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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, September 26, 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:

Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor
Pat Bandzes, Eversource
Jenna Clink, Eversource
Cathy Lezon, Eversource
Douglas Pistawka, Eversource
Susan Stotts, Eversource
Emily Boushee, Senator Chris Murphy's Office
Tom Worthley, UCONN Forestry

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Torrance Downes

*Members Present

Robert Haramut
Janice Ehle-Meyer
Dan Bourret
Paula Fernald
Margot Burns
Eliza LoPresti

1. Call to Order, Roll Call/Introductions, Public Speaking

Chairman Bonnie Reemsnyder called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. at the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments Office, 145 Dennison Road, Essex, CT. She thanked everyone for coming, as the previous night's flooding caused emergency issues in many of the region's towns.

Roll call was taken by Sam Gold, Executive Director.

Public Speaking:

Emily Boushee of Senator Chris Murphy's office stated that the Senate recently passed a comprehensive opioid package. A minibus package for \$674 billion for the Dept. of Defense passed as well. If any CEOs have manufacturers in their community that they would like to nominate for Murphy's Monday Manufacturer they should contact his office. Sen. Murphy is launching the selection process for his next page; young men that are Juniors in high school are to be nominated. Sen. Murphy is working on the Farm Bill, which expires September 30.

2. Eversource Vegetation Management – Douglas Pistawka

Mr. Pistawka, Supervisor of Vegetation Management, presented information on Eversource's vegetation management program. Two of the four arborists for our region were present as well. Schedules of tree trimming and maintenance were described. This year's program is funded at 80.4 million dollars.

The widespread decline and mortality of many of CT's trees due to invasive species was discussed. The number of dead trees that have the capacity to cause problems with utilities and safety is well beyond what towns and Eversource can handle removing. Mr. Pistawka explained the prioritization of tree removal based on condition and potential number of customers affected. Last year, Eversource removed about 28,000 hazardous trees across the state, in conjunction with towns. He gave brief recommendations for planting near power lines.

Tom Worthley, of UCONN Forestry, addressed questions about getting rid of timber from removed trees. There is less wood exportation because of tariffs, therefore lumber mills are not taking as much wood. He feels there are markets on the horizon, though the industry is currently at capacity. He distributed a report on tree mortality that he authored, which is included in the filing of these minutes. Mr. Worthley also discussed Stormwise, UCONN's storm task force. They are beginning to work with communities on management skills for roadside forests. If anyone is interested he should be contacted.

Other discussion included strategy for enforceable ordinances on tree planting and invasive species control. Emerald ash borer are now spread throughout state. Gypsy moths are controlled by a naturally occurring fungus.

Including money in municipal budgets for tree management was discussed. Ms. Gister asked about the possibility of a regional solution – for example a firewood production facility or something similar. This will be discussed at the next regional services committee meeting.

Tree plans and inventories were discussed – having a prioritization of which trees need to be removed/maintained and addressing the issue in a systematic way was suggested.

3. LCRVMPO Business

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

Upon motion of Mr. Maniscalco, seconded by Mr. Salvatore, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the July 25, 2018 meeting.

- b. Transportation Improvement Program

- i. 2018 TIP amendment #17 – replacement of traffic control signals in various locations in District 2, project 0172-0476

Construction will take place in 2021. Projects within our region include Rt. 17 at Rt. 68 in Durham, Rts. 66 & 16 in East Hampton, Rt. 155 & Millbrook in Middletown, Rts. 66 & 3 in Middletown and Rt. 1 at Huntley Rd. in Old Lyme.

Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore, seconded by Mr. Maniscalco, it was unanimously voted to approve 2018 TIP amendment #17 – replacement of traffic control signals in various locations in District 2, project 0172-0476.

- c. Transportation program updates

i. LOTCIP update & review of selection process/criteria – Two projects are hopefully going out to bid for construction in the spring in Durham & Cromwell. The Chester project should be receiving a commitment to fund letter, and Haddam is under review. The state bond commission approved FY 19 funding for all existing projects.

The current solicitation process and selection criteria was distributed. Mr. Haramut is hoping it will be approved during the next meeting so he can send the solicitation out shortly thereafter. RiverCOG staff is happy to meet with town departments if needed. If there are questions or suggestions they should be referred to RiverCOG staff.

ii. Community Connectivity Grants – Five in our region have been approved, and funds have been allocated for them. CT DOT would like to meet with the approved towns all together, possibly after next month's COG meeting. Mr. Haramut will find out if CT DOT will be giving feedback on the projects that did not receive the grants and/or if they would have a meeting with those that were not awarded.

- d. Approval to sign the Project Authorization Letter for the Lower Connecticut River Valley Regional Bus Integration Study

Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore, seconded by Mr. Fortuna, it was unanimously voted to approve Sam Gold to sign the project authorization letter for the Lower CT River Valley Regional Bus Integration Study.

- e. Recommendation of Regional Bus Integration Study consultant and authorization to enter into an agreement

Mr. Gold explained that the selection committee interviewed three firms, and has identified a leading firm, but that not all scoring sheets are in yet so a formal decision has not been made. He asked for authorization from the MPO to enter into agreement and negotiations with the chosen firm.

Mr. Bishop moved to allow Mr. Gold and RiverCOG to enter into an agreement with a chosen consultant for the regional bus integration study. Second by Ms. Gister. All voted unanimously in favor. (after a brief tabling of the motion as described below)

Discussion: CT DOT was on their way, but not yet present during the meeting.

Mr. Salvatore moved to table this discussion until CT DOT representative(s) were able to enter the meeting. Second by Ms. Gister. All voted unanimously in favor.

After agenda item 4a, this item was continued:

Mr. Salvatore moved to put the motion back on the table; second by Mr. Fortuna. All voted in favor.

Mr. Gold introduced Lisa Rivers & Maureen Lawrence of CT DOT. He thanked them for their support and funding of this project.

Mr. Bishop called the question; Mr. McDonald seconded. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Gold thanked the selection committee for helping with the process.

4. LCRVCOG Business

a. Regional Election Monitor Report

Ms. Conklin reported that software issues/glitches arising from the primary have been identified and she is following up on some reporting issues. She was interviewed by a reporter for the Rivereast for an article that focused on the regional election monitor role. All registrars are in possession of handicapped voting equipment (Inspired Voting Systems) and all workers in the polling place need to learn to use it as it is being more widely needed for the aging population; she is following up with all registrars on this. A story from the Hartford Courant from the day before was distributed; the state has been funded federal money to fortify election security – some of the money is going to be used to fund regional election monitors.

It was explained that RiverCOG got a grant last year to fund the election monitor position, but stretched it to last two calendar years, with the majority of money for this election year. After the election there is no more state money earmarked for the position. Chair Reemsnyder encouraged everyone to press the state to continue to fund this position for next calendar year, as this has been a good thing for our communities. Ms. Conklin suggested telling Denise Merrill about benefits of having an election monitor position. This led to a discussion on the registrars positions/offices, and a long-term plan for taking politics out of the registrar's positions and weaknesses that have been identified by party chairs in towns. Ms. Milardo asked for a detailed registrar job description and if pay per town can be shared. This information may be found on CCM or Secretary of State's websites. There was discussion on the level of training for registrars, the hours and the technical understanding necessary.

b. RiverCOG Paper Shredding Events 2019 (and HHW)

Ms. Ehle/Meyer presented data on the paper shredding events for 2018. She asked how we can schedule events so they are not competing with each other, as some towns held shredding events on the same day as RiverCOG shredding events. There was concern that RiverCOG's free events were competing with town events that were fundraising events, and also if the RiverCOG shredding was needed if towns are having more events. RiverCOG will send out the calendar as soon as possible in the year.

Ms. Ehle/Meyer reported that there are three more hazardous waste collections for the year, occurring in October.

c. Shared Services Discussion

A meeting will be set up to talk about tree issues as noted earlier in the meeting, along with the item below.

i. MS4 Compliance Services

It was suggested that there be a larger discussion during a separate shared services meeting on how towns can potentially work together to comply, especially in regards to mapping, documentation, etc. A possible GIS mapping project was discussed.

5. Chairman's and Executive Director's Reports

Chairman Reemsnyder thanked Mr. Gold and Ms. Fernald on their hard work on the resolution of the IRS issue, at no cost to the COG.

Mr. Gold reported that Ms. Burns and he are working on a grant application for pre-disaster mitigation grants for the towns that have not opted out. If the money is received it will arrive next year so there will be a lapse in the plans if towns decide to join the regional grant. This is not disaster recovery money; it is reserved to help address future disasters. There is a 25% match for the towns that participate, which will be around \$4,000/town. This would need to be in next year's budget.

Mr. Gold also stated that OPM noticed RiverCOG that a new, complicated annual report is due to them shortly. He was not able to provide a draft because of the tight schedule, he will be working on this in the upcoming week. This led to a discussion on OPM's request for future regional services.

6. Other Business

a. Update on DEMHS, Gateway & Interim ZEO Work – Torrance Downes

Mr. Downes reported that DEMHS (Region 2), which involves ten of the RiverCOG towns, is running three three-year grants and one one-year grant concurrently. The 2018 grant budget goes into place October 1 and was approved at the last meeting. The grant amount went up slightly.

Gateway involves eight of the region's towns and has just adopted their newest zoning standards since 2004, which are meant to be adopted into the local regulations. Essex is holding a public hearing in October to adopt the standards; they have not adopted new regulations since 2004. Mr. Downes discussed the large home that was to be built on Hamburg Cove, which Gateway pushed back on because of the size. The property is now being sold.

Mr. Bourret and Mr. Downes have been acting as interim ZEO in Clinton since June, after numerous months of doing so in Westbrook. Clinton has been interviewing for a ZEO.

b. Update on ALICE Report – Janice Ehle/Meyer

This will be reported on during the October meeting.

c. Hydrilla/Invasive Species Update – Margot Burns

This will be discussed again in a future meeting since many of the river towns were not present. Ms. Burns reported that the water chestnut work has been going well and seems to be manageable. However, there has been what is believed to be hydrilla found under the water chestnut, which is very invasive. Samples have been sent for genetic testing, paid for from a grant through the New England aquatic nuisance species panel. The state/DEEP is aware of hydrilla, but there is no money to take care of the problem. Ms. Burns explained how the plant grows and what abatement involves. If this is not taken care of, the likelihood that the estuary will be infested is very high. She encouraged the CEOs to make noise with the state to get help with taking care of this invasive issue.

8. Adjournment

Chairman Reemsnyder adjourned the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eliza LoPresti
Recording Secretary