



Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

145 Dennison Road Essex, CT 06426 | +1 860 581 8554 | www.rivercog.org

Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments And Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

September 27, 2023 – 9:00 am

RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Charlene Janecek
Clinton: Karl Kilduff *
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore *
Deep River: Angus McDonald *
Durham: John Board *
East Haddam: Irene Haines *
East Hampton: David Cox
Essex: Carey Duques
Haddam: Bob McGarry *
Killingworth: Nancy Gorski *
Lyme: David Lahm *
Middlefield: Bob Yamartino *
Middletown: Ben Florsheim *
Old Lyme: Tim Griswold *
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna * (until 9:30)
Portland: Ryan Curley *
Westbrook: John Hall *

MPO Members:

Middlesex Chamber of Commerce: Darlene Briggs *
Estuary & Middletown Area Transit Districts: Joe Comerford *

*present

Others Present:

Kevin Tedesco & Jane Dunbar, CT DOT
Erin McBride, Senator Murphy's Office
Julia McGrath, Congressman Courtney's Office
Matt Fulda & Mark Hoover, MetroCOG
Zaheer Master, AIS
Robyn Nichols, CRCOG
TJ Magnoli, Eversource
Kim O'Rourke, City of Middletown
Nicole Velardi, DEMHS
Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office

Staff Present:

Sam Gold, Eliza LoPresti, Robert Haramut, Kevin Armstrong, Susie Beckman, Margot Burns,
Janice Ehle/Meyer, Paula Fernald, Brendan Geraghty

RiverCOG

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

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 9:03 A.M. The meeting was conducted at RiverCOG's Essex office and via Zoom.

2. **Public Speaking**

Ms. LoPresti read a statement from **Carol Conklin, Regional Election Advisor**, who was unable to attend the meeting. The towns have had their primaries, the mechanics of running them went smoothly. Killingworth had a recount due to a close amount of votes. The state pulled primary towns to audit, Middletown is the only one chosen in our region.

Julia McGrath of Congressman Courtney's Office stated that they are preparing for a possible government shutdown. If that does happen, Rep. Courtney will hold a telephone town hall next week. Ms. Gorski asked how the PFAS grant would be affected by a shutdown. Ms. McBride will get back to her on that.

Erin McBride of Senator Murphy's Office stated that the Sen. is involved in a bipartisan bill to keep the govt. open until Nov. 17.

Ellen Graham of Senator Blumenthal's Office stated that their office is also prepping for a shutdown. She asked to be contacted if people are not receiving her grant notifications.

Chairman Salvatore asked about federal funding for drainage/flooding. Ms. McGrath stated there are revolving funds from EPA to the state for flooding. If he is referring to the recent flood response, she has not yet heard of a declaration.

3. **Presentations**

a. **CRCOG Purchasing Council Textile Recycling – Robyn Nichols**

Ms. Nichols presentation can be found [here](#). She presented the benefits of textile recycling with Baystate Textiles; a benefit to those towns that are part of the CRCOG purchasing council.

b. **Document Digitization – Zaheer Master, Accelerated Information Systems**

Mr. Fulda and Mr. Hoover from MetroCOG presented on their towns' use of the AIS system and what that has been able to accomplish. RiverCOG towns are able to join onto their existing licenses and use their existing technology/templates. That presentation can be found [here](#). The cost per user, per license is \$950/year plus the cost of any customization of products for each town. There had been discussion at the RiverCOG shared services committee about using the extra RSG funds to pay for the startup fees. There should be another meeting of this committee held to include pertinent staff from town halls that might be interested.

4. **LCRVMPO Business**

a. **Approval of Minutes of July 26, 2023 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Special Meeting**

Ms. Haines moved to approve the minutes of the July 26, 2023 special meeting; second by Mr. Kilduff. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. Approval of Minutes of August 23, 2023 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Special Meeting

Mr. McGarry moved to approve the minutes of the August 23, 2023 special meeting; seconded by Mr. Griswold. Vote was unanimously approved.

c. FY 21 TIP Amendment #30

i. Westbrook, 0154-0128, STPA-BRX, X7, Replace bridge 00232 over I-95 and intersection improvements, FYI, ROW, \$50,000, 80/20/0, Move phase from FY 24 to FYI no change to cost

ii. Westbrook, 0154-0128, STPA-BRX, X7, Replace bridge 00232 over I-95 and intersection improvements, FYI, FD, \$924,000, 80/20/0, Move from phase FY 24 to FYI no change to cost

Mr. Kilduff moved to approve FY21 TIP Amendment #30, sections i and ii; second by Mr. Lahm. Vote was unanimous in favor.

iii. Statewide, 0170-5041, BRFP, X6, Concrete sealer program for NBI bridges on I-91, FY24, CON, \$3,800,000, 80/20/0, New project

Mr. Kilduff moved to approve FY 21 TIP Amendment #30, section iii; second by Ms. Haines. Vote was unanimously approved.

d. Other Transportation Updates

i. October MPO Board meeting – Request for resolution of support for CT DOT’s FY24 safety performance management measures, Draft 25-28 TIP Schedule, 2025 MPO Certification, SS4A, TCP, and ALT Connector Study

During the October meeting, Mr. Haramut will request a resolution of support for the safety performance measures; details will be on that agenda.

The draft TIP will be ready for approval in Spring of 2024.

The MPO will be up for certification review in 2025. There was a meeting about prior recommendations with FHWA and CT DOT because we are now at the halfway point. Most items from the 2021 certification have been addressed.

