



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

May 24, 2023 – 9:00 am

RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Charlene Janecek
Clinton: Karl Kilduff *
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore (9:45) *
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 *
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
Jeff Pugliese, Eversource
Steve Sullivan, Eversource
TJ Magnoli, Eversource
Ellen Graham, Sen. Blumenthal's Office
Robin Kabernick, Eversource
Senator Martha Marx
Sam Carmody, Eversource
Edgardo Block
Erik Shortell, FHWA
Rep. Michael Cohen
Ricky Milliner
Nick Giardina, BL Companies
Nicole Velardi, DEMHS

RiverCOG

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Eliza LoPresti
Robert Haramut
Kevin Armstrong
Megan Jouflas
Brendan Geraghty
Janice Ehle/Meyer
Susie Beckman
Torrance Downes
Margot Burns

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Introductions

Vice Chairman Griswold called the meeting to order at 9:02 A.M. The meeting was conducted via Zoom.

2. Public Speaking

Julia McGrath – Rep. Courtney’s Office: Ms. McGrath stated that once the federal debt limit issue is resolved the office will again work on the appropriations projects. She is taking requests for the Congressman’s time during the August recess. The Safe Streets for All grant deadline is approaching mid-summer.

Ellen Graham – Senator Blumenthal’s Office: Ms. Graham thanked everyone for the well-wishes for the Senator who is mobile and doing well after his leg operation.

Senator Martha Marx mentioned bills that she worked on during the session such as one and done, regarding one-time prior authorization for certain medications. Additionally, she is advocating for better funding for the Shoreline East.

3. Presentation – Steve Sullivan, Eversource President of Electric Operations (CT)

Mr. Sullivan discussed Eversource initiatives, including rates. He explained the break-down of a typical bill, how Eversource contributes to tax bases, and their community-mindedness. He mentioned there will be a summer supply rate decrease of about 22% due to a more competitive market on the generation side.

CEOs and staff asked Mr. Sullivan questions about rates such as why CT has the highest rates of all the states, why waste to energy plants get so little for what they produce in comparison to the cost, why the Eversource rate is often no competitive with other suppliers’ rates, and more.

4. LCRVMPO Business

a. Approval of Minutes of April 26, 2023 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Meeting

Mr. Cox moved to approve the minutes of the April 26, 2023 special meeting; second by Mr. Irish. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. FY 21 TIP Amendment #26 (motion)

- i. Statewide, 0170-3640, NHPP, X6, I95 and I395 Service plaza mainline sign and sign support replacement, CON, FYI, \$3,750,000, 100/0/0, New project**

Mr. Cox moved to approve FY 21 TIP Amendment #26, second by Mr. Hall. Vote was unanimously approved.

c. 24–25 UPWP (motions)

- i. 24-25 UPWP Conditional Endorsement**
- ii. 24-25 Roles and Responsibilities Endorsement**
- iii. Authorizing Resolution Endorsement**
- iv. Delegation of Authority Endorsement**

Mr. Cox moved to approve the 24-25 UPWP with conditional endorsement, the 24-25 roles and responsibilities, the authorizing resolution, and the delegation of authority. Second by Mr. McDonald; vote was unanimously approved.

d. Various Performance Measures Targets (motion)

Mr. Cox moved to approve the various performance measures targets; second by Mr. Fortuna. Vote was unanimous in favor.

e. Other Transportation Updates

We are still waiting on the project authorization letter from CT DOT to begin work on the Air Line Trail study. Senator Lesser did reach out to CT DOT on our behalf; their finance department is overburdened, and the letter should be coming next month. CT will be reviving the Safe Routes to School grant.

