



# Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

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## Regional Planning Committee

### LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

#### MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Monday, January 22, 2024 – 7:00 pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting

#### Members:

Chester	Carlie Dailey *
Clinton	Alan Kravitz Martin Jaffe
Cromwell	Nick Demetriades * Anthony LaCava
Deep River	Tony Bolduc *
Durham	Frank DeFelice *
East Haddam	Crary Brownell Debbie Langdon
East Hampton	Michael Kowalczyk *
Essex	Carey Duques
Haddam	Raul deBrigard *
Killingworth	Alec Martin * Stephanie Warren *
Lyme	Mary Stone * David Lahm
Middlefield	Paul Pizzo
Middletown	Beth Emery * Nathaniel Spencer
Old Lyme	Harold Thompson *
Old Saybrook	Douglas McCracken * Michael Bender *
Portland	Chantal Foster Bob Ellsworth
Westbrook	Bill Neale * Marie Farrell

\*Members Present

#### Staff Present:

Sam Gold	Susie Beckman
Eliza LoPresti	Marcos Gonzalez
Kevin Armstrong	
Megan Jouflas	

#### Others Present:

Catherine Johnson, Middletown

# RiverRPC

## 1. Call to Order

Chairman DeFelice called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. The meeting was conducted via Zoom.

## 2. Roll Call - Eliza LoPresti called the roll.

## 3. Seating of Alternates – no alternates were seated.

## 4. Adoption of Agenda

*Mr. Neal moved to adopt the agenda; second by Ms. Emery. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

## 5. Public Comment

Catherine Johnson, Middletown, stated that she knows a Middletown resident who lives in Luther Ridge that has a problem with a bus route change; it now takes her four hours round trip to get to Rocky Hill to see her husband in the veteran's home. She stated there was a meeting with RiverCOG held at Luther Ridge (it was actually with River Valley Transit) in which the residents were told to use the app, but this person cannot do that. Additionally, because Cromwell doesn't participate in dial a ride, Middletown residents that have doctors in Cromwell cannot get there by bus. Mr. Gold stated we will give her Brendan Geraghty's information, as he is the planner at River Valley Transit.

## 6. Approval of the Minutes of Past Meetings

*Mr. Neale moved to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2023 meeting; second by Mr. McCracken. Vote was unanimous in favor with Ms. Dailey and Ms. Emery abstaining.*

## 7. Election of Officers

*Mr. DeFelice nominated Eliza LoPresti as temporary secretary; second by Ms. Stone. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

*Mr. Neale moved to approve the slate of officer for 2024: Frank DeFelice as Chairman, Raul deBrigard as Vice Chairman, and Mary Stone as Secretary. Second by Ms. Emery. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

## 8. Referrals – None

## 9. Miscellaneous: State, Regional and/or Local Planning Issues

Mr. Gold reported that the legislature will most likely focus on housing this session. He and Mr. DeFelice will attend a meeting of the CT Bar Association and CT chapter of the American Planning Association this week about ZBA use and variances. He also ran through the COG's legislative priorities; the adopted legislative agenda will be forwarded to the RPC.

Ms. Jouflas reported that the planning process for the Thriving Communities grant will kick off in February. This is a technical support grant in which we'll be studying transportation-oriented development.

The Climate Pollution Reduction Grant is underway. RiverCOG is a subcontractor to Capitol Region COG on this plan. A draft of the priority climate action plan will be released for public comment shortly and public meeting dates will be sent out as well.

Mr. Armstrong is trying to pull together census information for the data dashboard and display it so it is usable.

At this time there was discussion on ZBAs, their training, variances, and possible legislation regulating both. It was suggested that ZBAs receive training in reading POCDs and to have a better understanding of P&Z boards. There was discussion on the mandate for ZEO qualifications and the fact that the training required is hard to find and not necessarily supported by the state. Locally, many ZEOs are retiring and there are not replacement staff.

There was discussion on rail in the region, with Mr. Neale noting that Shoreline East doesn't have the marketing campaign that others do; this might help boost ridership. They should also be talking with EB and the businesses in New London to push the pre-tax benefit or train tickets.

## **10. Adjournment**

*Ms. Emery moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 pm; second by Mr. Bolduc. Vote was unanimous in favor.*