



# Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

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## Regional Planning Committee

### LOWER Connecticut River VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Monday, February 24, 2025

7:00 p.m.

#### Members:

Chester Carlie Dailey \*  
Clinton Lawrence Edwards \*  
Eddie Alberino \*  
Cromwell Nick Demetriades  
Anthony LaCava  
Deep River Daniel Smith \*  
Durham Frank DeFelice \*  
East Haddam Crary Brownell  
Debbie Langdon  
East Hampton Michael Kowalczyk \*  
Essex Carey Duques \*  
Thomas Pinkowish  
Haddam Raul deBrigard \*  
Killingworth Alec Martin \*  
Stephanie Warren \*  
Lyme Mary Stone \*  
Middlefield Paul Pizzo \*  
Middletown Beth Emery \*  
Nathaniel Spencer  
Old Lyme Harold Thompson \*  
Howard Margules \*  
Old Saybrook Douglas McCracken  
Michael Bender \*  
Portland Chantal Foster  
Bob Ellsworth  
Westbrook Bill Neale \*  
Marie Farrell

\*Members Present

#### Staff Present:

Sam Gold  
Susie Beckman  
Megan Jouflas  
Elizabeth Rolison  
Brendan Geraghty  
Robert Haramut  
Kevin Armstrong  
Marcos Gonzalez

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## 1. Call to Order

Chairman DeFelice called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The meeting was conducted via Zoom.

## 2. Roll Call – Elizabeth Rolison called the roll call.

## 3. Seating of Alternates

Alice Kelly (Cromwell), Stephanie Warren (Killingworth), and Michael Bender (Old Saybrook)

## 4. Adoption of Agenda

*Mr. deBrigard moved to adopt the agenda; seconded by Mr. Pizzo. The vote was unanimous in favor.*

## 5. Public Comment

None

## 6. Approval of Minutes of Past Meetings

*Mr. Neale moved to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2025, meeting; seconded by Mr. Thompson. The vote was unanimous in favor.*

## 7. State Parcel and CAMA Improvement Grant

Kevin Armstrong (RiverCOG, GIS Planner) presented on the State Parcel and Computer-Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) Improvement Grant. He provided a detailed breakdown of the project's scope, objectives, and funding distribution, explaining how it would impact municipalities within the RiverCOG region.

Mr. Armstrong began by explaining the fundamental purpose of CAMA which is a software-driven approach to property valuation and tax assessment. CAMA systems are used by municipal tax assessors to maintain a structured database of all taxable properties, ensuring accurate assessments for tax purposes.

He emphasized that CAMA systems play a critical role in municipal finance, as property taxes are the primary revenue source for most towns and cities. However, discrepancies arise when CAMA data does not align with GIS parcel mapping, leading to inaccuracies in land records.

Mr. Armstrong explained that each property in a town's tax database should have a corresponding parcel in the GIS system. However, due to data mismatches, missing records, or outdated mapping practices, these connections are often incomplete or inaccurate.

The primary objective of the grant is to enhance the accuracy and completeness of property data by addressing inconsistencies between CAMA records and GIS parcel mapping. The state has allocated \$2,044,900 in grant funding, with \$205,700 designated for the RiverCOG region, to address these issues and improve data quality. Mr. Armstrong outlined the 3 objectives:

1. Improving CAMA-to-Parcel Data Alignment
2. Enhancing Parcel-to-CAMA Data Consistency
3. Standardizing Geometric Accuracy of Parcel Boundaries

Mr. Armstrong also elaborated on the specific challenges that Connecticut towns face in maintaining accurate property data. These challenges include:

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### 1. Multi-Unit Property Issues

Many towns struggle with condominiums, apartment complexes, and mixed-use buildings, which often have multiple CAMA entries but only one GIS parcel. The state is considering a “stacked parcels” approach which is creating multiple overlaid parcels within the same geographic footprint and “carved-out sub-parcels” method which involves subdividing properties into non-physical digital units for accurate tax assessments.

### 2. Inconsistent Parcel Data Across Municipalities

Different towns have historically used different GIS vendors and mapping standards, leading to variations in accuracy and formatting. The grant will help standardize property data formatting, making it easier to integrate local records into a unified statewide GIS system.

### 3. Missing or Incorrect Records

Some towns have CAMA entries that do not correspond to any GIS parcel, often due to data entry errors, incomplete records, or outdated parcel boundaries.

Mr. Armstrong explained that funding would be allocated based on need, prioritizing towns that fail to meet the state’s 98% accuracy threshold for parcel matching. Towns with the greatest data alignment issues include Middletown, Killingworth, East Hampton, Haddam, and Durham (CAMA-to-Parcel Matching Issues) and Middletown, Killingworth, East Hampton, Haddam, and Durham (CAMA-to-Parcel Matching Issues).

