



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, October 24, 2022 – 7:00 pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Members:

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Chester | Cindy Lignar * |
| Clinton | Alan Kravitz Martin Jaffe |
| Cromwell | Nick Demetriades * Anthony LaCava * |
| Deep River | Tony Bolduc * |
| Durham | Frank DeFelice * |
| East Haddam | Crary Brownell Debbie Langdon * |
| East Hampton | Michael Kowalczyk * |
| Essex | Carey Duques Sandra Childress * |
| Haddam | Raul deBrigard * |
| 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 * Michael Bender * |
| Portland | Chantal Foster * Bob Ellsworth |
| Westbrook | Bill Neale * Marie Farrell |

*Members Present

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Torrance Downes
Eliza LoPresti
Ben Lovejoy
Kevin Armstrong
Brendan Geraghty

RiverRPC

Janice Ehle/Meyer
Margot Burns

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 –Cindy Lignar (Chester), Debbie Langdon (East Haddam), and Sandra Childress (Essex) were seated.

4. Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Neale moved to adopt the agenda; second by Ms. Johnson. Vote was unanimous in favor.

5. Public Comment - None

6. Approval of the Minutes of Past Meetings

Mr. Neale moved to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2022 meeting; second by Mr. Martin. Vote was unanimous in favor.

7. Presentation on Regional Transit – Brendan Geraghty

Mr. Geraghty gave a presentation on the transit district’s current and future plans and the implementation of the recommendations from the transit study. The presentation is linked [here](#).

Commissioners gave suggestions about specific bus routes such as changing the path of route 587 and changing schedules for the beach route and the route that connects with other transit taking people to the airport. Mr. Geraghty clarified fees, proposed fees, and how the extra mile program works, which is now free, but may need to charge in the future. It was also noted that the Bird bikes and scooters are not part of the transit program, they are a private company. Mr. Geraghty explained the fare tracking and how that is currently working through a consultant. He answered questions about the percentage of the fleet that is or will be electrified. Eventually the fleet will be EVs but not now. The building of the new facility will include space for use and maintenance of EVs, as in 2024 diesel buses will no longer be available to purchase in the state. The current facility will be retrofit to have capability for EVs. Mr. Geraghty clarified that the transit district is now in good financial standing but if expansion is to occur, increased costs may be coming. He described program costs. He was also asked if ridership numbers are rising; the answer is that yes, the ridership numbers are going up, partly because there is currently no fare on public buses in CT.

8. Referrals

a. Farm Store Zoning Regulations - Durham

Durham agriculture commission is proposing regulations for farm stores. They are asking for the ability to have 1,500 square feet on a 5 acre minimum parcel. There is a question as to whether a store can sell the required 60% home-grown items on a parcel of that size. The permitting process is for a zoning permit only. There was a public hearing in this in Durham already, which closed, but the matter was not voted on. The Durham P&Z has already proposed changes.

There was discussion on what product a horse farm might produce, other than compost. There was a question whether the store needs to be contiguous to the farm or if it can be in a different location and if it was established away from the farm whether that wouldn't just be considered regular retail use. There was also question about if there was a provision for property under control of the same owner but not on the same lot in order to meet the percentage of goods that need to be produced on the farm.

Ms. Ehle/Meyer reported that the Regional Agricultural Commission commented that farmers can go to a weekly market and rent a stand and sell their products and anyone else's, so how does that compare with the farm store regs. Mr. DeFelice noted that the farm market is a stand-alone thing. Farm stands are permitted in Durham almost by right whereas this is more of a commercial operation, like having a store in a neighborhood.

There was a question on how a farm store can be filled with 60% of their wares during the winter. This could be asked if there were a higher standard like a special permit (rather than a zoning permit). There could also be a higher standard than just the zoning permit if the place is in proximity to residential areas.

Mr. Downes will create and submit a letter from the RPC based on the comments and questions received.

9. Updates

- a. **Discussion on Pameacha Pond, Middletown:** Mr. Lovejoy gave an update on the situation of Pameacha Pond, which is included in these minutes (pages 5 & 6) and was forwarded to all members. There is a sewer line that runs near the pond which has caused a past issue with sewage in the water. This issue is now neutralized and repairs are being done. The pond includes a dam that is owned by the City of Middletown and is in need of repair. The City currently has no plan for what is going to happen with the pond/dam and has announced that it is open to ideas, given the complexity of the whole situation. There is a group called Help Save Pameacha Pond that was created in response to an early idea to turn the pond into a park.

There was discussion on privately owned dams and the lack of funding sources to help the private owners keep them safe and the ramifications that unsafe dams could have.

