



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, April 24, 2023 – 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
Eliza LoPresti
Kevin Armstrong
Margot Burns
Susie Beckman
Megan Jouflas

RiverRPC

Janice Ehle-Meyer

1. Call to Order

Chairman DeFelice called the meeting to order at 7:01 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. Neale. 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 March 27, 2023 meeting; second by Mr. Kravitz. Vote was unanimous in favor.

7. Referrals

a. Middlefield Temporary Ag Events

Mr. Downes already drafted a letter (that was not yet sent) stating that there are no serious intermunicipal impacts due to the proposed regulation, but he commented that typically there are more standards guiding ag events than was written in their proposal. This was discussed and it was decided that there will be additions to the letter.

Ms. Ehle-Meyer reported on the comments from the Regional Agricultural Council (RAC) which are as follows:

The RAC recommends that 11.3 Temporary Events should read 11.3 Temporary Nontraditional Events.

Typical agriculture events should be permitted by right on Middlefield farms without having to ask for permission, there should be no permit required. Middlefield's agriculture regulations should differentiate between typical or traditional agriculture events and nontraditional agriculture events. Regulations should also differentiate between agriculture related and non agricultural related events.

To claim an event as an agriculture event, it should be reviewed that the farm is the primary use on the farm and the event as a secondary use of the farm. Agriculture events on farms should be secondary to the farm and the farm should be the primary use. The location of an agriculture event should not be primarily an event location and the secondary use a farm.

Nontraditional and non agriculture related events on a farm should necessitate additional requirements.

Chairman DeFelice noted that this proposed regulation was developed to accommodate one large business in town, but once these regulations are written, they apply to everyone else as well.

Ms. Johnson brought up the issue of noise, especially in relation to fireworks. This will be included in the letter.

There was discussion on minimum acreage for an event, versus right-sizing an event, meaning that it should be ensured that there is sufficient room for the number of people at an event. This will be included in the letter.

There was discussion on special permitting and whether it is permissible to have sunset clause. It is not; once those are issued they exist in perpetuity.

There was discussion on the process in other towns, namely Durham. When a permit for this type of event is applied for, the applicant needs to get review from the Fire Marshal, the Sanitarian, and other groups in town. It was discussed that police should be added to this as well.

Mr. deBrigard moved to send the letter that was already created with the addition of the points mentioned above; second by Ms. Stone. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. Durham Farm Store Regulations

Ms. Ehle-Meyer stated that the RAC's feeling about the proposed regulation is that the farmers in Durham know their farms and area best, so they support what they're proposing (as it was proposed by Durham's agriculture committee).

There was discussion on how much of the farm store's product needs to be grown on the farm, whether it needs to be produced and processed on the farm to count, and whether the percentage could be expanded to include CT grown. The tack store is a separate thing; a tack store would not need to include 60% farm-produced products.

There was discussion on wording that the farm shall be open year round and whether that could be changed to include seasonal operations.

The general consensus is that the proposal needs more work and is not ready. There was suggestion on looking to other rural CT towns that may already have written regulations on farm stores, such as Ellington. Mr. Gold will ask Mr. Downes to find some examples.

Mr. Kravitz moved with Mr. Neale's second that Mr. Downes will craft a letter containing the RPC's comments and look into other existing regulations. Vote was unanimous in favor.

8. Updates

- a. **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy:** Ms. Joufflas updated everyone that the CEDS is going before the COG for adoption on Wednesday, April 26. Then, it will go to the State for their 60-day review, then along to the federal government. The hope is that it will

be federally adopted within two years. We will be moving forward at the same time with declaration of the RiverCOG as a federally recognized economic development district.

- b. **Air Line to Farmington Canal Trail Study:** This is a corridor study to further the Air Line Trail into Middletown over the Arrigoni Bridge and to have it eventually connect to the Farmington Canal Trail. We are waiting on the project authorization letter from CT DOT.
- c. **Thrive Grant:** RiverCOG is receiving a federal Thriving Communities grant for technical assistance to study TOD. RiverCOG is partnering with the communities of Old Saybrook, Middletown, Westbrook, and Clinton, along with HOPE Partnership, to complete the study with technical assistance provided by WTS Engineers. RiverCOG is the only recipient of this grant in the state.

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

Ms. Lignar stated that the tri-town sustainable team is working with getting five area schools into a food scrap program. They will be receiving matching funds from Sustainable CT, this will start in September. She hopes that waste management becomes a priority for RiverCOG.

Ms. Lignar stated that the lower Connecticut River valley heritage recreational trail is a 17-mile loop trail through river valley towns; this is being worked on now and there are upcoming meetings involving RiverCOG's Transportation Planner.

Ms. Ehle-Meyer stated that RiverCOG applied for a regional waste authority planning grant through CT DEEP.

Mr. Gold reported on senate bill 1240, which he provided testimony in support of. This bill would potentially create a tax credit program for landlords to convert office/commercial space into housing. There was further discussion on the details of this bill.

Mr. Gold reported that the state and three largest metropolitan areas are getting air quality grant funding. RiverCOG will write a letter of support for CRCOG's project, which our area will be included in.

10. Adjournment

Ms. Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 pm; second by Ms. Lignar. Vote was unanimous in favor.