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[www.rivercog.org](http://www.rivercog.org)

Chester, Clinton, Cromwell,  
Deep River, Durham, East Haddam,  
East Hampton, Essex, Haddam, Kill-  
ingworth, Lyme, Middlefield, Mid-  
dletown, Old Lyme,  
Old Saybrook, Portland, Westbrook

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## LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL AGRICULTURE COUNCIL

April 20, 2023

### Members:

Chester:  
Clinton: Richard Martin  
Cromwell:  
Deep River Ron Larson  
Durham: Warren Herzig  
East Haddam:  
East Hampton: -----  
Essex: -----  
Haddam: John Halfinger  
Killingworth: Walter Adametz  
Lyme:  
Middlefield:  
Middletown:  
Old Lyme:  
Old Saybrook: Kristy Benson-Amarante  
Portland:  
Westbrook: -----

### Staff:

Janice Ehle/Meyer

### Guests:

Amanda Fargo Johnson

### Meeting

The meeting was a Zoom call and in person at the RiverCOG office.

### 1) Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order by John Halfinger at 7:00. A motion was made by Walter Adametz and seconded by John Halfinger to accept the minutes from the March 16, 2023, meeting. A correction on the spelling of Cecarelli was asked. Motion approved.

## 2) Public Comments/Presentations

- Amanda Fargo Johnson-

A. RC&D was awarded the Climate Smart and Forestry Grant from DoAg which includes giving grants to farmers and starting 4 Conservation Agriculture Equipment Sharing Hubs in CT. One of the hubs is proposed to be the RiverCOG hub with an expansion. The question that Amanda has is: does RAC want to continue managing the existing hub, will RiverCOG continue to pay insurance etc., or will RC&D be taking over the program? The insurance program that exists now is that RiverCOG provides liability insurance and each farmer using the equipment supplies an insurance rider. Amanda said that late fall is when her proposed equipment hubs would be activated.

B. A comment was made that it would be good to have the equipment stay in the lower CT River Valley area, but the existing towns could vary depending on how many RiverCOG farmers want to use the equipment.

C. A suggestion was made to have trailers for each piece of equipment that would make it easy for farmers to pick up the equipment and go. Equipment will stay on a trailer.

D. Amanda recommends that the equipment stay at host farms.

E. John Halfinger said that he can act as the host farm for the equipment in the future too.

F. There was a discussion about trailering the equipment vs. pulling it with a truck. To be legal the equipment must be towed with a trailer unless it stays local, and it can be pulled with a tractor. Having insurance coverage is the issue.

G. There was a discussion about the size of drill that would be ordered for the other hubs.

H. There was a discussion about maintaining ownership of the equipment in RiverCOG vs RC&D. Also, discussed, after the 3-year RC&D program, what is happening with the equipment? Having one agency to have ownership would be best.

I. There was a discussion about changing legislation to pull equipment with a truck and change State Statutes. RAC will think about a champion legislator in the region.

J. Janice will check what the RiverCOG contract says with DoAg says after the October contract runs out.

K. A motion was made by Walter Adametz and seconded by Warren Herzig that pending approval from the DoAg that we transfer the equipment share program at the end of our contract to RC&D.

## 3) RAC Board

RAC Board members needed.

Cromwell

East Haddam – Kristy will contact some farmers

East Hampton – John will contact a farmer

Essex

Lyme

Middlefield

Old Lyme

Westbrook

## 4) Website

- A. A new farmer is going to be featured on the website, Kristy Benson-Amarante.
- B. The numbers for the website are going up and people are staying on longer.

### **5) Farm Viability Grant**

- A. Trailer – is here. The trailer needs to go to John Halfinger’s farm to see how rails would work. Next week is proposed.
- B. The registration and the manual need to be put in the tool box for the trailer. A suggestion was made for a tube and a sleeve for the registration.
- C. Richard Martin will send info for what is required to pull the trailer.

### **6) CEDS Grant - Healthy PlanEat**

Rosemary Ostfeld has contacted many farmers to onboard for the website, there are 3 new farmers and one more hub. Totes and bags have been ordered and Rosemary is working on the website.

### **7) Zoning amendment**

#### **A. Middlefield agriculture**

Questions were: Is there a problem that needs to be addressed? What is an event? Massive amounts of paperwork will need to be generated with this proposal. What is the need for this amendment? Is agriculture vs. non agriculture? What is the motivation behind the change? An event should be the accessory use of a farm. Agriculture events should be permitted by right. What is the cause for this change? If not enough information, can ask for a hearing to be tabled and not be closed and to get more information.

#### **B. Farm and Tack Store regulations – Durham -**

Warren explained the situation for the regulation. Having farm stores open all year is a problem. A farm stand requires all products sold, must be grown on the farm. The RAC supports the Durham Agriculture Commission on this matter.

**C. Johana Hanes** is asking to have a support letter to hold a hearing for Congress for Farm Bill Reauthorization. This issue concerns nutrition and SNAP and does not concern RAC’s agriculture issues. RAC is nonpolitical.

### **8) Old Business –**

A. Contact Heather Milardo from the Senior Estuary Center to ask her to join the next meeting to see if there are things that the RAC can do to help with the commercial kitchen proposal.

B. Ron Larson went to the Haddam extension center and asked if they do saturation rates with their soil tests. Ron was connected to UConn and they said that they do not do saturation rates either. AgriTech will do soil tests and calculate saturation rates.

**9) New Business –**

A. Warren Herzig talked about the farmers market master from Durham is now going to have a farmers market in Guilford. The Durham farmers market will continue at the Korn School and not be at the town green.

B. Kristy Benson- Amarante said that the Haddam farmers market will move from Friday evenings to Saturday mornings. Kristy is looking to get more vendors.

C. Warren Herzig said that Greenbacker's farm in Durham has been divided into two parcels for sale.

**10) Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:30.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, May 18, 2023, at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Janice Ehle/Meyer