



# 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 REGULAR MEETING

October 25, 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 \* (10:05)  
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 \*  
Portland: Ryan Curley \*  
Westbrook: John Hall \*

#### MPO Members:

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

\*present

#### Others Present:

Grayson Wright, CT DOT  
Julia McGrath, Congressman Courtney's Office  
TJ Magnoli, Eversource  
Nicole Velardi, DEMHS  
Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office  
Denise Merrill & Sheldyn Oliver, America250 CT Commission  
Rep. Christine Palm  
Carol Conklin, Regional Election Advisor  
Kathryn Russell, Deep River  
Beth Sabilia, CHEO

#### Staff Present:

Sam Gold, Eliza LoPresti, Robert Haramut, Kevin Armstrong, Susie Beckman, Margot Burns,  
Brendan Geraghty

# RiverCOG

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

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

2. **Public Speaking**

**Chairman Salvatore** thanked the CEOs who were attending their last meeting: Charlene Janecek of Chester, Angus McDonald of Deep River, and Tim Griswold of Old Lyme have elected not to run for re-election.

**Carol Conklin, Regional Election Advisor**, mentioned that with the upcoming election, the state has been conducting monthly calls with registrars and town clerks to keep them updated on upgrades to the voter database. There was a pre-election meeting recently held and she is checking in with all the towns.

**Representative Christine Palm** gave a public thank you to the poll workers and registrars who have pivoted during this time.

**Julia McGrath of Congressman Courtney's Office** stated that since there is no speaker of the house, she doesn't have much of an update. They are still looking toward a potential shutdown in November. Matthew Reich is the new district scheduler in the office.

3. **Presentations**

a. **America 250, CT Commission - Denise Merrill**

Ms. Merrill gave a presentation on the commission, formed to commemorate the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The celebration will be 7/04/2026. She hopes that the municipalities will consider putting together a committee or use existing committees, like a historical society, to come up with creative ideas. The website for the project is [www.ct250.org](http://www.ct250.org). Ms. Merrill's presentation can be found [here](#).

4. **LCRVMPO Business**

a. **Approval of Minutes of September 27, 2023 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Regular Meeting**

*Mr. Cox moved to approve the minutes of the September 27, 2023 regular meeting; second by Mr. McGarry. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

b. **Annual Endorsement of Safety Performance Measure Targets**

*Mr. Hall moved to endorse the safety performance measure targets; seconded by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimously approved.*

c. **Other Transportation Updates (ALT-FCT Connector Update, Carbon Reduction Strategy, Vulnerable Road User Assessment, TCP, etc.)**

Mr. Haramut reported that VHB is the consultant for the ALT-FCT study; an initial kick off meeting was held with the advisory committee. They will all be going on a tour of the connector shortly. The bond commission approved \$2 million construction costs for the trail that will come from the project. This could possibly be leveraged to get another \$10 million from the federal government through the RAISE grant.

**d. Update from Estuary Transit District**

Mr. Geraghty stated that the new service changes and the new via app for xtramile were launched and are running well. They are now soliciting rider feedback. Mr. Geraghty then lost his connection to the meeting and Mr. Gold reported on the proposed Shoreline East cuts. There is a potential of ETD filling in the gaps. Cuts to Shoreline East will put the state in an awkward position with all the talk to TOD near rail stations.

Rep. Christne Palm reported that she and some of her colleagues met with the Governor and pushed back hard on the cuts. She believes it will come up again this session. She would like any kind of resources that she could share and perhaps a summary of findings from that meeting. Mr. Gold will send his testimony to her.

**4. LCRVCOG Business**

**a. HUD PRO Housing Grant Application Leverage Resolution (motion)**

*Mr. Cox approved the leverage resolution for the HUD PRO Housing grant application. Second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimously approved.*

**b. Bylaw Amendment – Economic Development District (motion)**

*Mr. Cox moved to approve the bylaw amendment for the Economic Development District. Second by Mr. Fortuna. Vote was unanimously approved.*

**c. DEMHS Resolution (motion)**

Ms. Velardi from DEMHS gave an update that the 2023 EPG application has been sent out. She thanked everyone who came out to the field day on Oct. 11. The next REPT meeting will be held on Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>.

