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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 26, 2016

RiverCOG Members:

Chester: Lauren Gister *
Clinton: Bruce Farmer
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore * (9:05)
Deep River: Angus McDonald, Jr. * (9:40)
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: Dan 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:

Senator Ted Kennedy, Jr.
Edgar Wynkoop, CT Dept. of Transportation
Carol Conklin, Election Monitor
Pat Bandzes, Eversource
Eric Sheehan, Eversource
Carolyn Linn, Chester Selectman
Fran Pac, Middlefield Administrative Assistant
Suzanne Helchowski, Westbrook Administrative Assistant

* Members Present

Staff Present:

Torrance Downes
Judy Snyder
Rob Haramut
Jon Curtis
Paula Fernald
Janice Ehle-Meyer

1. CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, PUBLIC SPEAKING

Chairman Bonnie Reemsnyder called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. at the Lyman Grill Room Restaurant in Middlefield and thanked Lyman Orchards and Ed Bailey for making the arrangements for hosting the meeting. Roll call was taken by Torrance Downes, Deputy Director and guests were introduced. Ms. Reemsnyder announced that Margot Burns has received an award from the CT River Coastal Conservation District as an Environmental Professional. Unfortunately she is unable to attend today's meeting, however there is a card for everyone to sign and to send our congratulations to her.

2. GUEST SPEAKER STATE SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY, JR.

Bonnie Reemsnyder introduced Senator Edward Kennedy and thanked him for attending. He thanked Ms. Reemsnyder for the invitation and said the towns in the RiverCOG that he represents are Killingworth and Durham. He wanted the members to tell him the issues that are most important to their towns. Ms. Reemsnyder said that the hot issues are: Regionalization of the health districts and the proposal to reduce the number of MPOs in the state.

She told the Senator that two weeks ago a special meeting was held with the health districts, the health directors and the CEOs of the RiverCOG towns to discuss the proposal to regionalize. The minutes of that meeting accurately detail the feelings of those present and a copy was given to the Senator. She stated that at that meeting the members voted to send a letter, signed by the CEOs, to the CT Commissioner of Public Health. She stated that the RiverCOG towns work well together sharing some services, however what the State is trying to mandate would make it difficult on our towns. The State is proposing that what the towns would have to pay would be tied to the municipal budget and it could be as much as 1.5%. This would be a huge amount for the towns to pay, but the State wants to create large health districts.

Senator Kennedy said that he has received several calls and letters regarding the consolidation of health districts. He felt that towns should be able to decide for themselves what is good for them. He is really interested in understanding how and in what ways towns can be encouraged to cooperate and maybe there is legislation that is needed.

Laura Francis stated that the Commissioner of Public Health thinks that the towns are being underserved, but, when asked, cannot say in what ways it is underserved. Ms. Francis gave an

example of shared services between four towns that developed an RFP for a consultant to give us some assistance in analyzing the operation of our transfer stations.

Cathy Iino said that the towns are told that regionalization will save money, but clearly the health district will not save the towns money and will put more of a burden on the taxpayers.

Senator Kennedy asked if a town could choose which health district they wanted to be in. Lizz Milardo stated that Haddam was in a health district where the majority of towns were on the other side of the river and this presented a challenge. Haddam has changed to a health district in which the towns are on the same side of the river and it is working much better. Now our emergency center is together with towns that are closer to us. My operating budget for that is \$90,000 a year, however the residents of Haddam are getting many more services than before for their money. Senator Kennedy asked what the response is from the Commissioner of Public Health when the RiverCOG voices their concerns. Tony Salvatore said that the Commissioner met with the Health Directors and did not meet with the Chief Elected Officials. He also stated that it would be mandated that the municipality join a district and the town would be charged. He said that the town of Cromwell has their own health director and does not want to join a health district.

Bonnie Reemsnyder said that as CEOs we often reach out to each other to look where we can save money for our towns and work together. We do this with our neighboring towns all the time. So we really feel that we need to be at the table when this is discussed. She stated that recently Old Lyme reached out to towns outside of the RiverCOG on the FRA's (Federal Railroad Administration) proposal for a high speed train track. There were First Selectmen from Stonington to Old Saybrook so when we need to come together we do.

The second issue Ms. Reemsnyder spoke about was the proposal to reduce the number of MPOs in the state. She and Sam Gold, Executive Director, had traveled to Washington DC to speak at a workshop with US Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx. There is a proposal at the federal level, and there is also a desire at the state level, to reduce the number of MPOs to between one and three for the entire state.

Bonnie Reemsnyder introduced Jon Curtis to discuss the MPO proposal. Mr. Curtis stated that the second comment period closed on Monday for the proposed MPO merger. This is an issue that the RiverCOG has been working on all summer. CTDOT's remarks to the USDOT were to reduce the number of MPOs from 9 to between 1 and 3 in the state. He said that he and Torrance Downes had attended an Association of COGs meeting in which Tom Maziarz, Bureau Chief, CTDOT was present. He said that it is their intent to preserve the existing COGs, and create overarching MPOs. Mr. Maziarz will be attending the December RiverCOG meeting.

Senator Kennedy asked what is driving this. Bonnie Reemsnyder said part of the answer is that with 1 to 3 MPOs in the state it would allow the MPOs to do more of the work that CTDOT does now.

Cathy Iino said that with both the health district and the MPO issues it feels like the state departments that are doing this are actively trying not to communicate with us. This is backwards we should be contacted from the beginning.

Michael Maniscalco felt that policies and rulemakings are being done without receiving the comments from the people involved. He said it is imperative that we send a message that we need to start communicating better and working together to create good public policy.

Bonnie Reemsnyder thanked Senator Kennedy for attending the RiverCOG meeting.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 28, 2016 LCRVCOG AND LCRVMPO MEETING AND THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 14 SPECIAL LCRVCOG MEETING

Upon motion of Noel Bishop, seconded by Ed Bailey, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the September 28, 2016 LCRVCOG & MPO meeting.

Upon motion of Cathy Iino, seconded by Ed Bailey, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the October 14, 2016 special LCRVCOG meeting.

4. LCRVMPO BUSINESS

a. Endorsement September 2016 Ozone Air Quality Conformity Determinations

Robert Haramut explained the 2016 ozone air quality conformity determinations. Usually this is done when a TIP or a long range plan is updated. However these endorsements are for regional significant projects and can be conditional approved pending any additional comments.

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Laura Francis, it was unanimously voted to approve the resolution for Greater Connecticut Ozone Marginal Nonattainment Area (Litchfield, Hartford, Tolland, New London and Windham Counties).

Upon motion of Carl Fortuna, seconded by Cathy Iino, it was unanimously voted to approve the resolution for New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT Ozone Marginal Nonattainment Area (Fairfield, New Haven and Middlesex Counties).

b. Transportation Project Updates

Robert Haramut updated the members on the following transportation projects.

LOPCIP – There are two existing projects, Old Saybrook and Durham that should be going into final design before the end of the year. Mr. Haramut submitted all the jobs from the last solicitation and so far received comments from Middletown and Cromwell.

Transportation Enhancement Program Applications – November 14th is the deadline. Mr. Haramut will summarize the applications for the board to review at the December 7th meeting.

Bus Ridership Study – Two RFQs have been received and CTDOT is reviewing those now.

Corridor Studies – Route 66 and Route 81 studies from last year. The preliminary scope of work and RFQs were sent to CTDOT. These need to be separated into two projects and CTDOT should start the selection process in the spring.

2018 TIP – The draft should be completed by April or May and then it will go through the air quality modeling process.

UPWP – The draft will be completed in the spring. This will have the same schedule as the 2018 TIP.

State Capitol Plan - Mr. Haramut is meeting with CTDOT on November 8th. The members should contact Mr. Haramut if there are other projects to add to the list.

Freight Plan – The work has started on this project.

MPO Certification – This issue will be coming up in the late spring early summer.

Bruce Farmer asked about the Clinton train station. Rob Haramut stated that there is a problem with Amtrak that needs to be resolved before going forward.

c. Update on the USDOT Proposed Rulemaking on MPOs - Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordination and Planning Area Reform

Jon Curtis thanked all the members for their support through the comment period and asked if anyone had any questions. Lizz Milardo asked about the town being split between two MPOs. Mr. Curtis was told by CTDOT that towns would not be split. Noel Bishop asked if there was a timeline for a decision. Mr. Curtis said there were several factors to that, including the election.

5. LCRVCOG BUSINESS

a. River COG Non-Profit Report

Torrance Downes stated that on October 18th he met with Sam Gold, Margot Burns, Melvin Woody (Gateway Commission and CT River Land Trust), Nancy Fischbach (Gateway Commission and CT River Land Trust) and Attorney Steve Mednick to discuss the 501c3 non-profit status. The CT River Land Trust is the organization that has the 501c3 non-profit determination. The major concern was if the non-profit is turned over to the RiverCOG and there are conservation interests and other interests how do we silo the funds that come in and who accesses them. The conclusion was that the Community Foundation of Middlesex County

(Nancy Fischbach is a board member) or the Hartford County are good models because they do that in their process. Attorney Mednick was asked to develop draft by-laws that would represent that kind of opportunity.

b. Regional Election Monitor Report – Preparations for Election Day

Carol Conklin said activity has increased in the towns with training and questions. There is a new system in place for the end of night reporting and getting the results to Hartford. There is also new handicapped equipment for voting. She has asked all the registrars to test all the equipment before Election Day. Plug everything in, test the password, test the user name, test it in an office, test it at the polling location, and test the wifi. Nothing should be done at the last minute. The registrars have been encouraged to have police phone numbers on hand in the event of traffic or problems with voters.

c. FY 2016 River COG Financial Report

Paula Fernald said that the audit has been completed and copies will be available shortly.

d. CT DPH County Health Department Proposal Update

Bonnie Reemsnyder said that it was decided at the special meeting that a letter, signed by all the members, will be sent when Sam Gold returns next week.

