



# 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

### DRAFT MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

November 30, 2022 – 9:00 am

#### RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Charlene Janecek \*  
Clinton: Karl Kilduff \*  
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore \*  
Deep River: Angus McDonald \*  
Durham: George Eames  
East Haddam: Irene Haines \*  
East Hampton: David Cox \*  
Essex: Carey Duques \*  
Haddam: Bob McGarry  
Killingworth: Nancy Gorski \*  
Lyme: David Lahm \*  
Middlefield: Jim Irish & Bob Yamartino \*  
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, Rep. Courtney's Office  
Robyn Kebernick, Eversource  
TJ Magnoli, Eversource  
Grayson Wright, CT DOT  
Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor  
Rhea Drozdenko, CT River Conservancy  
Ellen Graham, Sen. Blumenthal's Office  
Chuck Lewis & Chris Morgan, Valley Shore Community TV  
Nicole Velardi, DEMHS

#### Staff Present:

Sam Gold  
Eliza LoPresti  
Robert Haramut

# RiverCOG

Kevin Armstrong  
Ben Lovejoy  
Torrance Downes  
Margot Burns  
Megan Jouflas  
Brendan Geraghty

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.

2. **Public Speaking**

- a. **Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor:** Ms. Conklin reported that during the November election one town had some parking issues and there was slow internet for end of the night reporting but other than that the election ran smoothly. One town had a tie, even after recount; one of the candidates conceded. No RiverCOG towns were chosen for an election audit. There are three towns with new registrars, they will receive training after the new year. Mr. Gold and Ms. Conklin met and discussed going to the Secretary of State to discuss improvements in the REM program.
- b. **TJ Magnoli, Eversource:** Mr. Magnoli noted that CEOs have received information on the impending increase in supply rates in January. There are various relief programs for low to moderate income residents. A \$10 credit will be included on all bills if approved by PURA.
- c. **Ellen Graham, Sen. Blumenthal's Office:** Ms. Graham reported that the Senate passed the gay marriage protection act. They are waiting on a resolution or a budget before Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> and monitoring the house to determine if earmarks will return.
- d. **Julia McGrath, Rep. Courtney's Office:** Ms. McGrath reported that they are currently waiting on the earmark for East Hampton in the omnibus, which will probably be pushed to the end of December. The office has been in communication with Amtrak and federal rail about the NEC inventory reported that was released. She will bring back feedback to the COG as they are aware of local concerns.

3. **Presentations**

- a. **Fiscal Year 2022 Audit Presentation, Martin Henry of Henry, Raymond, and Thompson:** *Mr. Cox moved to table the audit presentation; second by Mr. Irish. Vote was unanimous in favor.*
- b. **Chuck Lewis and Chris Morgan, Valley Shore TV:** Mr. Lewis and Mr. Morgan were present to discuss the cable access provider, located in Westbrook. They provide streaming and production services for towns. They carry local events, parades, sports, meetings, etc. and have a free live studio and local bulletin board that towns can access. They will provide equipment to train on streaming meetings. In addition to live and on-demand streaming, their content is available on Roku, Fire Stick and Apple TV.

Mr. Fortuna noted that Old Saybrook uses their services and they do a great job with a modern, professionally run studio. Many people see their shows.

**4. LCRVMPO Business**

**a. Approval of Minutes of October 26, 2022 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Meeting**

*Mr. Hall moved to approve the minutes of the October 26, 2022 meeting; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

**b. Air Line Trail to Farmington Canal Trail Connector Study**

Mr. Haramut reported that we have applied for a corridor study through CT DOT. The city of Middletown has an earmark for the local match through the same study. The study will be done in two phases, the second will be the design phase, which will probably be a separate RFQ.

**c. MTP Update**

There will be public information meetings on the Metropolitan Transportation Plan over the next two weeks. A draft is currently being worked on. There are new data inputs because of new plans such as the RPOCD, the Regional Housing Plan, the LCRV Transit Study, etc. A draft should be ready by early February for public commenting for thirty days, with possible MPO endorsement in March.

**d. TRIP Update**

This is the new Transportation Rural Improvement Program that mirrors LOTCIP. Mr. Haramut sent information to the four rural towns that qualify (Haddam, East Haddam, Killingworth, Lyme). We can submit two applications for our region, thirty will be accepted statewide. There is roughly \$500,000 for projects. The state now allows local roads to be eligible and has extended the deadline to March. Prioritization will occur at the April meeting if more than one project is received.

**e. Update from Estuary Transit District**

Mr. Geraghty reported that he has been doing public outreach for proposed fare changes. They are proposing a new reduced fare for students and low-income riders, a fare capping program, elimination of fares for ADA paratransit riders that are able to ride on the regular bus routes, and adding a fare for the Xtra Mile service that is now free during its pilot program. The state just extended free fares until the end of March 2023; the state will replace the lost revenue until then. The new name and branding will be revealed soon.

**5. LCRVCOG Business**

**a. Discussion on 2023 Legislative Agenda**

Mr. Lovejoy ran through all the items on the draft legislative agenda. This led to a discussion on municipal solid waste and what the towns will do with MIRA's closing. Mr. Fortuna noted that he and Sen. Needleman are talking about calling for a proposal for a regional waste district through CWPM, which could avoid regional towns having to ship garbage out of state.

Mr. Gold asked all CEOs to reach out to the legislators in the area and ask them to attend the meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**b. DEMHS Update**

There was a previous question about whether DEMHS assets have a ten-year lifecycle or whether they could be repaired past that time; it has been confirmed that they can be repaired. There has been confirmation that is acceptable to fund purchases with multi grant years so that larger purchases can be completed.

**c. Regional Housing Committee Bylaws Amendment (motion)**

*Mr. Cox moved to approve the Regional Housing Committee Bylaw Amendment. Second by Ms. Haines. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

**d. CT DEEP Climate Resilience Fund Grant Resolution (motion)**

The grant application is for evaluation of stream crossings with the goal of identifying projects that can be bundled to form larger projects that will be eligible for federal funding.

*Mr. Cox moved to approve the resolution for the CT DEEP Climate Resilience Fund Grant application; second by Mr. Lahm. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

**e. RPIP Grant Resolution (motion)**

The Regional Performance Improvement Program application is for funding a boat, equipment, and staff to do seasonal work on aquatic invasive management in the Connecticut River.

*Mr. Fortuna moved to approve the RPIP grant resolution. Second by Mr. Lahm; vote was unanimous in favor.*

*Discussion: Mr. Cox noted that ideally we will find ways to fund this other than our own pockets. Hopefully by the time we get to that point there will be another revenue source.*

*Mr. Gold noted that the grant will pay for three years of the program giving us an opportunity to build a funding mechanism.*

*Ms. Burns noted that at the NEANS, New Hampshire, meeting, the Coast Guard discussed that any fees on boater registrations are illegal in federal statute. CT does now have boater registration fees, which is an issue. She is not sure how the state will deal with it. Some states have instituted a new sticker program. At some point this will have to be dealt with.*

*Ms. Haines doesn't condone additional funds being put into boat registrations.*

**f. Regional Election Monitor Contract**

The new two-year contract will be the same as the previous contract but for the amounts paid. The first year will be \$8,000 and the second year will be \$9,000 (up from \$7,000 each year).

*Mr. Fortuna moved to authorize the Executive Director or Chairman enter into agreement with Carol Conklin for Regional Election Monitoring Services, with an additional \$3,000 during the next two-year contract period; second by Mr. Griswold. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

*Discussion: Mr. Gold noted that Ms. Conklin is paid out of RSG funds but that this program has become an unfunded mandate by the state. He and Ms. Conklin will discuss this with the Secretary of State, as that office is the proper place for this program.*

**g. 2023 Nominating Committee**

Volunteers are needed for a nominating committee to help elect COG officers for 2023. Anyone willing should be in touch with Mr. Gold or Ms. LoPresti.

**h. HHW Update**

Ms. Ehle/Meyer was unable to be present during the meeting; Mr. Gold read her update. The appraisal and phase 1 for the Essex facility are done, the site is ready to be turned over to Essex. There should be a meeting with the HHW subcommittee to discuss the 2023 season. Mr. Griswold noted that the HHW subcommittee should meet and make a recommendation for disposition of Essex site.

**i. Regional Agricultural Council Update**

The trailer has been ordered and will arrive in January for modifications. There will be a demo day for the no till equipment on March 2. The contract with HealthyPlanEat is being reviewed now by Attorney Mednick.

**j. Update on CEDS**

Ms. Joufflas noted that the third steering committee meeting will occur soon and draft recommendations will be formed at that time. They have been working on an analysis of vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial parcels. The plan is now on schedule for a draft in January.

**k. Lower Connecticut River Land Trust Update**

The LCRLT Trail Challenge is underway at [www.lcrlt.org](http://www.lcrlt.org). Board members, including a president, are needed. The annual meeting will be Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> at 11:00, please attend.

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

Mr. Gold reported that RiverCOG will soon be posting a job in order to replace Mr. Lovejoy. For now he will continue to work with Mr. Downes on DEMHS in a part time capacity into the new year. Bylaws amendments will be coming soon for approval. If there are any bills that come up that you would like him to create testimony on please let him know. The Regional Housing Plan won a statewide award through the CT chapter of the American Planning Association.

**7. Other Business**

Mr. Hall asked for a briefing on what the CRCOG purchasing council is and how that can help towns. Mr. Gold will ask for a briefing event.

Ms. Haines asked how all towns are dealing with Juneteenth as a holiday. Most have added it as a holiday.

**8. Adjournment**

*Mr. Cox moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:42 am; seconded by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Eliza LoPresti