*Mr. Cox moved to approve the authorizing resolution for RiverCOG to act as the fiduciary to region 2 and. Second by Mr. Fortuna. Vote was unanimously approved.*

**d. Nominating Committee**

If anyone would like to serve on the executive committee or nominating committee please reach out.

*Mr. Cox moved to table the nominating committee item, seconded by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimously approved.*

**e. Legislative Meeting**

The legislative meeting will be held on Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> during the next regular COG meeting. Meeting location was discussed, this is still to be determined. Mr. Gold will circulate last year's legislative agenda for possible changes. Rep. Palm applauded the early legislative meeting this year because this year's session is short with committee bills only, so internal lobbying will have to be done.

**f. Household Hazardous Waste Update**

Mr. Gold reported on Ms. Ehle/Meyer's behalf that the season is done for 2023. Mr. McDonald stated that he had a conversation with the Superintendent for Region 4 schools and that he is still resistant to holding a collection there. He suggested that Ms. Ehle/Meyer have a meeting with him. Chairman Salvatore volunteered for his Superintendent to speak with him as the collections are run safely and successfully at a Cromwell school.

**g. Regional Agriculture Council Update**

The agriculture grant from the state has been spent before its end of the month deadline.

**h. Aquatic Invasive Species Program Update - Budget Years 2024, 2025, 2026**

A request was sent to the Senate committee for WRDA (Water Resource and Development Act) for continued mitigation and eradication efforts for hydrilla in the river; the proposal is to change the act to include the CT River under invasive species partnerships in sect. 104, stating that it's imperative that the Army Corps continue to lead the work after the research project is complete.

Hydrilla was found in Lake Pocotopaug, it has probably been there for up to 3 years. Ms. Burns would like them to talk to Greg Bugbee of the Ag. Station. It may also be in Pameachea Pond in Middletown, but that hasn't been confirmed yet. The Clean, Drain & Dry program needs to be emphasized everywhere, not just state boat launches.

Mr. Gold recognized Rep. Palm for her help in getting the Aquatic Invasive Species bill and program going.

For the Aquatic Invasive Species program, there will be a deficit of under \$1,000 for next year. There was discussion and consensus on funding this locally. It was agreed that members will fund the program at \$100 per town for FY 25. It was also noted that the RiverCOG boat is available to towns in need of it as long as it's not in use for the program.

*Ms. Haines moved that all towns will contribute \$100 in FY25 for the Aquatic Invasive Species program; second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimously approved.*

*Discussion: if any town has need of the boat please contact Ms. Burns. It is being winterized now but can be used next year. It could also be valuable for Gateway's use.*

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

The Town of Essex is waiting on their tree contractor to remove the dead tree at Bushy Hill. This work is to be done with the stewardship grant awarded them by LCRLT.

LCRLT will apply for a grant through the USDA Forest Service to encourage forest management plans.

**j. Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update**

The BRICK grant notice of funding posted, this is the grant that could be used to do the 2026 updates to the NHMPs. Fifteen towns did the update through RiverCOG last time.

Old Saybrook and Westbrook are on different schedules. By consensus, the updates will continue the same as last time.

#### **6. Chairman's and Executive Director's Reports**

Chairman Salvatore urged the towns to send a letter of support for the PRO Housing grant application. He confirmed that the COG would like to continue 2024 meetings in the same way, with quarterly in-person meetings.

Rep. Palm stated that she is preparing a list of environmental concerns for the legislative committee. She would like to have RiverCOG's buy in on this.

Mr. Gold gave the financial report from 9/30/23. We are in the parameters of the budget for this fiscal year. The STIF account holds \$1,143,185 and the checking account has \$708,277 because we received a payment of RSG. The STIF account is returning about 5% in interest.

Candidates for the Regional Planner position are being interviewed now. ACIR is holding a hear in November on the MPO study.

#### **7. Other Business**

The legislative agenda draft will be sent around shortly, there will be a second meeting about document digitization in November as well as a regional veteran's advisory committee.

#### **8. Adjournment**

*Mr. McDonald moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:35 am; second by Mr. Griswold. Vote was unanimously approved.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Eliza LoPresti