He reassured committee members that every town in the region will benefit from the grant, but funding will first be targeted toward municipalities requiring the most immediate corrections.

### **Timeline**

- Early 2025: Finalization of project scope and coordination with towns.
- Mid-2025: Consultant engagement and data collection begins.
- Late 2025 - 2026: Data corrections implemented in priority municipalities.
- December 2026: Completion of project and public launch of the statewide GIS parcel database.

Chairman DeFelice thanked Mr. Armstrong for his thorough presentation. He reiterated that this grant represents a major step toward modernizing Connecticut’s land records system and ensuring that municipalities have the most accurate and up-to-date property data possible.

Committee members agreed that this project would provide long-term benefits for tax assessment accuracy, land use planning, and public transparency.

## **8. Document Digitization Update**

Mr. Armstrong provided an update on RiverCOG’s regional document digitization initiative, aimed at digitizing municipal records for improved accessibility and preservation.

RiverCOG had initiated this effort in April 2023, selecting Scan Optics, LLC as the vendor after an RFP process. The project aims to digitize municipal records to both preserve aging paper records and improve accessibility for town staff and the public.

However, Mr. Armstrong acknowledged a major challenge: cost constraints. Even at a fraction of a cent per page, the sheer volume of municipal records makes comprehensive digitization prohibitively expensive for many towns.

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Committee members expressed interest in the project but recognized the financial burden. Some members highlighted that digitized land records would improve open space management, enabling towns to easily track conservation lands and other protected areas.

Mr. Armstrong agreed, stating that while public access to digital records remains a long-term goal, additional funding sources will be necessary to expand the program.

## 9. Referrals

To view current referrals: <https://www.rivercog.org/regionalservices/referrals/>

## 10. 2025 Legislation

Mr. Gold encouraged members to stay updated on state and regional legislation by reviewing the 2025 [Bill Tracker Spreadsheet](#), which provides insights into proposed laws affecting municipal planning. He encouraged members to attend upcoming legislative hearings and to monitor updates from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) and the Connecticut Association of Councils of Government (CTCOG) for additional legislative insights and to advocate for or against specific legislation by coordinating with local officials and stakeholders.

Mr. Gold highlighted several key legislative initiatives currently under consideration by the Connecticut General Assembly. These bills pertain to housing, land use regulations, environmental protections, transportation infrastructure, and municipal funding.

Some of the key legislative topics discussed were Statewide Zoning and Affordable Housing Initiatives, Municipal Infrastructure and Transportation Funding, Environmental and Climate Resilience Measures, Property Tax Reform and Municipal Revenue Adjustments and Digital Governance and Open Records Access.

[View Bill Tracker Spreadsheet Here](#)

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

Ms. Stone (Lyme) provided an update on the ongoing development of the 2025 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for her town. The process, which began in early 2024, has involved extensive public outreach, including a townwide survey that saw a significantly higher participation rate than the previous plan—20% to approximately 50% of registered voters. Efforts have been made to ensure data integrity by filtering out illegitimate responses. Unlike previous iterations, this POCD has garnered heightened public interest, largely due to leadership in their Affordable Housing Commission. Consequently, the process has become politically sensitive. A bipartisan writing committee of four members—two Democrats and two Republicans—has been formed and is working collaboratively. Each chapter will be reviewed by the full Planning & Zoning Commission, and Ms. Stone assured the group that she would provide further updates as the process advances, with a target completion within 2025.

Ms. Duques (Essex) shared that Essex has successfully completed its document digitization project using Scan Optics, a Connecticut-based vendor utilizing Laserfiche software. The transition to digital records has significantly streamlined administrative processes, allowing staff to efficiently manage and share information with the public. Carey emphasized that, despite the time investment required, the project has been highly beneficial.

Ms. Kelly (Cromwell) reported on the town's zoning regulation updates, noting that they are incorporating provisions for renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. Additionally, Cromwell will be doing their subdivision regularly and had successfully passed its POCD last year. She credited the town's strong team for these achievements.

Paul Pizzo (Middlefield) updated the group on Middlefield's ongoing efforts to construct a new public safety complex. After four years of planning, the town now has a finalized design, selected contractor, and an estimated cost of approximately \$15 million for the 26,000 square foot building that will service them for the next 40 years. Financial support has been secured from Rosa DeLauro's office, and additional state funding opportunities are being explored. The town plans to seek bond authorization from the community in April. The new facility, located on the same site as the previous town hall, will provide essential infrastructure improvements, including 10 new bays for emergency vehicles, alleviating longstanding space constraints. Mr. Pizzo acknowledged that gaining public approval for such a large-scale project would be a challenge, but he remains optimistic about its benefits for regional public safety.

## **12. Adjournment**

*A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Alberino; second by Ms. Emery. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.*

Minutes recorded by Elizabeth Rolison