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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 MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

Wednesday, January 24, 2018  
Connecticut State Capitol, Room 310  
210 Capitol Ave, Hartford, CT

**RiverCOG Members:**

Chester: Lauren Gister \*  
Clinton: Christine Goupil  
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore \*  
Deep River: Angus McDonald, Jr. \*  
Durham: Laura Francis \*  
East Haddam: Emmett Lyman \*  
East Hampton: Michael Maniscalco \*  
Essex: Norm Needleman  
Haddam: Lizz Milardo \*  
Killingworth: Cathy Iino \*  
Lyme: Steve Mattson  
Middlefield: Ed Bailey \*  
Middletown: 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 \*(10:17)  
Middletown Area Transit: Lisa Seymour \* (10:20)

**Others Present:**

Representative Devin Carney  
Representative Robert Siegrist  
Representative Matt Lesser  
Representative Melissa Ziobron  
Senator Len Fasano  
Senator Paul Formica  
Pat Bandzes, Eversource  
Edgar Wynkoop, DOT

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\* Members Present

**Continuation of Others Present:**

Daniel Giungi, CCM  
Amy Patterson, Executive Director CLCC  
Betsy Gara, COST

**Staff Present:**

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

**1. CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, PUBLIC SPEAKING**

Chairman Bonnie Reemsnyder called the meeting to order at 10:04 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.

1a. Amy Patterson, Executive Director, CT Land Conservation Council (CLCC) addressed the Council under public speaking. She said that the CLCC is worked closely with Margot Burns, Environmental Planner at the RiverCOG and the Land Trusts in the state. She distributed the report “Enabling a Local Option for Land Conservation and Stewardship Funding” (attachment #1) and spoke about a bill before the legislature that would allow certain towns to establish a voluntary one-time real estate conveyance fee of up to 1% to fund the acquisition, preservation, and stewardship of open space and farmland in the municipality. This fee would be paid by buyers of residential real estate on every sale. The proposed legislation would give municipalities an option to institute a fee on a voluntary basis, no municipality would have to implement a conveyance fee if not wanted.

Tony Salvatore asked if towns in their ordinances or zoning regulations have this authorize now. Ms. Patterson said no but she would like this proposal to enable a pilot program in towns that are agreeable to the fee. Mr. Salvatore questioned the charge to everyone buying property. Ms. Patterson replied this would be just for residential real estate with an exemption on the first \$150,000 of the property’s value.

Lauren Gister asked why just certain towns were in this bill instead of including all towns and having the towns individually vote on this issue. Ms. Patterson stated that this proposal has been put to the legislators for many years and possibly the legislators were concerned that the CEOs did not want to bring this to their voters.

**2. REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE AND ELECTION OF 2018 RIVERCOG OFFICERS**

Angus McDonald stated that the members of the Nominating Committee were Susan Bransfield, Lauren Gister and himself. He said that the current slate of officers had been contacted and all agreed to serve another term. He then read the slate of officers for the 2018-2019 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

Mr. McDonald also added that there are two At Large nominees Anthony Salvatore, Town Manager of Cromwell and Cathy Iino, First Selectwoman of Killingworth. Mr. McDonald noted that the by-laws should be amended to allow for a 3<sup>rd</sup> term in office. Sam Gold asked that the agenda be amended to include a discussion to change the by-laws. He said in the past officers were allowed to serve three terms.

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 2018-2019 term of office for the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments and the Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization:

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

At Large members 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 2018 – 2019 term of office for the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments and the Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization effective January 24, 2018:*

*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.*

### **3. RIVERCOG LEGISLATIVE AGENDA / DISCUSSION WITH LOWER CT RIVER VALLEY LEGISLATORS**

#### **AMENDMENT TO AGENDA**

Sam Gold said he would like to amend the agenda to include the “Resolution Supporting Recognition of Regional Councils of Governments as County Equivalents for Connecticut by the U.S. Census Bureau” (attachment #2).

1. The RiverCOG received the agreement for its FY18 Regional Services Grant from OPM and a resolution needs to be approved to allow Mr. Gold to sign the agreement. OPM will pay us 75% of the grant now and 25% during the fourth quarter.

2. Resolution supporting the U.S. Census Bureau recognizing COGs are the closest thing in Connecticut to counties. This would allow COGs to apply for federal grants as counties and would mean that U.S. Census data would be collected along COG region lines. Since municipal lines don't change the data could still be aggregated along old county lines too. This means less work for COGs. OPM has asked for this resolution, although support for recognition of COGs as county equivalents for Connecticut in previous legislative agendas.

*Upon motion of Noel Bishop, seconded by Tony Salvatore, it was unanimously voted to amend the agenda.*

Sam Gold asked the COG to adopt the draft 2018 RiverCOG Legislative Agenda. Mr. Gold stated that it is very similar to the previous years' agendas with a few new items : 1) looking at our tax code in relation to the new federal tax code. Some of our surrounding states are proposing changes to their income taxes particularly New York. There is concern that if Connecticut does not stay abreast of what is happening in our neighboring state that residents that work in New York and live in Connecticut could face double taxation as there could be a payroll deduction by New York state payroll tax and then a personal income tax in Connecticut. This is a major risk to Connecticut. 2) Mr. Gold said we are impacted by limitation of the state and local taxes (SALT) deduction and we don't know what that impact is in Connecticut, but the State should analyze the impact on Connecticut and should be seeking ways of optimizing our state tax code, whether it is on the state and local level, to help residents and businesses realize the largest possible federal deductions and refunds. He thinks that is something we all could support. Anything that could be done to help the residents lower their federal burden would be appreciated by all. 3) Fees that are set by Statutes. A number of fees charged by municipalities are set by Statute well below the cost of administering the fee, license, or permit. Statutes should be amended to free towns from unreasonably low capped fees and enable municipalities to set their own fees at rates that are reasonable, and help them recoup more of their costs. Other items on the legislative agenda are similar to other years; transportation, regionalization and mandate relief.

Bonnie Reemsnyder asked the members for a motion to adopt the amended legislative agenda.

*Upon motion of Noel Bishop, seconded by Tony Salvatore, it was unanimously voted to adopt the amended legislative agenda.*

Cathy Iino said that the agenda may have to be amended regarding school busing because it was discovered that there are no statutes that mandate school busing as practiced. She said that there are positive things that need to be done, but doesn't think a policy change needs to be made. She doesn't think it is a legislative issue. Ms. Iino asked that this be taken off the agenda.

*Bonnie Reemsnyder asked if everyone is agreeable to taking the school busing item off the agenda to say aye. Members replied favorably.*

Laura Francis said that the group that is looking at the regional school issues is a robust group and is on the verge of coming out with some recommendations for some legislative actions. She would like to see the COG support this because so many of the towns are involved in regional school districts.

*Bonnie Reemsnyder asked if everyone is agreeable to say aye. Members replied favorably.*

Bonnie Reemsnyder thanked the legislators for coming today and invited them to attend any of the RiverCOG meetings in Essex on the fourth Wednesday on the month at 9:00 a.m.

Senator Len Fasano said that the extra money in the budget goes up and down depending on the year, like the stock market. In the years when there is extra money he feels those dollars should be put in a rainy day fund. He stated that there is approximately \$675 million or more from the nest egg and this is largely in part because of a law in 2008 where some Hedge Funds were able to defer their income for 10 years. In 2018 that money has to start being declared. Obviously in 2017 much of the money was declared because of taxes.

Carl Fortuna stated that there was a surge in revenue and questioned if there would now be less of an incentive to agree to a deficit mitigation plan now that there is money in the rainy day fund?

Noel Bishop asked the legislators, with most of the towns starting their budget process for next year, realistically what would you want to say to all the towns in terms of going forward and preparing their budgets given where the state is and to what extent can the towns be optimistic there will be some funds there or do we have to plan there will be no funds there? How would you answer that question?

Senator Len Fasano answered when we did the bipartisan budget a key component in the negotiations was to leave the municipalities as whole as possible. The Special Transportation Fund (STF) has been reported by Commissioner Redeker to be in peril. The administration has proposed increases to the gas tax, an excise tax, and to bring back highway tolls. The gas tax brings in more revenue than tolls. The tolls would have to be on every state interstate and expressway. Entrance and exit ramps would have to be reconfigured and toll collection gantries constructed. Tolls on state roads will also push traffic to other roads that don't have tolls on them.

Joe Comerford asked what are the prospects of a fix to the STF? DOT has talked about a 15% reduction in funding to transit districts in 2019 and 50% in 2020 because of STF shortfalls. Mr. Comerford stated that tolls would take six years to get up and running. The proposed funding cuts to transit districts would result in the destruction of the transit districts. A faster solution to the STF shortfall is needed.

Representative Devin Carey said that the Governor has a transportation plan, but he is keeping it a secret for now. Forcing municipalities to pay for teachers' pension costs will just increase property taxes. Connecticut has the second highest property tax burden in the country.

Senator Paul Formica said that there have been changes in the Special Transportation Fund that moved a revenue stream from sale taxes on automobiles. This is an important change going forward. He sits on the Tourist Committee and is meeting with the CT Tourism Coalition to get more people to visit CT. Tourist is a big economic multiplier with every \$1.00 invested in tourism generating \$3.00 comes in new revenue. The Energy Committee is trying to move CT's energy in a new direction. We are one of the costliest states in the country with regard to energy but we are home to the largest single producer of energy in New England with Millstone Nuclear Powerplant.

Representative Melissa Ziobron spoke about the proposed CTfastrak extension to UCONN from Hartford. She said that it was taken out of the budget but then we were told because of the University went ahead and started charging students fees for the service Fastrak East service was started in the fall. She found the Governor's office instituted the new service even when the money, \$1.8 million, was taken out of the state budget. This session will be a short session with discussion of changes to the FY2019 portion of the biennium budget passed in the fall.

Representative Devin Carney said that the Governor and Commissioner Redeker talked about Shore Line East and the possibility of eliminating weekend service and cutting back on weekday service. The Governor's transportation plan was a good plan however the Governor and Commissioner Redeker both knew that they had no way of paying for it. In the towns of Berlin, Meriden, West Hartford, and North Haven train stations were promised and there is no money for them.

Representative Robert Siegrist stated that this is his first term in office but he would like to reiterate what Rep. Ziobron and Rep. Carney had said, and that communication is key. He told the members to contact him with any questions, comments, or concerns they may have.

Lauren Gister said that we are hearing that this was buried in Commissioner Redeker's report and not included in the Governor's press release that the spring installment of the town aid road grant will not be forthcoming. This is creating a real problem as the towns try to secure contracts at this point. Is there any way to address that in time?

Senator Paul Formica asked if Commissioner Redeker had come and talked to the COG as a group about his transportation plan. Towns depend on town aid road and bridge programs. What he is talking about cutting \$4.3 billion in projects is about being able to bond and afford payments. This is where the .04 cents gas tax increase comes in. The shifting of the new cars sales tax from the general fund to the special transportation fund will be \$60 million and also help.

Laura Francis asked if the spending cap is repealed, why are we being asked by OPM to send in our budget numbers. Communication between the Governor, legislature, state agencies and towns needs to be improved because it is causing a lack of trust.

Mike Maniscalco said that because of the Governor, the town of East Hampton is about \$1.2 million behind in revenue. The Board of Education feels they are not responsible for the revenue because of the way the Connecticut State Statutes are put together and furthermore the school officers believe they do not cost the town any money. Because of this he is concerned that he won't be able to put police officers on the streets, fill potholes, or provide the residents with a safe community to live in.

Tony Salvatore asked if consolidation of schools would help. Senator Formica said that isn't always easy to do. Sam Gold stated that regionalization in some towns work well. Many of the State Statutes need to be changed for these things and to determine the level of service these towns require and expect. Cathy Iino said even when the studies for regionalization make sense, transitions will require significant investment.

Bonnie Reemsnyder thanked the legislators for coming.

#### **4. LCRVMPO BUSINESS**

- a. Approve Minutes of the December 6, 2017 LCRVCOG and LCRVMPO Meeting

*Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Lauren Gister, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2017 meeting.*

- b. Transportation Improvement Program (motion)
  - i. 2018 TIP Amendment 6 – Replace bridge 02510 along Route 82 over Strongs Brook, project 0040-0146, East Haddam
  - ii. 2018 TIP Amendment 7 –Bicycle and pedestrian improvements along Bridge Road, project 0060-0162, Haddam

Robert Haramut reviewed both amendments to the members.

*Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Tony Salvatore, it was unanimously voted to approve the 2018 TIP Amendment 6 – Replace bridge 02510 along Route 82 over Strongs Brook, project 0040-0146 in East Haddam and the 2018 TIP Amendment 7 –Bicycle and pedestrian improvements along Bridge Road, project 0060-0162 in Haddam.*

- c. CTDOT Project Postponements / Special Transportation Fund Impacts

Sam Gold stated that he had asked Commissioner Redeker at the meeting of the COG Directors when is he going to bring his list of indefinite postponements to the COGs for a vote. Most of these projects are using federal funds and the funds are programed by the chief elected officials sitting on the MPO boards. The state has been providing the 20% non-federal match, but there could be a situation where the project is so important to the town that the town may want to fund it themselves.

- d. Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan Public Comments

Sam Gold said that the state released a new Long Range Transportation Plan. This plan is based on public outreach work that was conducted four years ago as part of the transform CT program, which then turned into Let's Go CT, which was the Governor's transportation vision. A week before Christmas the state released a draft of the Long Range State Transportation Plan. We reviewed it and in it was the hundred billion dollar package for Let's Go CT and the verbatim recommendations of the Governor's transportation finance panel from 2016, including the recommendation that RiverCOG merge again into one of three MPOs. Mr. Gold attended the public hearing last week and spoke. He said that there was outreach last summer to get on the COG agenda, but DOT never followed through on this. The deadline for written comment is Monday and Mr. Gold will be submitting comments. One thing that upset him was the plan says the Commissioner of Transportation came to each one of the COG and spoke about this. The Commissioner did attend a May 2016 RiverCOG meeting, but spoke about other issues and never mentioned the Long Range State Transportation Plan. Mr. Gold will submit the verbatim transcript of that meeting along with his testimony.

Betsy Gara said that the Commissioner is coming to the COST meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

- e. Transportation Planning Updates
  - i. Corridor Studies Route 66 and Route 81

Sam Gold said there was a kick-off meeting with the Routes 66 and 81 corridor studies and are under contract with our two consultants.

ii. Regional Bus Operations Study

Sam Gold said he has been working with Lisa Seymour from MAT Transit, the City of Middletown, and Joe Comerford on trying to get a comprehensive regional bus study. He said that a request for a corridor study has been submitted to Edgar Wynkoop. We have also been working with Dennis Solensky the administrator for transit at DOT to try and get that funded. We would be looking at routing and operation effectiveness at the two bus companies.

iii. Middletown Area Transit Public Private Partnership

Sam Gold said he has been meeting with Lisa Seymour, the City, the Middlesex Chamber, and DOT *to assist them for a potential public private partnership for a new bus station in Middletown and redevelopment of the old bus station for some other kind of development.*

f. Updates from MAT and 9 Town Transit

Lisa Seymour stated that MAT is running within budget currently, but will be decimated by proposed cuts to transit districts by CTDOT. A 15% cut which is proposed by CTDOT will cause service to be taken off the road which will send the district backwards in the progress that it has made recently. The 50% cut in 2020 like proposed will eliminate the district as with other small districts.

**5. LCRVCOG BUSINESS**

a. Authorization for Sam Gold to sign FY18 Regional Services Grant Agreement

*Upon motion of Laura Francis, seconded by Cathy Iino, it was unanimously voted to authorize Sam Gold to sign the FY18 Regional Services Grant Agreement.*

b. FY2019 RiverCOG Dues

Sam Gold explained the spreadsheet with the options for a yearly increase of 5%, 10%, or 15%. The dues are based on the per capita population of the towns. He said that everything he hears from the State is that funding may be again 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. The majority of our funding is from the state and the federal government.

Cathy Iino asked if a list of the benefits that the towns received from the COG could be sent out to all the members.

Bonnie Reemsnyder said that every organization is being cut with year and this is very difficult to pass on to the taxpayers. Tony Salvatore said this does not send a signal to the State that the towns will make up the difference. Ms. Reemsnyder said that this is not how the state gets out of their obligation to the towns, but we also acknowledge the importance of the COG for our communities. Lauren Gister stated that the COG is the best to pass along information and protects the small towns.

*Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Noel Bishop, it was unanimously voted to set the RiverCOG FY2019 dues at 10%.*

b. RiverCOG Budget Update

This item has been discussed previously.

c. RiverCOG Office Space

Sam Gold spoke about the search for office space stating that yesterday he looked at two spaces in Old Saybrook and tomorrow he was going to Middletown. He said that the COG could get by with less square footage and that would bring the cost down. He needs to inform our current landlord of our intentions by the end of the month.

d. RiverCOG Bylaws Amendments

Sam Gold said he has revised the bylaws in several areas including term limits, making the text gender neutral, defining the role of the Executive Director, acknowledged the new non-profit and the Regional Planning Committee's duties. Bonnie suggested that the members review this document and send any comments to her within two weeks so that the Executive Committee could review them at their next meeting.

e. Resolution and Support of Federal County Analog Status for COGs (motion)

Sam Gold stated a good example of the importance of this issue is the damage from the Connecticut River ice jam. We are helping document uninsured damage due to the ice jam, in the hope of getting FEMA disaster relief. FEMA funding is determined by county lines, so any claim and relief would not include Lyme and Old Lyme, who didn't sustain enough damage on their to make New London County eligible, whereas Middlesex County may. This resolution would recognize Regional Councils of Governments as county equivalents in Connecticut by the U.S. Census Bureau. Recognition by the U.S. Census Bureau will lead to recognition by federal agencies, such as FEMA.

*Upon motion of Cathy Iino, seconded by Lizz Milardo, it was unanimously voted to adopt the Resolution Supporting Recognition of Regional Councils of Governments as County Equivalents for Connecticut by the U.S. Census Bureau.*

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

Sam Gold said that in December two employees left the COG. Rick Grant retired and Nate Hougrand left for a planning position for the City of New Haven. Mr. Gold said due to the budget uncertainties he will keep those positions vacant.

## **7. OTHER BUSINESS**

Sam Gold said that at the December meeting a budget was presented for possibly a third household hazardous waste collection in Cromwell. However, the northern towns did not want to pay for a third collection.

*Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Michael Maniscalco, it was unanimously voted to approve the budget presented at the December COG meeting that includes two HHW collections in the northern towns.*

Sam Gold wanted to bring this to the member's attention that there is a fund balance in the household hazardous account. That revenue is held for maintenance of the permanent collection facility in Essex. At some point this fund balance could be used to help defray costs for future collections.

Torrance Downes updated the members on DEMHS.

Tony Salvatore asked for a consensus of what the members are doing regarding circuit breakers. This is a statute that the town assessors have to come up with a figure to OPM for the state treasurer, and cut a check. Cromwell didn't fund it. Carl Fortuna said he will fund it.

Angus McDonald said he appreciated the work the Nominating Committee did and thanked them for their input.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

*Upon motion of Noel Bishop, seconded by Carl Fortuna, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 12:04 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Snyder  
Recording Secretary