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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**

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**  
Wednesday, May 23, 2018

**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 \*  
Middletown Area Transit: Lisa Seymour

**Others Present:**

Senator Len Suzio, 13<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District  
Diane Bordanaro, Middlesex Community College  
Trenton Wright, Middlesex Community College  
Joel Severance, Citizen Corps  
David Kuzminski, Town of Portland  
Lori Mathieu, CT DPH  
Edgar Wynkoop, CT DOT  
Christine Nelson, Planner, Town of Old Saybrook  
John Warszala, The Kennedy Center  
Pat Bandzes, Eversource

\*Members Present

**Staff Present:**

Sam Gold  
Torrance Downes  
Robert Haramut  
Janice Ehle-Meyer  
Dan Bourret  
Paula Fernald  
Margot Burns  
Eliza LoPresti  
Eric Pfeiffer

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

Chairman Bonnie Reemsnyder called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. at the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments Office, 145 Dennison Road, Essex, CT.

Roll call was taken by Sam Gold, Executive Director. Mr. Gold introduced one of the four new summer interns, Eric Pfeiffer. Two of the students will be fellows from Sustainable CT and their possible duties were discussed. Ms. Francis and Mr. McDonald suggested that those fellows can help the towns that participate with Sustainable CT with MS4 compliance for their websites.

Public Speaking:

Senator Len Suzio gave an update on the legislative session and his thoughts on what may happen next year. In answer to a question about the Governor's rescission authority over the recently passed budget, Sen. Suzio stated that some items are restricted such as municipal aid and school funding, though he has rescission authority over state agencies. The town aid road funds currently have no cut-backs in the approved budget, though rescission could be possible in the fall. Town aid road funding is on the State's bond commission's agenda. Sen. Suzio also mentioned that STEAP grant money may be available. He was unable to answer if there was any open space funding; he will check and send that information to Mr. Gold.

Diane Bordonaro, Director of Non-Credit Programming at Middlesex Community College, invited everyone to attend their college after hours event on June 12, 2018 at 5:00 P.M., as they are seeking to deepen the relationship between the college and surrounding towns.

**2. LCRVMPO BUSINESS**

- a. Approval of the Minutes of the April 25, 2018 LCRVCOG and LCRVMPO Meeting

*Upon motion of Mr. Maniscalco, seconded by Ms. Gister, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the April 25, 2018 meeting.*

- b. Transportation Improvement Program
  - i. 2018 TIP amendment #10 Statewide Transportation Demand Management TDM 2018 project #0170-3495

This TIP amendment (Attachment #1) is for an ongoing project that provides about \$3,000,000 statewide for the CT Rides program.

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*Upon motion of Mr. Bishop, seconded by Mr. Salvatore, it was unanimously voted to approve 2018 TIP amendment #10 Statewide Transportation Demand Management TDM 2018 project #0170-3495.*

c. Transportation planning roles and responsibilities revisions (performance based planning and programming section added)

Mr. Haramut explained that this document (Attachment #2) is required under 23 CFR 450, part of the Federal regulations for MPOs. This document is currently the appendix of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The new section involves the performance based planning & programming which discusses data collection, selection and reporting of performance targets, and progress toward achieving the goals and includes a list of performance measures.

*Upon motion of Mr. Bishop and second of Ms. Gister, it was unanimously voted to approve the resolution regarding transportation planning roles and responsibilities.*

d. Performance measures update (bridges, pavement, system reliability, freight movement, congestion and air quality)

This became a new regulation for states and MPOs; these regulations are set forth by the State. It is recommended to adopt the State's regulations to avoid writing our own and doing data collection. Mr. Haramut described the targets on the list (Attachment #3). Mr. Gold explained the use of the word "reliable" in the document – in this case it refers to predictability of commute.

*Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore, seconded by Ms. Iino, it was unanimously voted to approve the resolution for endorsement of targets for various performance measures established by CTDOT.*

e. 2018 BUILD Grant Program – Letter of support for the Haddam swing bridge walkway

The RiverCOG has been working with Haddam and East Haddam on a federal grant for a proposed walkway attached to the swing bridge. CT DOT is currently designing the walkway as part of the rehabilitation project for the bridge, but the walkway portion of the project is unfunded. The proposal is to submit an application to the BUILD grant program before the end of July for approximately \$17,000,000. As a third of the 1.5 billion dollar grant is set aside for rural use, and Haddam is considered as such, the DOT believes there is a good chance this will be funded.

*Upon motion of Ms. Milardo and second of Mr. Lyman, it was unanimously voted to provide a letter of support for the Haddam swing bridge walkway project.*

*Discussion: Mr. Salvatore inquired as to where the money is coming from. He stated he supports the project, but sees the state is holding back road funds; Mr. Gold stated that it is part of the omnibus budget bill passed by Congress though he doesn't know the specific funding source. There is no local match in this grant, therefore the funding for the rural projects can be 100% Federally funded.*

f. Corridor studies: Route 66 & Route 81

i. Public meetings and pop-up events

The studies are in the initial phases of data collection and initial review. A list of the public meetings and pop-up events was provided to members (Attachment #4). Ms. Iino asked if only Clinton residents should take the online survey; the survey is open to non-Clinton residents.

g. Other transportation program updates (5310, LOTCIP)

Mr. Haramut updated that the 5310 program is still under review. The LOTCIP jobs are moving along. There was a ribbon cutting on Main Street in Old Saybrook last week, CT DOT is reviewing Durham's final design and the Cromwell job is in right of way so as soon as the next round of bond commission money comes out it will be bonded. The CT DOT is optimistic that this program will still exist in some form.

There was discussion on the Local Bridge program– there has been no official communication from the CT DOT about funding as of yet. Mr. Wynkoop (CT DOT) will communicate information to Mr. Gold as soon as he hears anything.

h. Transit updates

i. Regional bus operations study

Mr. Gold reported that the two transit districts and CT DOT met and discussed the study which will be moving forward. The COG will host the study with a hired consultant to help look at the operational efficiencies, potential for merging or operating together, and governance. This project will be 80% funded federally, the State's 20% match will be funded from CT DOT.

There was discussion on the written commitment letters on the Route 81 (and other) projects that still haven't been funded.

ii. MAT and 9 Town Transit updates

Mr. Comerford stated that the special transportation fund has been fully funded for five years. He is being told to start the year at flat funding, with a possible small increase later. All service will be kept intact despite rising costs. Mr. Comerford thanked all that wrote letters and contacted representatives; a difference was made because of the number of elected officials and constituents that were heard from.

Mr. Gold added that the cuts that were proposed for Shoreline East will not go into effect, though they have been doing bussing lately, which is a significant degradation in service as compared with the train. Ms. Goupil brought up the train station in Clinton and her concern that the entire location is not being looked at fully and may have unnecessary additions like four elevators.

John Warszala, Mobility Manager with the Kennedy Center, has been working with the South Central Regional COG, discussed the program and services he provides. He helps people sign up for the State's reduced fare ID program, provides travel training for people to learn how to use public transportation and has proposed fare cuts for vulnerable populations.

**3. Citizen Corps Report and Boat Pumpout Program Update – Joel Severance**

Mr. Severance gave an update on the boat pump out program (Attachment #5) that services the area from the bridge in East Haddam to LI Sound. The program is funded under the Federal Clean Vessel Act, the fiduciary is the Town of Essex. 2017 was the first year the program ran over budget as the number of boats serviced, pump outs, and days on the water were up. This year's service dates have been cut back. There was discussion on the fact that fees or donations for the service cannot be received.

Mr. Needleman noted that Essex handles the HR (among other) functions for employees who receive tips, which may be at odds with their ethics policy. Ideas for supplemental funding were discussed, such as

partnering with Gateway or possible acceptance of donations. Mr. McDonald & Chair Reemsnyder also discussed contributing what they can as their towns benefit from the service as well.

Mr. Severance then gave a presentation on the statistics and duties of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) (Attachment #6.) RiverCOG is the fiduciary for this team. The CT Citizens Corps Council has received an award from FEMA for the most outstanding statewide team in the country. Ms. Francis clarified that the CERT teams cannot just be called in to help with town-wide events; they are not indemnified unless activated by the State.

#### **4. Sustainability and Drinking Water Supply – Lori Mathieu, DT DPH & David Kuzminski, Town of Portland**

Mr. Kuzminski and Ms. Mathieu are both members of the sustainability committee that is made up of state agencies, water utility members, DEEP representatives and more. They have created a coalition of resources that can be utilized by municipalities to help manage everyday water tasks. Mr. Kuzminski and Ms. Mathieu discussed the State Water Plan, which was not approved in this legislative session. They have goals of working on system sustainability, studying peak water use and conservation, and balancing needs when it comes to water use and planning. Ms. Mathieu would like to come back in the late fall to present what the State Water Plan says about water system resiliency in this region. Mr. Kuzminski stated that the coalition is also addressing integration of asset management, dealing with aging infrastructure, succession planning and more into plans of conservation and development.

Ms. Goupil and Ms. Mathieu discussed that creating an ordinance for each town may not make sense at this point, and water planning should be addressed as a region, or possibly on the State level. Ms. Francis also spoke to the challenges of working with water as a utility. Mr. Maniscalco discussed water as an inhibitor to economic growth in East Hampton and other towns, especially because of state funding cuts. Ms. Mathieu stated that she is available to work with the towns, and a workshop on water was discussed; information will be sent to Mr. Gold.

#### **5. LCRVCOG BUSINESS**

##### **a. RiverCOG FY 19 Budget**

Mr. Gold presented the final budget and mentioned that the one number still up in the air is the FY19 Regional Services Grant amount. The lowest number of the funding formula (\$207,000) was included. There may potentially be a filling of one of the vacant positions, and it was mentioned that healthcare will be moved to the State's partnership 2.0 program (from Anthem). There are no other major changes in the budget for next year.

*Mr. Bishop moved to adopt the RiverCOG FY 19 budget, Mr. Maniscalco seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.*

##### **b. COG Funding**

The COGs have been funded for the first year in at least two years in the State budget. The COG directors are currently in discussion to come up with a formula for funding distribution as OPM did not provide one.

##### **c. IRS Civilian Penalty**

Paperwork from CRERPA was requested from the social security administration in 2012. Copies were sent to them that were either misplaced or never received. Since the IRS never updated our new address, communications from them regarding this were not being received. Pro bono legal support is being provided from Attorney Ray Muratori; we are asking for full penalty and interest abatement.

d. Long Island Sound Dredging Spoils Lawsuit

The Amicus Brief in support of the eastern disposal site for dredging spoils was accepted by the Federal Judge in Brooklyn. The first bill for \$500 was received; COGs on the shoreline are sharing the cost. The Attorney is Robinson & Cole out of New London, and a number of other parties are on the brief including the CT Port Authority, Marine Trade Association and Electric Boat.

e. Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plans

Advice has been communicated to the towns on preparing their plans as the COG didn't have the funding to assist. If extra money comes in there may be aid. The estimation of \$10,000 - \$15,000/town was based on the cost from the last time the updates were made divided by the number of towns in the COG, so if a town chooses to do the update on their own it may cost more. Mr. Gold stated that we are now waiting to hear from the State when the next round of grant funding will take place and he is not confident that the money will be available before expiration of the current plans (summer of 2019.) Therefore we could be in the process of updating while the current plans expire.

Ms. Burns distributed contact information for the FEMA plan reviewer and the State contact along with the former Midstate towns' final assessments.

f. RiverCOG Summer Interns

Previously discussed

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

Chair Reemsnyder had nothing to report.

Mr. Gold asked for volunteers for a working group on shared regional services; Ms. Francis, Ms. Gister, Ms. Milardo, Mr. Fortuna, and Ms. Goupil volunteered. Mr. Gold will send an email to everyone on the Southeast CT report, which should be reviewed.

Mr. Gold also stated that the towns are all facing MS4 (storm water handling) requirements and that hopefully the Sustainable CT interns can be utilized to help with compliance. Ms. Goupil requested that the interns attend their sustainability meetings for cross communication. Mr. Gold will follow up on this request.

## **7. OTHER BUSINESS**

a. Invasive Species

Ms. Burns gave a presentation on a new invasive species, the Emerald Ash Borer (attachment # 7) affecting ash trees. She discussed utilizing tree inventories as a valuable tool. It was suggested that interns could possibly be used to create the inventories and work with tree wardens. Ms. Iino asked about Eversource taking a role in looking at these trees; it was noted that they do a good job when they are

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pointed out to them. There was discussion on disposal of trees taken down and moving of the wood so as not to spread the borer.

Ms. Burns also gave information on hydrilla, an invasive water species that is spreading up the CT River. (Attachment #8)

b. DEMHS Update

Mr. Downes stated that the oldest of the four open grants (Homeland Security grant) is closing down May 31. Spending of that grant has gotten to a point of less than \$100. Another Homeland Security grant for 2018 will go into place in October.

Mr. Downes mentioned that he and Mr. Bourret are finishing up zoning officer work in Westbrook within the next week or two, they will then move to providing that service for Clinton.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

*Upon motion of Ms. Gister, seconded by Mr. McDonald, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:17 a.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Eliza LoPresti  
Recording Secretary

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