- b. **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):** Stakeholder outreach was done with 15 different groups at the end of September and a second steering committee meeting was held. Public outreach events were held in Middletown and Old Saybrook but were not very well attended. To supplement, activities have been converted into an online survey which has been passed out at transit stops and at paper shredding events. Efforts have been made to engage the NAACP. Discussion on the public outreach process followed. It was suggested that the CEDS should link to the state plan.
- c. **Regional Housing Plan:** Mr. Lovejoy noted that draft bylaws for the Regional Housing Committee (RHC) have been presented to the COG. He then presented the framework for the website that will house the RHP toolkit, fulfilling one of the plan recommendations.

Research has begun on topics of interest for the toolkit such as ADUs, conservation and subdivisions, adaptive reuse, consolidated parking, cottage clusters, and land banks.

Discussion included the timing on the RHC; Mr. Gold reported that the COG is working on officially creating the committee, it could possibly be created by the beginning of the new year. The toolkit is a stand-alone recommendation and will be created no matter what the COG decides about the RHC. The toolkit will be used by town officials, land use commissions, possibly developers, and others.

- d. **Training for Commissioners/Volunteers:** Mr. Lovejoy reported on specific land use training requirements from the state, the list is included in these minutes (page 7). It was asked whether the COG would be providing training; Mr. Gold noted that it would be much more efficient if it could be done virtually on a state-wide level since CT is relatively small.

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

Mr. Lovejoy reported that the group for development of CT's future has been meeting, the subcommittee report on the state housing plan deadline is approaching. The solid waste group also continues to meet.

RiverCOG is drafting its annual legislative agenda now; Mr. Lovejoy will attend CCM's legislative convention in early November.

11. Adjournment

Mr. Bolduc moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm; second by Mr. Neale. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Pameacha Pond Update

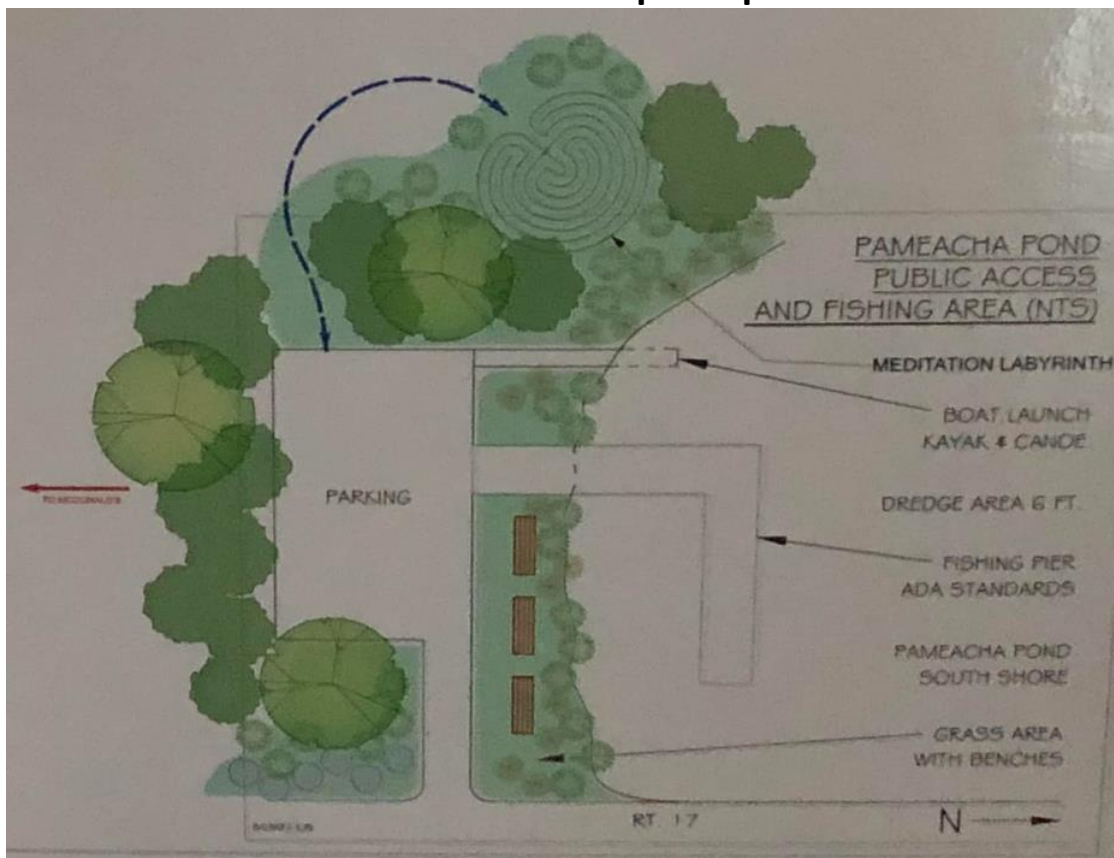
Overview

- Pameacha Pond has long been a treasured attraction for the residents of Middletown.
- The pond is connected to Pameacha dam that is located in the north section of the pond
- The dam is owned by the City of Middletown and in 2018 DEEP Dam Safety division issued a consent decree that the dam was in need of serious repair
- The dam is also located near a main sewer discharge culvert that is also in need of repair
- The city of Middletown had initially planned to remove the dam, drain the pond and replace it with a public park. The city released some preliminary plans for this park but were quickly met with swift resistance and opposition by residents who opposed this conversion concept
- That initial concept that caused such concern was never officially presented as the final concept for construction and to date there are no official ideas or definitive future for how the city plans to move forward
- Most recently, the city has announced that it is open to alternative ideas and due to the complexity of both the dam and adjacent sewer repairs, has opted to separate these two projects.
- As of this meeting, the city has begun making the necessary repairs to the sewer drainage system near the park and has placed the dam repairs on hold in order to engage the public further on next steps
- The Group Help Save Pameacha Pond has organized around the preservation of the water body and pressed the importance of the existing ecosystem as being integral to the area.
- They have recently drafted a concept plan which they intend to present to the Common Council when the pond comes up for consideration and public hearing
- The \$3 million dollar repairs to the sewage system began this week

Upcoming Meetings

- TBD – As of tonight, there are no official meetings concerning the park but it is understood that the park will come before the Common Council soon

Friends of Pameacha Current Concept Map



Next Steps

- Mary Ellen Sutton, who is spearheading the advocacy efforts, has requested any support possible for preserving the park
- The group intends to rally at the Common Council meeting once the official date is set
- The repairs to the associated sewers will be completed over the next few months and has formally been separated from the pond proposals
- Mary can be reached at 860-966-9038 and stated that she is willing to partner with the RPC where possible to help preserve the park.

Additional Information

- *Sewer Repairs Article* [here](#)
- *Background from Jonah Center* [here](#)
- *Save the Pond Group* [here](#)

Lower Connecticut River Valley RPC Required Training for Land Use Commissions Review - October 24th 2022 Meeting

- On or after 1/2023 each member of a Zoning, Combined Planning and Zoning and Zoning Board of Appeals must complete 4 hours of training with at least one hour dedicated to Affordable and Fair Housing Law
- Each member has 1 year to complete the 4 hours of training
- After the initial training each member must complete at least 4 hours every other year
- The Zoning/Land Use must submit a summary report to local legislative body by 3/1/2024 establishing that all members have completed the training as required
- The required hour on Affordable and Fair Housing must include at least one of the following topics:
 - *Zoning Laws and Segregation, The Fair Housing Act, Municipal Land Use Planning and Zoning Responsibilities Under the Fair Housing Act, The Meaning of Affirmatively, Furthering Fair Housing and How it Applies to Municipalities, Planning and Zoning to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing, Zoning Reforms to Promote Diverse Housing Options*
 - *What is Affordable Housing, Who Needs It, and How Has It Evolved Over the Years?*
 - *Addressing Community Affordable Housing Needs with the Public*
- The remaining 3 hours of training can be focused on the following topics:
 - **Process and Procedure** –Including: *Legal History of Zoning Commissions, Running an Effective Public Meeting, Commissioner Conduct*
 - **Site Plans, Surveys, Maps, Architectural Conventions** – Including: *Basic Survey review & Reading Site Plans*
 - **Environment, Agricultural, and Historical Resources** – Including: *Inland Wetlands, Aquifer Protection, Coastal Area Management, Flood Management, Right to Farm, Endangered Species Act, Low Impact Development, Historic District Conservation, and Historic Places, Buildings and Roads*
- By March 1, 2024, each commission is responsible for submitting a report to their respective local legislative body (board of selectman, town council etc.) on how they ensured that each of their members received the required training and the report must offer a record of when each member completed their training.
- The report must be sent annually each year thereafter to the respective legislative bodies for compliance purposes and the council must receive and record in the official town record the receipt of this report.
- Outside of the one required hour of training, municipalities are permitted to offer training on other topics of relevance but are advised to focus on topics similar to those listed above for the first year’s requirements.
- Regional collaboration through the COGS for coordinating training opportunities is encouraged and recommended by the Office of Policy Management.
- All new commissioners are granted one year from their initial appointment to complete their required training.
- All commission members are suggested to take UCONN’s CLEAR Land Use Academy, particularly newer members as the courses offer a sufficient overview of many relevant topics that will be addressed by land use commissions.