hosting. The program shows the potential for working together to help the environment and farmers. The no-till practice reduces labor and fuel and creates no runoff of pesticides/soil. Transporting the pieces was discussed.

k. Update on Regional Housing Plan

Ms. Joufflas reported that ten of the twelve 8-30j plans have been adopted, the final two are expected in the next few weeks. The recommendations for the regional plan were created, they are now with the liaisons who are taking a look at them. The full plan will be presented to the RPC at their June meeting and will be brought before the COG for adoption during the July meeting.

l. Lower Connecticut River Land Trust Update

Ms. Burns reported that the land trust is finalizing plans for the CT River Trail Adventure project in which participants will hike trails in all the towns/land trusts and then donate to the land trust in return for a t-shirt or hat saying they completed the adventure.

OSWA grant applications are due September 30. CLCC is holding an information session about the grants virtually, information will be sent to all.

m. Aquatic Invasive Species Update

Ms. Burns reported that newer water chestnut plants have been found in the southern part of the river. She is working with our partners and volunteers to pull up the plants. Hydrilla abatement efforts continue, for that we are working with the Army Corps of Engineers.

n. Legislative Update

Mr. Lovejoy noted that a commission for CT's development and future was formed in the last session. They are charged with zoning regulation overhaul, looking at reports on planning, aligning planning docs to make the state POCD have more teeth, model code, consolidated housing plan, affordable housing, and sewage.

He attended the CCAPA hot topics in law event and will be joining the subgroup on building the legislative agenda for 2023.

o. DEMHS Update

Mr. Lovejoy met with DEMHS leadership recently. They are in the budget process for the next ALCRA grant and supply chain issues are an obstacle to purchasing and getting consistent pricing.

5. Chairman & Executive Director's Reports

Mr. Gold mentioned that a bill passed to create a working group around long and short-term waste management solutions. There is also a working group about digitizing building departments that will meet this summer. This will aid in future sharing of building departments/officials. Shared staff should be brought up during the next session. For now there can only be one individual appointed as building official but identifying multiple officials could facilitate towns.

He gave the financial report; the COG is within parameter of the adopted FY21 budget. The STIF account totals \$922,940; the checking account currently holds \$24,317.

Chairman Salvatore thanked Mr. Gold and the RiverCOG staff for doing an outstanding job this fiscal year.

6. Other Business

Ms. Francis noted that the CIRMA training session and updates on legal issues and the fair housing act occurred. Her town planner is currently training their boards about this as there are easy ways to get in trouble. She would like to look into a possible regional training on this.

7. Adjournment

Ms. Francis moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:45 P.M., second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti