



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

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

May 29, 2024 – 1:00 pm

RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Cindy Lignar *
Clinton: Abby Piersall *
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore *
Deep River: Carol Doak-Jones
Durham: Brendan Rea
East Haddam: Irene Haines *
East Hampton: David Cox *
Essex: Carey Duques *
Haddam: Bob McGarry *
Killingworth: Eric Couture *
Lyme: David Lahm *
Middlefield: Jim Irish *
Middletown: Ben Florsheim *
Old Lyme: Martha Shoemaker
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:

Julia McGrath, Congressman Courtney's Office
Carol Conklin, Regional Election Advisor
Kathryn Russell, Deep River
Laurie McElwee, The Kennedy Collective
Nicole Velardi, DEMHS
Senator Martha Marx
Grayson Wright, CT DOT
April Florez, Dylan Wetherald & Zaheer Master, AIS

Staff Present: Sam Gold, Robert Haramut, Kevin Armstrong, Susie Beckman, Margot Burns, Megan Joufflas, Janice Ehle/Meyer, Marcos Gonzalez, Brendan Geraghty

RiverCOG

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Introductions

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M. The meeting was conducted via Zoom.

2. Public Speaking

Julia McGrath of Congressman Courtney’s office stated that the FY25 community funding process has been wrapped up. There is still no update on the COG’s PRO Housing application. The deadline is coming up for the active infrastructure investment program on June 17; this is for planning and design costs for transportation development, with an alternate form focus. The US DOT is running a pilot program for transit-oriented development (TOD) planning; the application is due July 22.

Laurie McElwee stated that the East Hampton Xtra Mile program was rolled out recently. She is going to all towns to check in with Senior Centers and Farmers Markets and would like to keep everyone connected.

Carol Conklin, Regional Election Advisor, stated that at least 5 registrars from our region will be leaving, new people will be on the November ballot. If there are problems recruiting for this position please reach out to her for aid. More funding has been allocated for towns for early voting, it has not yet been determined how it will be spread amongst towns. The state voter database has been in the process of an upgrade, they have decided to postpone the roll out until after the November election. New voting equipment is still in the purchase order stage. Chairman Salvatore asked about early polling locations and if they need to be approved each time by a towns’ legislative body; Ms. Conklin confirmed this is accurate. He has concerns about timing of that approval and sending it into the state. She recommended emailing concerns on this to the state.

3. Presentation – Laserfiche for Document Digitization Projects

Dylan Wetherald of AIS gave a presentation on Laserfiche and how it can be used for the towns.

4. LCRVMPO Business

a. Approval of Minutes of April 24, 2024 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Regular Meeting

Mr. Cox moved to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2024 regular meeting; second by Mr. Couture. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. FY 21 TIP Amendment 36

- i. Dist 2, 0172-0513, STPA, X7, Replace traffic control signals at various locations, CON, 2024, \$4,500,000, 80/0/20, New phase

Ms. Lignar moved to approve TIP Amendment 36, section i.; second by Mr. Curley. Vote was unanimously approved

- ii. ETD, 0478-XXXX, 5311P, X6, Estuary TD – Sec 5311 Transit on call operating FY23, OTH, 2024, \$1,668,000 50/33/17, Move from FY23 5311O TO FY24 5311P. Increase estimate from fed \$41K
- iii. Various, 0170-XXXX, 5311P, X6, Sec 5311 Prog adjust to actual appr., admin and RTAP FY 23, OTH, \$824,000 100/0/0, Move from FY23 5311T To FY24 5311P. Increase estimate from fed \$500K

- iv. ETD, 0478-XXXX, 5311P, X6, Estuary TD - Sec 5311 Capital FY23, OTH 2024, \$380,000, Move from FY23 5311C to FY24 5311P. Increase estimate from fed \$80K

*Mr. Couture moved to approve TIP Amendment 36, sections ii, iii & ix.; second by Mr. Hall..
Vote was unanimously approved.*

c. FTA Section 5310 Traditional/Non-Traditional Priority List New Haven UZA

Mr. Cox moved to approve the FTA Section 5310 Traditional/Non-Traditional Priority List New Haven UZA, second by Ms. Lignar. Vote was unanimously approved.

d. FTA Section 5310 Traditional/Non-Traditional Priority List Hartford UZA

Mr. Cox moved to approve the FTA Section 5310 Traditional/Non-Traditional Priority List Hartford UZA, seconded by Mr. Couture. Vote was unanimously approved with Chairman Salvatore abstaining.

e. Transportation Alternatives Program Priority List New Haven UZA

Mr. Cox moved to approve the TAP Priority List, New Haven UZA, seconded by Mr. Lahm. Vote was unanimously approved.

f. Transportation Alternatives Program Priority List Hartford UZA

There were no applications for this program under the Hartford UZA.

g. Other Transportation – Active Transportation Micro Grants, Municipal Grant Program (MGP)

Checks were sent to those that submitted applications under the active transportation micro grant program. The second quarter of applications will open at the end of June; one application has been received so far. The MGP applications that came through our office have both been submitted to CT DOT.

The kickoff meeting for the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) plan occurred last week with the consultants, FHI Studio. The advisory committee is now being built, Mr. Haramut will send out information to the MPO board to see if anyone or a designee would like to serve on it.

h. Update From Estuary Transit District

Mr. Geraghty reported that the launch of new Xtra Mile zones occurred yesterday; overall it went well. The park connect seasonal service, which is free to Hammonasset and a service expansion of hours and days were also launched in Middletown yesterday. They are also working on bus shelters, prioritizing Middletown and the northern part of the region.

i. New Transportation Planning Project Solicitation

There is about \$200,000 in the transportation planning program for a special study or project. Mr. Gold is wondering about needs that member towns may have. Please contact him or Mr. Haramut to discuss.

5. LCRVCOG Business

a. RiverCOG Draft FY 25 Budget (motion)

Mr. Gold reviewed the draft budget with the group.

Mr. Fortuna moved to approve the FY 25 RiverCOG budget; seconded by Ms. Haines. Vote was unanimously approved.

b. Authorization to Enter Into Agreement with OPM for RSG FY25 (motion)

Ms. Haines moved to authorize the Executive Director to enter into agreement for the RSG program for FY 25 in the amount of \$550,146; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimously approved.

c. RiverCOG Office Lease (motion)

Mr. Cox moved to approve Chairman Salvatore to sign the office lease; second by Ms. Haines. Vote was unanimously approved.

d. Regional Waste Authority

Mr. Gold reported that he and Ms. Ehle/Meyer met with Mr. Needleman and Mr. Fortuna about the forthcoming grant. Mr. Needleman has questions that he would like clarified with DEEP and MIRA before we proceed. Chairman Salvatore suggested a sub-committee, Ms. Ehle/Meyer and Mr. Fortuna agreed that this will be beneficial in the future.

Mr. Fortuna reported that MIRA Dissolution Authority would, in theory, have funding for the MIRA towns to stay together and have tip fee stabilization through FY26, pending legislation. The MDA board won't vote on tip fee stabilization, they are focused on remediation now.

e. Household Hazardous Waste Update

Two collections have occurred so far with good participation. The interlocal agreement is awaiting one last town to sign, once that happens she will send out a copy to everyone.

f. Regional Agriculture Council Update

The no-till equipment is now in the hands of CT RC&D. A few farmers in our region are using it and they are hoping for more participation. RC&D signed a gift contract to receive the equipment; the agreement came up at a past COG meeting in which it was

approved. At the end of RC&D's commitment of 3 years, RiverCOG will be involved in decision-making about the equipment.

g. Shoreline Soup Kitchen and Pantry Update

The meals and pantries are moving inside again to accommodate sit-down dinners again after COVID.

h. Aquatic Invasive Species Program Update

Sen. Blumenthal & Sen. Murphys's offices were worked with on getting the Connecticut River included in Sec 104 of the Water Resource Redevelopment Act (WRDA) as an invasive species partnership with the Army Corps. The letter for the Army Corps to continue its hydrilla work for the next fiscal year is ready to be submitted to the senate and has been signed by the New England Senators. An informational meeting was held with Army Corps for the region's marina owners and the first public information meeting for the summer pilot project will be taking place tonight at Goodwin University. There will be other meetings at Middletown City Hall on June 4 and at East Haddam Town Hall on June 27. Site applications will take place in July.

The boat is in and work on water chestnut abatement will be begin next week with our seasonal staff and river partners.

i. Lower CT River Land Trust Update

The Friends of Gillette submitted a proposal to DEEP for the Osaki House Environmental Center. The land trust received a draft fiscal agent agreement, which they will review. The summer meeting will be held on August 15th with dinner at 5:30 and a presentation at 6:00 by Hank Gruner, a herpetologist that will speak about stewardship of vernal pools.

j. DEMHS Update

Almost all MOAs have been received; if yours hasn't been turned in please do that.

DEMHS will be holding the emergency preparedness exercise on June 12; this will be an election security-based exercise. They will be participating in a hostile action exercise with Millstone on June 4. The May REPT meeting was well-attended and a lot of things were accomplished. The by-law update is drafted and awaiting comments from key people in DEMHS. The next REPT meeting will be in August. The 2020 EMPG reimbursements are due to their office by Friday, May 31.

There was a reminder to get your debris management locations submitted to DEEP ahead of hurricane season.

6. Chairman's & Executive Director's Reports

- a. **Update on Legislation:** Mr. Gold discussed a section of HB 5474 that allows the COG or multiple municipalities working together to make appointments to share staff. This language supersedes other language prohibiting these joint appointments. There are multiple ways this could work, including shared staff being COG employees. If you have suggestions on this, please give them to Mr. Gold. There is also possibility of towns doing updated POCDs and other types of plans together.

Chairman Salvatore stated that Mr. Gold put a lot of work into the lease agreement and we will be paying less than when RiverCOG moved to the current office. Mr. Gold thanked staff for the group effort in looking at alternative properties. Other than buying our own office space, this is the best solution.

Mr. Gold will be working on his self-evaluation and the Executive Committee will be giving him a review in June; if there are any comments please get them to Chairman Salvatore.

Next month's meeting will be in person at Gillette Castle state park in East Haddam and we will start earlier at 8:45 am. The meeting will be followed by a tour of the Osaki House.

7. **Other Business**

Mr. Couture asked Mr. Wright (CT DOT) if he knew when the Rt. 148 paving project would be taking place. Mr. Wright will find the answer.

The council formally congratulated Ms. LoPresti on obtaining her master's degree.

8. **Adjournment**

Ms. Haines moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:35 pm. Seconded by Mr. Couture; vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti