



# 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

September 28, 2022 – 11:30 am

#### RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Charlene Janecek \*  
Clinton: Karl Kilduff \*  
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore \*  
Deep River: Angus McDonald \*  
Durham:  
East Haddam: Irene Haines \*  
East Hampton: David Cox \*  
Essex: Carey Duques \*  
Haddam: Bob McGarry \*  
Killingworth: Nancy Gorski \*  
Lyme: David Lahm  
Middlefield: Jim Irish \*  
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:

Julia McGrath & Murray, Rep. Courtney's Office  
Erin McBride, Sen. Murphy's Office  
Nicole Velardi, DEMHS  
Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor  
Dan Bourret, Town of Portland  
Joyce Berardis, Town of Deep River  
Laurie McElwee, Kennedy Center

#### Staff Present:

Sam Gold  
Eliza LoPresti  
Robert Haramut  
Kevin Armstrong  
Janice Ehle/Meyer

# RiverCOG

Ben Lovejoy  
Brendan Geraghty  
Margot Burns

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

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 11:42 A.M. The meeting was held at the Riverfront Park in Portland, CT.

2. **Public Speaking**

Nicole Velardi, new DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator, will meet with all Region 2 towns in person shortly. The REPT approved the budget for the 2022 grant season. The non-profit security enhancement grant program is open now through November.

Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor, stated that voter registration numbers are up. No excuse absentee ballots are still happening this time. There will be a county-wide meeting in Old Saybrook next week for all registrars. There is a problem with getting enough poll workers and moderators statewide. She asked that everyone bring that up in networking groups they may be in. Poll workers and moderators can be unaffiliated.

Ryan Curley welcomed everyone to the Riverfront Park in Portland.

Julia McGrath of Congressman Courtney's office discussed the energy assistance program, information is on the Representative's website. Fiscal year 2022 projects that were funded supplementally are being rolled out now; FY23 projects are being voted on.

3. **LCRVMPO Business**

a. **Approval of Minutes of July 27, 2022 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Meeting**

*Mr. Cox moved to approve the minutes of the July 27, 2022 meeting; second by Ms. Haines. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

b. **21 TIP Amendment #19 (motion)**

*Please see the explanation sheet that follows these minutes for details on each project within this TIP Amendment.*

- I. **Statewide, 0170-3633, STPA, X6, Asset management group, PL, FY23, \$3,140,000, (80/20), New project**
- II. **Statewide, 0170-3635, STPBRX, X6, Bridge management group, PL, FY23, \$2,400,000, (80/20), New project**
- III. **Statewide, 0170-3639, STPA, X6, Pavement management group, PL, FY23, \$2,400,000 (80/20), New project**

*Mr. Fortuna moved to approve 21 TIP Amendment #19, I, II, & III; seconded by Ms. Haines. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

- IV. **Statewide, 0170-3639, STPA, X7, Computerized traffic signal systems, OTH, FY23, AC Entry, \$0, New project**
- V. **Statewide, 0170-3639, STPA, X7, Computerized traffic signal systems, OTH, FY23, AC Conv, \$3,920,000, (80/20), New project**
- VI. **Statewide, 0170-3639, STPA, X7, Computerized traffic signal systems, OTH, FY24, AC Conv, \$4,360,000, (80/20), New project**
- VII. **Statewide, 0170-3639, STPA, X7, Computerized traffic signal systems, OTH, FYI, AC Conv, \$11,430,000, (80/20), New project**

*Mr. Fortuna moved to approve 21 TIP Amendment #19, IV, V, VI, VII; seconded by Ms. Janecek. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

- VIII. **Old Saybrook, 0170-0217, NHPPBRX, X6, Rehab Br 06200A and 06200B over CT River, PD, FY23, \$1,775,000 (90/10), New project**
- IX. **Old Saybrook, 0170-0217, NHPPBRX, X6, Rehab Br 06200A and 06200B over CT River, FD, FY24, \$1,350,000 (90/10), New project**
- X. **Old Saybrook, 0170-0217, BRFP, X6, Rehab Br 06200A and 06200B over CT River, CON, FYI, \$30,000,000 (90/10), New project**

*Mr. Griswold moved to approve 21 TIP Amendment #19, VIII, IX, X; seconded by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

- XI. **Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPB, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Entry, \$0, New project**
- XII. **Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPB, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Conv, \$133,000, (80/20), New project**
- XIII. **Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPB, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY24, AC Conv, \$133,000, (80/20), New project**
- XIV. **Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPB, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FYI, AC , Conv, \$399,000, (80/20), New project**
- XV. **Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPFLEX, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Entry, \$0, New project**
- XVI. **Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPFLEX, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Conv, \$376,000, (80/20), New project**
- XVII. **Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPFLEX, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY24, AC Conv, \$376,000, (80/20), New project**
- XVIII. **Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPFLEX, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FYI, AC Conv, \$1,128,000, (80/20), New project**
- XIX. **Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPH, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Entry, \$0, New project**

- XX. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPH, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Conv, \$140,000, (80/20), New project
- XXI. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPH, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY24, AC Conv, \$140,000, (80/20), New project
- XXII. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPH, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FYI, AC Conv, \$420,000, (80/20), New project
- XXIII. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPNH, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Entry, \$0, New project
- XXIV. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPNH, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Conv, \$85,000, (80/20), New project
- XXV. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPNH, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY24, AC Conv, \$85,000, (80/20), New project
- XXVI. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPNH, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FYI, AC Conv, \$256,000, (80/20), New project
- XXVII. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPNL, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Entry, \$0, New project
- XXVIII. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPNL, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Conv, \$28,000, (80/20), New project
- XXIX. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPNL, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY24, AC Conv, \$28,000, (80/20), New project
- XXX. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPNL, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FYI, AC Conv, \$85,000, (80/20), New project
- XXXI. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPS, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Entry, \$0, New project
- XXXII. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPS, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Conv, \$14,000, (80/20), New project
- XXXIII. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPS, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY24, AC Conv, \$14,000, (80/20), New project
- XXXIV. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPS, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FYI, AC Conv, \$41,000, (80/20), New project
- XXXV. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPW, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Entry, \$0, New project
- XXXVI. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPW, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY23, AC Conv, \$4,000, (80/20), New project
- XXXVII. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPW, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FY24, AC Conv, \$4,000, (80/20), New project
- XXXVIII. Statewide, 0170-5032, TAPW, X6, TA Program, Federally eligible engineering activities, PE, FYI, AC Conv, \$12,000, (80/20), New project.

*Mr. Cox moved to approve 21 TIP Amendment #19, XI through XXXVIII; seconded by Mr. Florsheim. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

**c. ADA Assessment**

An ADA survey was sent out, please answer this by Sept. 30.

**d. Other Transportation Updates (23 MTP, LOTCIP, ALT Study, SS4A)**

A draft of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan should be ready for viewing by the holidays. The public comment period will occur after the CT DOT has the air quality conformity determination, probably in February, with hopes for adoption at the March meeting.

The Clinton Route 1 sidewalk project through LOTCIP is showing an increase in cost due to inflation.

The application for the Safe Streets For All grant has been submitted; this is for an action plan for the region.

**e. Update from Estuary Transit District**

Mr. Comerford stated that their new DBA is River Valley Transit. Branding is being worked on now. Free fares are continuing through November. The fixed routes are now up to rider levels over those of 2019. The demand transit response is up 76% over 2019, which is a struggle because this is a service that actually costs money to run.

The extra mile program in Middletown which is primarily for Wesleyan's campus, was rolled out in August. So far there have been over 1,000 rides and the partnership with Wesleyan has resulted in internships for students to work in public outreach and on grants.

There is still a struggle to find drivers, there may end up being cuts due to low staffing. Possible recruiting strategies were discussed such as lowering the driver age (it is now 21), getting a bus to a CDL school so people that go there can be licensed to drive busses as well (current CDL holders cannot drive busses, that is a separate license).

**4. LCRVCOG Business**

**a. Authorization for Executive Director to sign contract with Healthy PlanEat**

Healthy PlanEat is a website that local farmers can join; people can order their products (from more than one farm) and then pick them up in one central location. Sole source approval was obtained from DECD already; the funds for this would come out of the EDA grant already received.

*Ms. Haines moved to authorize the Executive Director to enter into contract with Healthy PlanEat. Second by Mr. Florsheim. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

*Discussion: Healthy PlanEat will be paid up to \$39,000, although the budget hasn't yet been completed. This is a one-time cost/project. The money will allow farmers to get onto the site and use the site's marketing to drive traffic to our regional farmers. This will get more farms and products out locally and will allow farmers to develop their own websites with in-house classes on that, marketing, and publicity. Mayor Florsheim noted that this site has been*

*popular and successful in Middletown already. They offer a one location pick up for items from many different farms.*

**b. Authorization to hire a contractor for the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce for their MEWS+ project, under RiverCOG's CARES Act Grant**

The MEWS+ entrepreneurship program was an in-person program until COVID hit; it is now going to go ahead as online programming. A RFP was put out for consultant services, all but one response were 60 to 1,000 times the budget. The business institute affiliated with Middlesex County Chamber came in within budget and will provide in kind support for this project. The program is also to be run at the Hive in Chester. The expenditure will be up to \$52,000.

*Mr. Florsheim moved to authorize hiring of the Business Initiative Foundation of Middlesex County to oversee the MEWS+ program. Second by Mr. McDonald; vote was unanimous in favor.*

**c. Legislative Agenda**

Mr. Gold asked for ideas within the next month so that a draft could be presented at the October meeting. The December 14 meeting in Old Lyme will be in person and will be the legislative meeting. He asked for ideas to be sent to him and Mr. Lovejoy, and for the ideas to be things not covered by COST or CCM. Mr. Lovejoy will distribute a memo summarizing last year's agenda and actions taken.

**d. Document Digitization Project Update**

Mr. Armstrong asked towns to answer an upcoming survey about what, if any, document digitization they already have in place. We need buy-in from as many towns as possible for consistency across the region and to get good group rates. Five or six towns are currently on board.

**e. HHW Update**

Ms. Ehle/Meyer would like to start working on next year's schedule as this year is winding down. A place to hold a collection in the tri-town area of Chester/Deep River/Essex is desired.

**f. Regional Agricultural Council Update**

The RAC would like to use part of their grant to purchase a trailer to move the no-till items around the region to various farmers. There is \$12,000 left in the grant. Prices are around \$9,000.

*Mr. Hall moved that the RAC should look into purchasing a trailer with the remaining grant funds; second by Ms. Janeczek. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

*Discussion: The farmers feel it's necessary so we are definitely looking to support them. The trailer will be stored with the equipment for now, in Haddam. After the one year grant period is up the RAC will look into other storage options.*

**g. Update on CEDS and Regional Housing Plan**

Mr. Gold updated that CEDS stakeholder interviews were completed, each town was involved. Public workshops will be held in Middletown on Oct. 12 and Old Saybrook on Oct. 13.

Implementation of recommendations from the RHP are being worked on now. A toolkit is being created that will give towns best practices, background, case studies, and sample language for the regulatory changes that towns proposed in their 8-30j plans. The toolkit will be a resource for towns as they implement their own plans. Expect to have the first "tool" ready by the end of the month which will act as a template for the others. A by-law amendment to create a regional housing committee is in the works. We expect to have a draft for this group to review at the next meeting. Mr. Gold noted that we are the only region in the state to be fully compliant with 8-30j.

**h. Resilient 2.0 and Lower Connecticut River Land Trust Updates**

Ms. Burns updated that CIRCA will be attending the October meeting, map drafts should be available shortly. DEEP currently has a resilient community grant opportunity which is good for any town with projects that are ready, please just let her know if this is of interest.

The LCRLT is going to hold a trail adventure which will be up on that website shortly. Letters of support were sent on behalf of the COG and the Land Trust for OSWA grants in East Haddam. OSWA applications are due Sept. 30; there are matching funds available through CLCC and NRCS. The LCRLT may be able to help any towns or land trusts that need another entity to hold easements.

**i. Aquatic Invasive Species Update**

Many volunteers participated to rid the river of water chestnut this year. The bloom was a result of a release in Hartford. There are still some problem areas in Cromwell, Middletown, Haddam. This is the first year that water chestnut affected a commercial waterfront (in Deep River).

The Army Corps are planning meetings about hydrilla and creating an environmental impact statement for model research sites in the river, dependent on DEEP's approval.

Meetings have been held with CRCOG about aquatic invasives. They would like to get involved up river as the East Hartford/Keeney Cove area is totally covered.

**j. Update on Solid Waste Working Group & Commission on CT's Development and Future**

Mr. Lovejoy reported that subcommittees of the Commission on CT's Development and Future are meeting on affordable housing, sewer, model code and conservation housing planning. They are sending reports to the legislative body. The most current solutions include sensible improvement with a possible menu of options for affordable housing, new guidance on sewers for towns to roll out alternate forms of sewer and/or new technology available.

The solid waste working group saw a presentation by Enviro Power about new tech in incinerators that are efficient and clean. DEEP will host a municipal forum to discuss projects and ideas on regional and multi-town collaborations.

**k. DEMHS Update**

Mr. Lovejoy stated that Region 2 is finally fully staffed. The homeland security grant has been submitted; major projects include PSAP to PSAP upgrades, election security, regional EMPG hazmat grant with a regional response trailer. The 2020 grant has been extended because of supply chain issues. There is going to be fiduciary coordination between all five regions. There is also a new local cyber security grant program for vulnerability testing for municipalities.

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

Mr. Gold stated that the COG is within parameters of the 2.4 million dollar FY23 budget. The financial audit will begin on October 17. \$144,000 was added to the fund balance from FY22, of that \$105,000 is unrestricted. The STIF account has a balance of \$1.16 million; the interest rate has tripled in the past three months which we will use for local match. The checking account has \$53,232 as of Aug. 31. 2022.

**6. Other Business**

Ms. Haines gave an update on the Haddam-East Haddam swing bridge; due to mechanical problems the bridge will be manually opened at 10:00 and 1:00 each day for about 30-60 minutes to allow boat traffic.

Mr. Gold noted that there was some confusion over a municipal survey about structures in roadways. There are a few ways to interpret this; Mr. Lovejoy will look into it further.

**7. Adjournment**

*Mr. McGarry moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:10 pm; seconded by Mr. Curley. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Eliza LoPresti