In the preliminary stages of the Thrive grant, we are now working with our partner towns on a self-assessment and coming up with a rough scope. Mr. Gold also mentioned the potential Protect federal grant that he has been discussing with SCRCOG and CT DOT. This is for evacuation route planning.

f. Update from Estuary Transit District

Mr. Geraghty stated that they are working on getting their new logo and branding all over the website. They have applied for a microtransit grant to fund the existing service in Middletown and new service in East Hampton. There are proposed schedule and route changes that they are doing public outreach for now. New technology upgrades are finally happening and ETD is working with the COG on the Thrive grant and the Regional Housing Committee.

Chairman Salvatore was able to join the meeting at this time; he chaired the rest of the meeting.

4. LCRVCOG Business

a. **FY 2024 Budget (motion)**

Mr. Griswold moved to approve the fiscal year 2024 budget; second by Mr. Fortuna. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Discussion: Dues are staying the same but they could have increased based on the per capita formula. The total increase from all towns was \$411. DPH estimates are used.

b. **Household Hazardous Waste Update**

The next collection will be in Lyme/Old Lyme on June 17; the next shredding event will be in Westbrook on June 24. We are continuing to work with DEEP on closing the Essex facility and waiting to hear from DEEP on the Regional Waste Authority grant awards.

c. **Regional Agricultural Council Update**

The trailer is currently having rails welded on; these are needed to safely transport the drill. RC&D has a grant to create four equipment hubs in the state. One will be ours, as the current grant for the no-till program runs out in October. This would continue the program for a few years and enable the RAC to possibly obtain more equipment.

d. **Update on Regional Housing Plan & Committee**

The first RHC meeting was held last week. The next meeting will include a presentation comparing home prices since the 8-30j plans have been created, a test run of the data dashboard, and three towns discussing lessons learned/best practices.

e. **CEDS Update**

The state gave their approval of our CEDS and authorized submission to the EDA and apply for federal Economic Development District designation.

f. **Lower CT River Land Trust Update**

The next meeting will include review of the two grant applications that were received for the small stewardship grant initiative (from the Town of Essex and the East Haddam Land Trust). They are also looking into insurance for holding conservation easements.

g. **Aquatic Invasive Species Program Update**

Water chestnut is starting to come up in more shallow areas, please be looking for it. The towns should have received a note from the Army Corps on a meeting coming up in June that refers you to the project website which will include all information. Please forward this to your conservation commissions and anyone else that might be interested in learning about the project.

h. DEMHS Update

Mr. Downes reported that the oldest grant will be expiring on June 15th; this has been completely spent down. During the next two months, the budgeting process for the next grant will happen. Region 2 owns a burn trailer which has been offline because it was older than 10 years, and grant funds were not allowed to be used for upgrades or repairs of items of that age. However, they changed the rule so that the trailer can be repaired and it is now available for use in the region. There will be a field day to show off equipment at some point this year. Ms. Beckman has been working on collecting the MOAs for multiple grants.

i. Legislative Update

Mr. Gold mentioned that the Secretary of State responded to the letter from the COG about early voting concerns. She agrees with what was stated in the letter, but she does not have a say in the legislation. COST responded as well, saying that early voting will be passed.

Mr. Gold is working on a bill with NECOG regarding state funding of \$25,000 per COG for the Regional Election Monitor position. He also mentioned a few housing bills and that he is advocating in support of things in the Regional Housing Plan and pointing out major issues with the bill(s).

Chairman Salvatore mentioned HB 6622 which affects constable/resident trooper towns. Mr. Fortuna discussed a bill with CCM about cancer presumption in fire fighters and how that will affect CIRMA. There was discussion on a letter from the towns to legislators on this topic.

5. Chairman & Executive Director's Reports

Mr. Gold reported that he will be writing his annual self-review and will forward it to the Executive Committee shortly. He has been discussing a Building Official project with SECOG, who may have excess capacity in their regional program to help our towns that have a need. There are grants from the EPA to MSAs of \$1 million to plan around abating air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. We will be working with the Hartford MSA on this.

6. Other Business

None

7. Adjournment

Mr. Fortuna moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:34 am; seconded by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti