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[www.rivercog.org](http://www.rivercog.org)

Chester, Clinton, Cromwell,  
Deep River, Durham, East Haddam,  
East Hampton, Essex, Haddam,  
Killingworth, Lyme, Middlefield,  
Middletown, Old Lyme,  
Old Saybrook, Portland, Westbrook

**LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
AND  
LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
APPROVED AMENDED MINUTES OF MEETING**

Wednesday, January 18, 2017

9:00 a.m.

Room 310, CT State Capitol  
210 Capitol Ave, Hartford, CT

**RiverCOG Members:**

Chester: Lauren Gister \* (9:17)  
Clinton: Bruce Farmer  
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore \*  
Deep River: Angus McDonald, Jr. \* (9:17)  
Durham: Laura Francis \*  
East Haddam: Emmett Lyman \*  
East Hampton: Michael Maniscalco \*  
Essex: Norm Needleman  
Haddam: Lizz Milardo \*  
Killingworth: Cathy Iino \*  
Lyme: Ralph Eno \*  
Middlefield: Ed Bailey  
Middletown: Joseph Samolis, Alternate for Daniel Drew  
Old Lyme: Bonnie Reemsnyder \*  
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna \*  
Portland: Susan Bransfield  
Westbrook: Noel Bishop

**MPO Members:**

Middlesex Chamber of Commerce: Darlene Briggs  
Estuary Transit District: Joe Comerford \*  
Middletown Area Transit: Andrew Chiaravallo

**Others Present:**

Edgar Wynkoop, CT Dept. of Transportation  
Pat Bandzes, Eversource Energy  
Daniel Giungi, CCM, Senior Legislative Associate

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\* Members Present

**Others Present:**

Betsy Gara, COST  
Senator Ted Kennedy, Jr.  
Senator Art Linares  
Senator Len Suzio  
Representative Robert Siegrist  
Representative Devin Carney  
Representative Matt Lesser  
Representative Jesse MacLachlan  
Representative Melissa Ziobron  
Representative Christie Carpino  
Senator Paul Formica  
Evan Johnson, Chris Murphy's Office  
Genese Leach, CT Audubon

**Staff Present:**

Samuel Gold, AICP  
Judy Snyder  
Rob Haramut  
Torrance Downes  
Dan Bourret  
Margot Burns

**1. ROLL CALL, INTRODUCTIONS, PUBLIC SPEAKING**

Chairman Bonnie Reemsnyder called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. in Room 310, CT State Capitol, 210 Capitol Ave, Hartford, CT and thanked everyone for coming. Roll call was taken and Sam Gold, AICP, Executive Director introduced the guests and asked if anyone from the public wished to speak at this time.

Bonnie Reemsnyder introduced Representative Matt Lesser who represents the City of Middletown. He is very interested in the proposed budgets cuts this year. Ms. Reemsnyder told Representative Lesser that there is a standing invitation for him to attend any of the RiverCOG's monthly meetings

**2. REPORT OF THE 2017 RIVERCOG NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

Laura Francis stated that the members of the Nominating Committee were Lauren Gister, Bruce Farmer, and herself. She said that the current slate of officers had been contacted and all agreed to serve another term. She then read the slate of officers for the 2017-2018 term of office.

Chairman -	Bonnie Reemsnyder, First Selectwoman of Old Lyme
Vice Chairman -	Michael Maniscalco, Town Manager of East Hampton
Secretary -	Noel Bishop, First Selectman of Westbrook
Treasurer -	Carl Fortuna, First Selectman of Old Saybrook

Ms. Francis also added that there are two At Large nominees Anthony Salvatore, Town Manager of Cromwell and Cathy Iino, First Selectwoman of Killingworth.

Due to a lack of a quorum at this time the election of officers will be discussed and voted on later in the meeting.

#### **4. CONVERSATION WITH LEGISLATORS ABOUT THE RIVERCOG 2017 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

Bonnie Reemsnyder stated that a legislative agenda has been prepared and asked Senator Suzio if he would like to address the COG members. Senator Suzio stated that he represents the towns of Cheshire, Meriden, Middlefield and Middletown and is on the Transportation, Finance, Revenue and Bonding, Judiciary, Children, and Veterans Affairs Committees. He said that the state is in need of additional revenues and he has a proposal that would reduce the state sales tax and increase the state income tax.

Ms. Reemsnyder asked that the state please stay out of the town budgets. She felt that the minimum requirement budget (MBR) for education needs to be revisited because of the declining enrollment in the schools.

Ralph Eno discussed the MBR and that the exception for schools that are in the top 10% in performance is expiring.

Representative Melissa Ziobron stated she represents the towns of East Haddam, East Hampton and part of Colchester. She is a ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, and on the Committees for the Environmental, General Law, MORE Commission, CT Legislature Sportsmen Caucus, CT Alcohol and Drug Policy Council, and is CT's proxy to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. She said she will work across party line for the small towns and the small towns need a bigger voice. She said that her office is always open. She stated that Michael Maniscalco had a great idea and she has put it in a proposal to Rep. Craig Minor. This proposal would prohibit all future state budgets from coming to the municipalities without designating where the cuts were supposed to go. She said towns want to know when and what they are looking at and it isn't fair to change and surprised the towns halfway through a budget year.

Betsy Gara asked for a follow up on the mid-year budget cuts. She said that COST would rather have the specifics of where the cuts may come. COST would like to look at the Governor's authority and even add something at the legislature level that should be considered.

Sam Gold stated that unfortunately the MORE Commission lapse was used as a "fig leaf" by the Governor for budget cuts. He also wanted to make a comment about Senator Suzio's remark regarding taxes and fees. Mr. Gold stated that this is not part of the legislative agenda but he has discussed this with other COG directors. The idea is to try to optimize the taxes and fees in Connecticut to maximize federal income tax refunds and deductions. Corporations do this all the

time by optimizing their expenses to bring as much money back to them as possible. He felt that this idea had merit to look into.

Senator Suzio said that six years ago there was talk about eliminating the state tax and adjusting the federal tax for those who itemize their taxes. The thought was that this might draw people from other states. This may be of interest in the future because the budget is the overwhelming topic this year. Senator Suzio stated that he will have a tax proposal for next year. Bonnie Reemsnyder said that lowering the sales tax and adjusting it through the income tax would go a long way to help the residents of the state.

Rep. Jesse MacLachlan said that one of the issues seen in the last session was passing deficit burden from the state level to the municipalities in the form of educational cost sharing funding. He said the issues that are of interest to him on the legislative agenda are the non-state budget related issues and legislation that would raise costs for small towns. One of the issues is the elections and the increase cost for registrar of voters. He said he would like an explanation of the regional election monitor.

Sam Gold said it was originally proposed that the COGs were going to assist with election worker training. Then in the implementer bill the position became a regional election monitor that was employed by the COG, but really directed by the Secretary of the State.

Representative MacLachlan asked if the COG pays for the position. Mr. Gold said no, the first year was funded by \$100,000 that was split nine ways between the nine COGs, being \$11,000 per COG. In the first year eight COGs participated and the money was spent. Now we are in year two and there is no money for the position, but there is a State Statute that says the COG shall pay for this position. One COG, the CT Metro COG, did not participate in this program. Mr. Gold stated that River COG hired a very capable person to create this position that didn't exist before, but the question is shouldn't this be a position out of the Secretary of State's office to assist the local towns. He asked why should there be a state employee directed by the Secretary of State paid for by the towns, but not directed by the towns. If the state is not going to fund this position it should be repealed. Tony Salvatore said that the registrars he has spoken to feel this is not needed, not cost effective and the area that this was developed, for Bridgeport, did not participate and no one held them accountable.

Melissa Ziobron said that the time for individual legislators to present proposed bills ended last week but the committee still has the time to propose a bill. She asked if anyone has gone to the committees and asked them to raise this bill. Mr. Gold said there is a bill on the election monitor. Representative Ziobron stated to the members that when you see a bill like this please send it to your legislators so they are aware of it. The more legislators see and hear about a bill the more attention it will get. She said to send the information about particular concerns to your legislators to get public hearings on these issues.

Laura Francis addressed the issue of recreational marijuana. She said Durham is a drug free community recipient and she would like to keep it that way. Representative Melissa Ziobron

supports the bill for adult recreational marijuana. Tony Salvatore said he agrees with Ms. Francis but feels that a study needs to be done to look at the whole situation and see where the feds are going to go after Friday with regards to the enforcement of marijuana laws.

Mr. Salvatore also stated that he had met with Representative Christie Carpino and introduced through her a non-partisan bill with Senator Doyle restricting the consolidation of health districts in addition to allow two municipalities to come together to co-share a health director. It is his understanding that if two or more municipalities come together it constitutes, by statute, a health district needs to be formed. He also stated that Representative Carpino apologizes for not being able to attend today's meeting. Bonnie Reemsnyder updated the group on the health district situation. She stated that the Commissioner has changed the proposal and that the 1.5% fee is off the table and is now a per capita fee. He is adjusting but she feels that anyone that has had a conversation with him should talk about what the towns already do well together. We come together once a month and when there is an issue the case is made and we can usually come together and resolve it in a very good way for the state. We are the first COG that merged two regional planning agencies and we worked through the issues along the way and it worked very well.

Senator Paul Formica stated he serves on the energy committee as co-chair. He said that everyone is trying to work together to get an agreeable budget.

Senator Ted Kennedy said he represents six small towns and the issues listed on the legislative agenda are issues that he is familiar with in his towns. He said he has met with the RiverCOG before and would like to listen to their concerns.

Representative Devin Carney had a couple of questions. On the minimum budget requirement did the bill that was passed two years ago alleviate anything. Ralph Eno said the school declining enrollment seems to be escalating in the towns and more needs to be done. The top 10% performing exclusion has a sunset provision and he believes that has expired. So the schools that are performing will no longer have that exemption after this coming year.

Betsy Gara stated that she has asked the state board of education for a list of the top 10% of higher performing school districts. They don't have that list yet and that makes it difficult for the towns to prepare a school budget. She said it is always a fight to get the numbers of students from the state board of education.

Representative Devin Carney stated he is the ranking member of transportation and asked if towns are having difficulty finding school bus drivers. Representative Jesse MacLachan asked if the state statutes are preventing the towns from implementing school bus route technology. Laura Francis said that there has to be a seat available for every student regardless if they take the bus or not. Cathy Iino stated that running the buses without being completely full is a waste of energy and bad for the environment. Representative MacLachan asked what department or agency stated this. Laura Francis said to start with the state board of education. Sam Gold said

that our school buses are our largest transportation fleet in the state and they are running around half empty. Bonnie Reemsnyder asked if the committee could look into this issue.

Lizz Milardo had a comment regarding the funding of retirement accounts for teachers and asked them to look at the formula that is being used. She felt this needs to be changed. She also asked that the ECS formula be looked at. She said there are a number of towns asking for co-sponsorship on this. Haddam is in a regional school district with Killingworth and the first selectwoman has no say over that budget. Only the board of education does. She stated that some of the concerns are that we are not even at the number we need to be funded. We are less than 50%.

Laura Francis said that she had spoken to Senator Kennedy about how police services are billed out. When a town contracts with the state police for services OPM decides what is going to be charged out and they have added costs to those services. Ms. Francis is looking at alternatives. For an example she said that the Durham Fair bill in three years has gone from \$99,000 to \$160,000 and it is because of the formula used and what OPM decides to be charged out. The Connecticut Association of Fairs is also looking at alternatives. Lauren Gister stated that the Chester Fair bill for last year doubled from the previous year. Senator Kennedy asked if you could reach out for help to other towns police departments. Ms. Francis said they are looking into that. Carl Fortuna stated that he would like legislation on this issue. When the towns contract for state police help the town is also paying into that officer's pension, mileage, and all fringe benefits. Senator Kennedy said there is a document on how we budget in CT.

Bonnie Reemsnyder thanked the Senators and Representatives for coming today. Sam Gold invited everyone to attend a RiverCOG meeting in Essex anytime.

### **3. RIVERCOG 2017 ELECTIONS**

Continuation of election of officers:

*Upon motion of Laura Francis, seconded by Lizz Milardo it was unanimously voted to approve the nomination of the slate of officers.*

*Bonnie Reemsnyder asked if there were any questions or other nominations. There being none, nominations were closed and members voted unanimously to nominate the following slate of officers for the 2017-2018 term of office for the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments and the Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization:*

<i>Chairman -</i>	<i>Bonnie Reemsnyder</i>
<i>Vice Chairman -</i>	<i>Michael Maniscalco</i>
<i>Secretary -</i>	<i>Noel Bishop</i>
<i>Treasurer -</i>	<i>Carl Fortuna</i>

*And At Large are Anthony Salvatore and Cathy Iino.*

*Upon motion of Laura Francis, seconded by Lizz Milardo, it was unanimously voted to elect the following slate of officers for the 2017 – 2018 term of office for the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments and the Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization effective January 18, 2017:*

*Chairman - Bonnie Reemsnyder  
Vice Chairman - Michael Maniscalco  
Secretary - Noel Bishop  
Treasurer - Carl Fortuna*

*Additionally, Anthony Salvatore and Cathy Iino have agreed to serve as the At Large members of the Executive Committee.*

**5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 14, 2016 LCRVCOG AND LCRVMPO MEETING AND THE DECEMBER 28, 2016 LCRVCOG AND LCRVMPO SPECIAL MEETING (MOTION)**

*Upon motion of Michael Maniscalco, seconded by Tony Salvatore, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2016 meeting of the LCRVCOG and LCRVMPO.*

*Upon motion of Michael Maniscalco, seconded by Cathy Iino, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the December 28, 2016 LCRVCOG and LCRVMPO Special Meeting.*

**6. LCRVMPO BUSINESS**

a. 2016 List of Obligated and Granted Projects

Robert Haramut said that Title 23 CFR Part § 450.332 requires that MPOs publish or otherwise make available for public review, an annual listing of projects for which federal funds have been obligated in the preceding year. The list is broken down by regional, state, CTDOT district, non-attainment area and miscellaneous projects. It also shows the project number, phase, location, town, description, and cost broken down by federal, state and local share, similar to the TIP. The highlighted projects are those relating to bicycle and pedestrian initiatives.