Mr. Haramut is hopeful that a RFP or RFQ will be out in the next few weeks and a consultant will be hired this winter.

The consultant (WSP) for the Thriving Communities grant was met with recently. This grant is to study TOD around our train stations in-region along with a potential bus passenger terminal change in Middletown.

e. Update from Estuary Transit District

Mr. Geraghty stated that there have been service changes with new routes and new schedules. The new website is up. The extra mile program is active again now and there is a new app to go along with it. The final install on the bus tech upgrades are being done now. ETD will be working with RiverCOG on the Thrive grant.

Mr. Comerford reported that the microtransit grant awards have been delayed until April. They are in the middle of their electrification process and will have electric buses by July 2024. They need to make temporary charging capabilities. ETD is working on a new space program for their new Middletown maintenance facility and wrapping up a feasibility study on the new shoreline facility. They will soon go to public comment for expansion of night and Sunday service in Middletown.

4. LCRVCOG Business

a. Letter of Support for Old Lyme Land Trust OSWA Grant, Eklund Property (motion)

Mr. Griswold moved to approve the letter of support for the Old Lyme Land Trust for the acquisition of the 43 plus acre Eklund property, located at 188 Four Mile River Rd..

Second by Mr. Kilduff. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Discussion: Ms. Burns thanked everyone for their support and stated that this is an important corridor that has been worked on for a while. This is a good acquisition.

b. HDU PRO Housing Grant Application Opportunity Endorsement (motion)

Mr. Lahm moved to endorse the grant application for the HUD PRO Housing grant.

Second by Mr. McGarry. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Discussion: There is no match for this grant.

c. Bylaw Amendment – Economic Development District

This bylaw amendment is required to be submitted to EDA to create the EDD. The bylaw amendment requires two readings, so this will be on the October meeting agenda as well. In addition to the bylaw amendment, we are asked to sign a resolution that requests EDD designation for the region from the state. This will allow us to continue with the application to EDA.

Ms. Haines moved to approve the resolution to support the pursuit of Economic Development District status for the region. Second by Mr. McGarry. Vote was unanimously approved.

d. Regional Services Grant – Discussion on Possible Regional Services

This item was skipped

e. RWA Grant Status and MIRA Dissolution

Mr. Fortuna is sitting on the MIRA dissolution board. Mr. Gold and Ms. Ehle/Meyer met with CT DEEP about the RWA grant. They floated to the COGs that they could share a consultant. Mr. Gold stated that the COGs seemed open to it, but have questions. If the COGs do not agree to work jointly, DEEP will pick grant winners and losers.

f. Household Hazardous Waste Update

There are one HHW collection and one shredding event left for the season. Next year we would like to not use the old facility in Essex because of traffic issues. We would prefer to use the school in Deep River, but we have been denied. Angus will ask the Superintendent if they can talk about it.

g. Regional Agriculture Council Update

The no-till grant ends at the end of October. The plan is to continue the program through CT RC&D with their grant to develop equipment hubs.

Mr. McGarry moved to continue with the no-till equipment program; second by Ms. Haines. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Ms. Ehle/Meyer mentioned working with Healthy PlanEat and that a plan is being created for farmers to be able to sell surplus or ugly products, called Second Helping.

h. Lower CT River Land Trust Update

The project that East Haddam Land Trust was doing with their stewardship grant has been completed. The Town of Essex still needs to do theirs, which is removing a hazardous tree on a trail. There have been responses to the letter about LCRLT taking on conservation easements, Westbrook Land Trust may be interested in taking next steps. A hard copy of this letter will be sent to towns' applicable land use commissions to make them aware of the possibility. The LCRLT is also sending a letter of support regarding OLLT's OSWA grant application.

i. Aquatic Invasive Species Program Update

The water chestnut program is in good stead. Areas were cleared at Salmon Cove, Chester Creek, Deep River, Safe Harbor Marina, North Cove in Essex, Whalebone Cove, Pecauset Pond in Middletown, and by Portland Boat Works, who was helpful in disposal. Next year the program area will be the Mattabesset in Cromwell/Middletown.

The hydrilla dye study is done, reports for environmental impact assessment are being worked on now.

Ms. Ehle/Meyer stated at this time that we are looking to apply for a grant with Middletown to Rockfall Foundation for information program for recycling and repair cafes for the region.

j. DEMHS Update

Nicole Velardi reported that Bill Richards resigned as the REPT Chair. Scott Sisson is now the Chair and Mike Shove the Vice Chair. She mentioned that school hazard plans

are due December 1. Awards for the school security grant programs are going out today. There will be a hybrid REPT meeting on Nov. 17 and a field day on Oct. 11 at the Westville Music Bowl from 10:00 – 2:00.

Ms. Beckman reported that she is still collecting FY22 grant MOAs and resolutions and needs them from Chester, Durham, Killingworth, and Middlefield.

6. Chairman's and Executive Director's Reports

Mr. Gold reported that spending is within the budget for the fiscal year. As of Aug. 31 the STIF account holds \$1,023,621 and the checking account \$120,705. Chairman Salvatore complimented COG staff on a good job with the meeting.

7. Other Business

There has been no development on the proposed MPO consolidation study. The deadline for it was the end of the year. There has been no response to our letter asking to participate in the steering committee.

Mr. Lahm asked about the requirements for training for land use boards. Ms. LoPresti will resend information about training opportunities.

8. Adjournment

Ms. Haines moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 am; second by Mr. McGarry. Vote was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti