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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**

APPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

RiverCOG Members:

Chester: Lauren Gister *
Clinton: Bruce Farmer *
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:

Edgar Wynkoop, DOT
Carol Conklin
Frank DeFelice, RPC
Suzanne Helchowski
Lori Mathieu, Dept. of Public Health
Linda Ferraro, Dept. of Public Health
Senator Len Suzio
Mike Kalinowski, MD

* Members Present

Staff Present:

Rob Haramut
Torrance Downes
Dan Bourret
Paula Fernald

1. CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, PUBLIC SPEAKING

Chairman Bonnie Reemsnyder called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. at the Lyman Farms Grill Restaurant, 70 Lyman Road, Middlefield, CT. Roll call was taken by Torrance Downes, Deputy Director and guests were introduced. Ms. Reemsnyder thanked Ed Bailey for hosting the RiverCOG meeting at Lymans today. Ms. Reemsnyder introduced Senator Len Suzio to discuss the state budget. Senator Suzio thanked Ms. Reemsnyder and told the members that the budget is still a work in progress. Carl Fortuna urged Senator Suzio to express to the legislators to come together on the budget this year. Ms. Reemsnyder thanked the Senator for attending the RiverCOG meeting.

2. PRESENTATION ON THE DRAFT STATE WATER PLAN - LORI MATHIEU, PUBLIC HEALTH SECTION CHIEF AND LINDA FERRARO, CT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
[HTTP://WWW.CT.GOV/WATER/](http://www.ct.gov/water/)

Bonnie Reemsnyder introduced Lori Mathieu and Linda Ferraro. Ms. Mathieu said she represents the drinking water section of the state Department of Public Health. This section regulates all the public water systems in the state. Her section oversees the quality and quantity of drinking water statewide. She said the draft State Water Plan is now available on line for the members to review and public comments are welcome before the November 20th deadline. She distributed the executive summary of the plan and suggested that the members have their planning departments look sections over that could affect their towns. She stated that water conservation needs to be emphasized. Climate change, such as the extreme weather events Connecticut has seen in recent years place a lot of stress on our natural systems and our water supply systems. The time to plan for these events is before it happens. A balance needs to exist between the Department of Public Health that oversees drinking water and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection that oversees many of the other uses of the water supply. The plan addresses policies, pathways forward, technical and background information, what steps we take now, future options and opportunities, and detailed maps. Ms. Mathieu stressed it's important that members take a look at the plan and make comments.

3. BLUE ZONES PROJECT - A LONG TERM VISION FOR IMPROVING COMMUNITY HEALTH - MICHAEL KALINOWSKI, MD

Bonnie Reemsnyder introduced Dr. Michael Kalinowski. He is a lifelong resident of the region and would like to discuss his concept and vision in regards to public health in the region. He said that he will be speaking about the Blue Zones and the Blue Zones Project however he stated that he does not directly work for them. A Blue Zones Community is an area in which citizens, schools, employers, restaurants, grocery stores, and community leaders have come together to optimize residents' longevity and well-being. The three components are: 1) the concept – what is the blue zones project and what does that teach us; 2) the vision - how would this potentially look in our communities; and, 3) the plan – what tangible steps can we take to try and achieve this goal.

He said he has been working in the health care industry for over 20 years and gave a brief background of public health care in this country. Although health care has made tremendous strides over the last 50 years there is an area which needs more attention. He said that the metabolic illness life style related diseases such as obesity has increases greatly over the last 20-30 years and with that the diabetic rates, which is a public health crises, and cardio vascular disease, being the number one killer in the United States, have all increased. He said that the United States spends the most on health care per person than any other country in the world.

He said that the Blue Zones study started about 15 years ago as a research study commissioned by National Geographic. The job was to search the world for hot spots for health and longevity. The five communities that have exceptional health outcomes were Okinawa Japan, Ikaria Greece, Sardinia Italy, Nicoya Costa Rica and a faith based community of 7th day Adventist, in Loma Linda California.

Dr. Kalinowski said that the next step the researchers took was to come back to the United States and find an unhealthy community and see if implementation of these principles used in Blue Zones would help a community to make healthy chooses easier. The Blue Zones team worked with community leaders and organizations with the goal to achieve a sustainable long term model so that after the organization has taken a step back the implement changes can be carried out for decades. A small city of 30,000 residents in Albert Lea Minnesota was chosen for the study and in the first three years they were able to implement a 35% decrease in smoking rates and a 40% reduction in city workers health care costs. Then the researchers moved to a beach community in California and implemented a similar program. The results were a 14% drop in obesity and a 30% decrease in smoking. Next the state of Iowa contacted them and wanted to become the healthiest state in the country. Initially 15 communities signed up and then the Blue Zones were implemented and smoking rates were decreased by 10% and increased the produce consumption by 10%. This has been happening over the last eight years and currently there are 42 communities across the national that are Blue Zones communities.

4. LCRMPO BUSINESS

- a. Approval of Minutes of the September 27, 2017 LCRVCOG and LCRMPO Meeting (motion)

Upon motion of Noel Bishop, seconded by Tony Salvatore, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the September 27, 2017 LCRVCOG and LCRMPO meeting.

- b. Transportation Updates

- i. Repeal of Federal Greenhouse Gas Performance Measures

Robert Haramut said the Federal Highway Administration published a notice of rulemaking to repeal the greenhouse gas performance measures which is a percentage of change in tail pipe carbon monoxide emissions. He asked if the members wanted Mr. Gold to submit a letter either for or against this repeal.

Bonnie Reemsnyder said she would like to know more about the repeal and to hear comments.

Carl Fortuna asked what is standard and what does it mean. Robert Haramut said that the USDOT would save approximately \$11 million over several years.

Tony Salvatore asked what the staff recommendations are. It was felt the members needed additional information pertaining to this issue before making a decision.

ii. Federal Safety Performance Measures

Robert Haramut distributed and discussed the Metropolitan Planning Organization Safety Performance Measures Fact Sheet and Safety Performance Targets.

iii. Corridor Study Status Update and New Study Solicitation

Robert Haramut said he does not have the authorization letters for Routes 81 and 66 but he has met with FHI regarding Route 81 and will begin refining the preliminary scope. Next week he is meeting with Tighe and Bond to refine the Route 66 scope. He stated that he sent the solicitation for future studies. If those could be returned before November 22nd then we can review them at the December meeting. Laura Francis asked if the town of Durham should apply for corridor studies for Routes 17 and 79. Mr. Haramut agreed that the town could apply.

iv. LOTCIP update

Robert Haramut updated the members on the LOTCIP projects. He said that the Old Saybrook job (North Main Street at the Train Station) was supposed to be completed in the spring. Carl Fortuna said the project is about 95% complete and is beautiful. Mr. Haramut said that the next three committed jobs are Millbrook Road, Middletown, Higganum Road, Durham and Coles Road, Cromwell.

v. Urbanized Area MOU update

Robert Haramut said, as of today, he has not received comments from the state or feds. When he does then he can move forward.

vi. TIGER Grant

Robert Haramut spoke about the TIGER grant for the Haddam Swing Bridge. He stated that at this point DOT is not supportive of that project. He was told there is no budget and DOT does not know where the money would come from. Mr. Haramut said that this application could be submitted again next year.

c. Bus Company Updates

i. Regional Bus Operations Study

This item will be discussed at the December meeting.

ii. Middletown Area Transit

Lisa Seymour said that they are still working within the budget. She said there are a lot of changes with the staff because she is enforcing policies and procedures that were not there before. An ADA's rider guide was approved by the board and new software is being used by the staff which is helping immensely. Same day service is no longer available and that is helping to save money and be more efficient. Ms. Seymour said that MAT had a public hearing and adopted a no-show policy. If a client has seven no-shows in a year they will then be suspended from bus service for a time to be determined. This is already proving to be a deterrent and more clients are calling to cancel instead of not showing. The Portland bus service that is over budget and thought to be cancelled went to public hearing and Ms. Seymour was able to make changes to the runs and keep the service. She said she has been working with organizations that are out of district and there is no funding for them. She is searching for either alternatives or other funding sources.

iii. 9 Town Transit

Joe Comerford said that with Ms. Seymour taking over the Middletown Transit both companies are trying to coordinate shared services. Estuary Transit is working on a site selection for a new operations and maintenance facility and it is anticipated that the selection will be made in December and then negotiations will begin.

Laura Francis asked if time permits are the towns of East Hampton, Cromwell, Middlefield, Portland willing to meet with Mr. Comerford and Ms. Seymour for 10 minutes after the COG meeting.

5. LCRVCOG BUSINESS

a. State / COG Budget Update

Paula Fernald said that the COG is within budget.

b. Regional Plan Update

Frank DeFelice started that RPC is making good progress on the plan.

c. GrowSmart Implementation Update

This item was tabled to the next meeting.

d. Regional Performance Incentive Grant Wetlands and Watercourses mapping project

Dan Bourret said that last year he applied for a \$95,000 ARC grant and this year it took a while to finalize the grant because we had to get a waiver from the state to do some of the mapping in-house. He has met with Kevin Armstrong from Portland, Jeremy DeCarli, East Hampton Town Planner, Meg Parulis, Westbrook Town Planner and Sandy Prisloe. The RFP was sent out last week and the recommendations from the COG will be discussed at the December 6th meeting and a consultant will be chosen. The purpose of this is to improve the mapping for the municipalities.

e. Regional Election Monitor Report

Carol Conklin said it was a busy month. The new software that was used for the first time in the presidential election for voter results has been greatly improved and classes were available for the registrars to attend at Middlesex Community College or the Secretary of State's office. This is not mandatory to be used this year, but will be in the Governor's election next year. The difficulty for some of the registrars was the lack of computer skills. The availability of computer classes are being looked at for those that are interested.

6. CHAIRMAN'S AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

Bonnie Reemsnyder wished everyone that was running for re-election good luck. She stated that the evaluation on the Executive Director has been completed and given to him. Mr. Gold's contract expires in December and the Executive Committee will meet with him shortly to discuss an extension to his contract.

Ms. Reemsnyder reminded the members that a nominating committee is needed for officers starting in January.

Torrance Downes said that last week Sam Gold had attended a MPO workshop in Georgia and he will report on that at the December meeting.

Torrance Downes said that this is part work program and part revenue. Dan Bourret and Mr. Downes have been working the past few months in Westbrook as Zoning Enforcement Officers and last night the Planning and Zoning Commission hired a permanent ZEO. Mr. Bourret and Mr. Downes will be finishing up next week. Middletown has contacted the RiverCOG and they are in need of a ZEO. Mr. Bourret and Mr. Downes are going to meet with Joe Samolis, Town Planner to determine exactly what is expected, what is the work load, and how long will we be needed to help.

Noel Bishop said he wanted to go on record as complimenting Dan and Torrance for a job well done. This is an example of how the RiverCOG really makes a difference. Mr. Bishop thanked Dan and Torrance for their help.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

a. DEMHS Update

Torrance Downes said that four grants are open, four funding grants are available now. Two have been approved to add to the two that are already in place. The homeland security grants are three year grants so we have three of those overlapping. The newest emergency management planning grant which is hazard mitigation has just gone into place and that is a one year grant. We now have four grants available to fund the DEMHS Region 2 efforts.

b. Household Hazardous Waste / Recycling

There is no report at this time.

Bonnie Reemsnyder asked if anyone else had any comments.

Laura Francis said you might have gotten a notification from the Mayor of Waterbury regarding the city's efforts to initiate a lawsuit against big pharmaceutical companies to help to hold them accountable for their role that they may or may not have contributed to the opioid crisis. She said there is a lot of merit to the lawsuit, but there may be another opportunity for the towns. A company in the state may be willing to fund some of the prevention efforts that have been defunded in mostly every proposed budget that has come before the legislature. She stated that all of our Regional Action Councils are slated to lose their funding. There may be an opportunity for us to enter into an agreement that if we don't participant in that lawsuit perhaps we could get some of that money quicker than a settlement from that lawsuit. This was also discussed at CCM's public health legislative committee meeting. She asked the members to contact her with any ideas they may have.

Laura Francis stated that she has been following the elections and just wanted to say that it has been an honor to serve with all of you.

Tony Salvatore said that he would like to thank Edgar Wynkoop. Last month Mr. Salvatore thought he was having a problem with DOT. As a result it was a problem with the developer which is causing part of the problem and it wasn't DOT.

Lauren Gister said Chester had a big problem this summer with AirBnB short term rentals. Apparently seven to nine properties have been listed on the AirBnB internet site for several years without a problem. This year there was a listing for a house that sleeps 16 on a residential street. So what happens is that every 4 days this house becomes an event space. She said at one event there were 45 cars parked on the lawn, with fireworks, tents, port-a-potties and the neighbors are upset. She said that the town does not have any specific regulations or ordinances that address these short term rentals. The town is now looking into how to approach this in a way that solves a problem for our residents and protects private property owner rights, but also protects the rights of the neighbors. Lizz Milardo suggested that the town tax assessor may be able to help. Laura Francis said she has spoken to Bart Russell, a consultant, who was negotiating a contract with AirBnB promoting the company as a small town solution for economic development. Ms. Gister said she contacted CCM and asked for any information that is available from other towns in the state. Torrance Downes asked if she would share that with the COG.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Noel Bishop, seconded by Tony Salvatore, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Snyder
Recording Secretary