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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

September 21, 2023

**Members:**

Chester:  
Clinton: Richard Martin  
Cromwell:  
Deep River  
Durham:  
East Haddam:  
East Hampton: -----  
Essex: -----  
Haddam: John Halfinger  
Killingworth: Walter Adametz  
Lyme:  
Middlefield:  
Middletown:  
Old Lyme:  
Old Saybrook:  
Portland:  
Westbrook: -----

**Staff:**

Janice EhleMeyer

**Guests:**

Amanda Fargo Johnson, RC&D  
Jocelyn Lahey, RC&D

**Meeting**

The meeting was a Zoom call and in person.

**1) Approval of Minutes**

The meeting started at 7:10 by John Halfinger. The meeting was an informational meeting only because a quorum was not met. No voting took place.

## **2) Public Comments/Presentations**

A. Amanda Fargo Johnson introduced Jocelyn Lahey as the new Executive Director for RC&D.

B. Amanda explained they received a Climate Smart Agriculture Grant from DoAg. The first is to provide subgrants to farmers and the second is to do Climate Smart Resilient equipment sharing hubs. This would involve setting up 3 new hubs and adopting our existing equipment hub. The organizing of the equipment hubs will be happening in the next month.

C. Amanda is setting up a group conversation to include all pertinent parties as to what is happening and to ask what steps need to be taken.

D. There was a conversation about the area that the hub would cover. Comments were that the equipment is to be used, so if there is interest from farmers in other towns that want to be included great but, also include all 17 towns in the RiverCOG region.

## **3) RAC Board Members needed**

Cromwell  
East Haddam  
East Hampton  
Essex  
Lyme  
Middlefield  
Old Lyme  
Westbrook

Janice said that she had contacted farmers from the Healthy PlanEat site and didn't get any responses.

## **4) Website**

Janice looked at the traffic for the last 30 days for the website. The site sessions were up 388% from last month, unique visitors up 238% and page views were up 68%!!!

## **5) Farm Viability Grant**

A. Richard said that the trailer is still with no sides. Richard has a plan to drill the sides. Rentals of magnetic drills are available.

B. Janice said that there are about \$500 remaining in the grant for equipment. Can Kenny be paid to do the drilling? Richard will check.

C. A suggestion was made for an air-tag for the trailer.

D. If there is additional equipment that might need?

E. There was a conversation to get a small trailer for the transplanter.

## **6) CEDS grant – Healthy PlanEat**

A. Janice reported that the grant is winding down.

B. RiverCOG was thinking about a program “Second Helping” to organize for farmers to sell products that are seconds. There might be something with Healthy PlanEat to have social service etc access to this.

C. A comment was that only soup kitchens etc. have access to these products and not to regular retailers.

## **7) Durham agriculture zoning amendments updates**

### **East Haddam zoning changes.**

A. The amendment looks very thorough.

B. The RAC will still take some time to respond.

## **8) Old Business –**

A. The final report for the DoAg grant needs to be written up.

1. Survey

2. Field Days

3. Research and pricing

4. Endless meetings

5. Emails to farmers

6. Met with land trusts

7. January 26, 2022 talked with DOT about the issues of pulling equipment on roads.

8. Met with Farmland Trust

9. Talked with NOFA

10. Did mapping to locate possible parcels to farm.

11. Went to Ciccarelli Demo Day and talked about our equipment.

12. Incorporated info on RAC website

13. Talked about liquid lime.

Goals or outcome Achieved

1. Not met. Economy with COVID was a problem.

2. Short duration of program, not enough time to measure.

3. Farms are not doing it to feed their families. It is a lifestyle to farm.

What was the outcome of the project

1. Education to explain program with Demo Days went well. Other groups (not farmers) were looking at the equipment share project.

2. Equipment share program possibilities worked well. Inspired other groups.

3. 100% cover crop at Halfinger Farms. Totally committed to program. Could not plant the crops that are planting now without the cover crops. Used to do a lot of mowing and now don't mow at all.
4. The outcome was achieved but on a small scale.
5. The outside interest from other groups was unexpected. Had interest outside of the region, information is getting out.
6. There is a lot of interest, stepping stones to progress. Sparked a lot of interest.
7. Introducing something new will take time to change.
8. Short time frame and change takes time for farmers to change. Had one season for farmers to use equipment. Will be working with RC&D to keep program going.
9. Only one season to measure results.
10. Unexpected outcome -other people interested in doing a project like ours.
11. Issues – the weather. Multi species cover crops, wide variety because never know what the weather is – biodiversity.
12. It will take a few years with cover crops to realize the benefits. Recommend at least a 3 to 4 year program.
13. Seeds are expensive diverse types of farms with small acreage and not all farmable.

**9) New Business –**

No new business.

**10) Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:30.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, **October 19, 2023**, at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Janice Ehle/Meyer