**7. LCRVCOG BUSINESS**

a. RiverCOG FY2018 Dues (motion)

Sam Gold explained the spreadsheet with the options for a yearly increase of 0%, 2.5%, 5%, or 10%. The dues are based on the per capita population of the towns. This amount has decreased slightly from last year due to a decline in the RiverCOG town's population. He said that everything he hears from the State is that funding may be cut significantly for next year. The Executive Committee wanted this to be brought to the members because towns are waiting for this figure for their own budgets for next year. Mr. Gold said that a very small portion of our money comes from dues, that the majority of our funding is from the state and federal.

Ralph Eno asked what percent of the budget comes from the dues and what is the real operating budget number. Mr. Gold said the operating budget now is \$1.2 million. At this point he has not heard anything from the state for funding and he had heard that the match from federal grants has been cut back.

*Upon motion of Michael Maniscalco, seconded by Tony Salvatore it was unanimously voted to set the RiverCOG FY2018 dues at 2.5%.*

b. Lease Renewal

Sam Gold said that staff has been looking at other properties for rent in the region. He said that at the present time our rent is \$10.82/sq. ft. with our lease expiring in July the landlord has asked for an increase to \$17.00/sq. ft.. He stated that he has looked at a property in Deep River for \$10.00/sq. ft. for 4,000 sq. ft. and the maintenance inside and out would be paid for by the landlord. At the present time we are responsible for the outside and some of the inside maintenance costs. He also looked at Angus McDonald's property. Paula Fernald inquired at a bank to see if we qualified for a mortgage, and RiverCOG is able to get a mortgage for the purchase an office building. We have been asked to sign a letter of intent by the end of January. Mr. Gold has gotten an extension until the middle of February. He said he is working on getting information on a reasonable rent and to present that to our landlord for negotiations. Bonnie Reemsnyder stated that the next COG meeting is at the end of February, but should the COG have a special meeting to discuss this further. At this time Mr. Gold does not think that will be necessary. Mr. Gold is obtaining prices from movers to be included into the cost of the move. Tony Salvatore said that it will be costly to install all the electronics. Mr. Gold stated that he has been told that a new server is needed and he is waiting to replace it depending on the move. Ralph Eno asked if the COG was tax exempt. Mr. Gold answered we are. Mr. Eno asked why can't we look at the existing market rate and have this count as a charitable contribution that can be written off. Mr. Gold said we are not a 501c3. Mr. Eno said this could be considered a charitable donation. Mr. Gold will look into this further.

## **8. CHAIRMAN'S AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORTS**

Bonnie Reemsnyder told the members that she and Mr. Gold had gone to Washington, DC again last week to make a case on the proposed high speed railroad bypass going thru Old Lyme. She felt that this trip was very fruitful saying that Senator Blumenthal has come through on his commitment to having a private discussion with Elaine Chow the nominee for USDOT Secretary and she was asked a question about the bypass at her confirmation hearing. Ms. Reemsnyder also stated that they had met with Congressman Countney and with Senator Murphy, Senator Blumenthal, and Representative Himes' offices. Letters were brought and distributed from Old Saybrook, Waterford, Stonington, and New London, a resolution from the COG to express our



concerns and to request an audience with either the new USDOT Secretary and/or the incoming FRA Administrator so they understand clearly what this proposal would do to our area. The town of Old Lyme is working on the environmental concerns to be submitted to FRA and will share that document with the COG when completed.

Sam Gold would like to congratulate staff for raising the most money for the Middletown YMCA Summer Camp Polar Plunge last weekend and to congratulate Dan Bourret and Jon Curtis for participating in the plunge.

## **9. OTHER BUSINESS**

Dan Bourret gave a brief update on the new aerial flight that was done. He told the board that they should have the imagery deliverable soon and the LIDAR following in a couple months after as there have been some delays in the QA/QC process. Mr. Bourret said he made a request for the regional parcel layer for New England Geo Systems. They requested this for a project being done for Verizon. They need the GIS layer to identify homeowners within 150 feet of telephone poles that they plan on installing new wireless internet pods on top of them.

Tony Salvatore asked if this is FOI anyways. Mr. Bourret stated that it is.

*Upon motion of Laura Francis, seconded by Carl Fortuna, it was voted to allow Dan Bourret to release the data that is requested and only to be used for the purposes that are stated.*

*Ralph Eno abstained from voting.*

Bonnie Reemsnyder introduced Senator Art Linares who stated that he has a copy of the legislative agenda and will keep these issues in mind especially on the finance matters.

Bonnie Reemsnyder invited legislators to attend a future COG meeting.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

*Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Lauren Gister it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:51 a.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Snyder

Recording Secretary

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