



# 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

### DRAFT MINUTES OF SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, June 17, 2025, 9:00AM

**Members Present:** Anthony Salvatore (Chairman), Robert McGarry (Secretary), Carl Fortuna (Treasurer), Irene Haines (At-Large), Eric Couture (At-Large)

**RiverCOG Staff Present:** Samuel Gold, Janice Ehle-Meyer, Paula Fernald, Megan Jouflas, Elizabeth Rolison

### Call to Order

Chair Salvatore called the meeting to order at 9:01AM

### 1. Approval of Minutes from May 20, 2025, Regular Meeting

**MOTION:** Mr. McGarry made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2025, Regular Meeting.

**SECOND** Mr. Fortuna seconded the motion.

**VOTE:** The motion was unanimously approved.

### 2. Legislative Update

Mr. Gold provided a comprehensive legislative update, focusing primarily on the status and implications of the omnibus housing bill (HB 5002). He expressed concern over its problematic provisions, including mandated housing conversions, conflicting definitions, and layering of requirements without aligning with existing statutes. Despite the bill promising additional funding to COGs, Mr. Gold and others were opposed to its passage due to its flaws.

Ms. Jouflas added that RiverCOG is helping lead a coordinated response among COGs, including development of a matrix highlighting contradictions in the legislation and a potential alternative methodology for housing allocations.

Committee members shared their views on the likely political maneuvering around the bill. Mr. Fortuna expressed skepticism about a veto, and Ms. Haines provided insight into recent leadership meetings. Discussion also included concerns about the veterans' property tax exemption legislation, which despite recent changes, was still viewed as fiscally unsound and poorly targeted.

### 3. FY26 Draft Budget

Mr. Gold presented the FY2026 Draft Budget, totaling approximately \$3.5 million—RiverCOG's largest to date. He emphasized that the budget remains conservative and reflects strong financial standing.

**RiverCOG**

Mr. Gold reported the below:

- Municipal dues increase of 2.45% (about \$5,500 total), accounting for 6.35% of the budget.
- Leverage rate of \$15 in funding per \$1 of municipal dues.
- Budget assumes two new staff positions, accounting for possible housing-related work if HB 5002 is enacted.
- COLA for existing staff set at 3.5%.
- Significant equipment purchase anticipated: a new copier (~\$12,000).
- Includes a placeholder for \$400,000 in potential HB 5002 funding.
- FEMA grant billing is in progress, with back-up funding plans in place if federal funds are withheld.

**MOTION:** *Mr. Fortuna made a motion to recommend the FY26 draft budget to the full Council.*

**SECOND:** *Mr. McGarry seconded the motion.*

**VOTE:** *The motion was unanimously approved.*

#### 4. MPO Recertification

Mr. Gold provided an update on RiverCOG's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) recertification. The agency passed with high marks and received three commendations from USDOT:

1. Regional housing work and public education on housing.
2. Partnership with Estuary Transit District through shared staffing.
3. Transit-oriented development planning via the Thriving Communities Program.

The review did include two corrective actions concerning fiscal constraint in transportation planning. The issue stems from CTDOT reallocating federal funds across COGs, making it difficult to create fiscally constrained long-range plans. Mr. Gold explained a potential solution involving regional planning by urbanized area. The issue primarily lies with the state, but RiverCOG will assist in resolving it before year-end.

#### 5. Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Update

Ms. Ehle-Meyer provided an update on the HHW program. Recent collections in East Hampton and Lyme-Old Lyme went smoothly overall, but the East Hampton event fell short of the vendor's minimum threshold, resulting in an \$800 shortfall. This cost will be distributed among participating towns—a rare occurrence, only the second in five years. A full COG discussion will determine whether to cover such deficits from program reserves moving forward.

Other notes:

- Paper shredding turnout has been high.
- Misinformation about collection schedules has surfaced online, likely due to AI-generated content.
- Google Maps inconsistencies have confused users trying to locate RiverCOG offices.

#### 6. Other Business

**a. Community Composting Grant – Long Table Farm**

Ms. Ehle-Meyer reported on a grant application being developed with Long Table Farm to expand their food waste composting operation. The project seeks to include Old Lyme and educate regional farmers on composting. There had been some uncertainty about municipal support, but Old Lyme’s Board of Selectmen seems to have expressed some backing.

The committee agreed that COG participation must be contingent on confirmed municipal support and a clear agreement outlining responsibilities, especially regarding equipment ownership and maintenance. Questions remain about covering administrative costs. Additional details will be shared at the full COG meeting.

Ms. Haines noted that East Haddam has shifted to local composting at Cold Spring Farm, which may serve as a helpful model.

**b. COG MPO June in Person Meeting**

Mr. Gold invited Ms. Rolison Elizabeth to provide details regarding the upcoming COG MPO meeting. Ms. Rolison confirmed that invitations had been sent out the previous week. The meeting will take place at the Florence Griswold Museum, in the Dangremond Room.

- Date: Wednesday, June 25, 2025
- Location: Florence Griswold Museum, Dangremond Room.
- Schedule:
  - 11:30 AM – Light networking and refreshments (light fare)
  - 12:00 PM – Lunch
  - 12:30 PM – Meeting commencement (with flexibility, possibly beginning closer to 12:45 PM)

Following the formal meeting, attendees are invited to remain for private docent-led tours of the museum.

**7. Executive Session: Executive Director Annual Review**

Mr. Gold requested to postpone the Executive Director Annual Review, as he had not yet completed his self-evaluation. The Committee agreed to table the item until the next meeting.

***MOTION:** Mr. McGarry made a motion to postpone the Executive Session: Executive Director Annual Review until the next meeting.*

***SECOND:** Ms. Haines seconded the motion.*

***VOTE:** The motion was unanimously approved.*

**8. Adjournment**

***MOTION:** Ms. Haines made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:45AM.*

***SECOND:** Mr. McGarry seconded the motion.*

***VOTE:** The motion was unanimously approved.*

Respectfully Submitted,  
Elizabeth Rolison