e. 2017 Household Hazardous Waste Program

Janice Ehle-Meyer said that this Saturday is the last household hazardous waste collection day for this year. She said it has been a successful year with 3 satellite collections (Clinton, East Hampton and Middletown) and 10 collections at the permanent facility in Essex. The 3-year contract with Clean Harbors will be expire after the last collection and a RFP for a new contract will be advertised shortly. Ms. Ehle-Meyer said that the State producer programs for the disposal of mattresses and electronics are bringing in more than the State had expected. Cathy Iino asked about disposal of smoke detectors. Ms. Ehle-Meyer said that there is a list of priorities that the State is looking at to get producer responsibility involved in programs such as packaging, carpeting and tires.

f. Regional Plan Update

i. RFP Consultant Recommendation

Jon Curtis said sections of the regional plan are being drafted and an outline will be completed by next week. He said that the RiverCOG staff has interviewed three firms that submitted proposals to do a regional resiliency study and related public outreach. Staff is reviewing those firms and a decision should be made shortly. Mr. Curtis said that the RiverCOG is requesting a resolution that would allow Sam Gold to sign on with the firm that is chosen and that

the contract should not exceed \$100,000. The funds are available for this purpose from the CIRCA Resiliency Grant and the Department of Housing CBDG. Laura Francis asked if the Executive Committee had participated in those interviews. Mr. Curtis stated that they had not. He said that it is an extensive contract that spells out exactly what the timeline is, deliverable, payment schedule, etc.

Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Ed Bailey, it was unanimously voted to approve the resolution to allow Samuel Gold, Executive Director of the RiverCOG, to sign the contract with a consultant firm to conduct the regional resiliency study and related public outreach with the condition that the fee not exceed \$100,000.

Laura Francis stated that she is a little uncomfortable with this process because no member of the Executive Committee participated in the interviews. Mr. Curtis reiterated that the CIRCA grant the RiverCOG received was specifically for this purpose. He will send a copy to the Executive Committee.

g. DEMHS Update –Hughes Net Emergency Satellite Internet

Torrance Downes said that 10 of the 17 towns are in Region 2 of DEMHS. This concerns 6 RiverCOG towns: Chester, Durham, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth and Westbrook. The Hughes Net Emergency Satellite Internet is a communication system that Region 2 has used their DEMHS funds to pay for. This is emergency communications equipment that is used when the power goes out, the last time being Hurricane Sandy. This is a monthly expense that DEMHS decided they would no longer pay for. They voted to turn the funding over to each of the municipalities that want to continue this service. This would be approximately \$107.00 per month or about \$1,300.00 per year. Mr. Downes is discussing this now so the affected towns can plan for this in their budget. An official letter will be sent to the towns by DEMHS. The funding for this service will be in effect until June 30, 2017. Lauren Gister asked if this service is automatically renewed and if some towns chose not to participate will the cost go up for the other towns. Mr. Downes will check into that.

h. CCM Regionalism – BEST Conference

Bonnie Reemsnyder stated that the CCM Conference is on November 14th and 15th this year. The first day will be focused on CEOs. Susan Bransfield said she is on the CCM board. She said that both small rural towns and large cities are encouraged to join. Bonnie Reemsnyder said that Joe Delong, CCM Executive Director will be at the December 7th meeting of the RiverCOG. Torrance Downes stated that he had attended an Executive Directors, Council of Governments meeting in which the CCM consultant spoke about shared services of personnel, purchasing equipment, and regionalization in the state.

i. Small Cell / Mobilitie

Jon Curtis said that the Siting Council has said that Mobilitie has to go through the Siting Council for new construction. He warned the towns to be aware and watch if a company is digging pole holes in your town.

j. Regional Services Sub-Committee and Economic Sub-Committee Update

Jon Curtis said the survey has been sent out and asked the members to please fill out and return to him. At the next meeting he will present the results.

Mr. Curtis said that the economic sub-committee had decided to issue a RFP to hire a consultant to continue the GrowSmart Plan, Phase II, the implementation.

6. CHAIRMAN'S AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

Bonnie Reemsnyder updated the members on her and Sam Golds' trip to Washington DC to discuss the MPO pending merger plans. The keynote speaker of the conference was the Secretary of USDOT, Anthony Foxx. After his presentation he opened it up for questions. Ms. Reemsnyder had the opportunity to make the point that what happens at the local level is very important. She made the point of how the FRA was making a decision to have a high speed train go through Old Lyme and what it would do to the community. Mr. Gold was asked to sit on a panel and speak about MPOs and how they function. Ms. Reemsnyder said he made all his points and the members should be very proud of him. Afterwards Ms. Reemsnyder and Mr. Gold spoke to 6 or 8 staff members who are reporting to the Secretary. They understand their concerns.

Susan Bransfield announced that an article about the proposal for a high speed train to go through Old Lyme was in the *Bloomberg News* magazine. Ms. Bransfield would also like to see our congressmen and state representatives at the RiverCOG meetings.

Tony Salvatore suggested that the minutes reflect our appreciation of this COG to the Chairman and the Executive Director for the outstanding job with their initiative to go to Washington DC.

Upon motion of Laura Francis, seconded by Cathy Iino, it was unanimously voted to approve that the minutes reflect our appreciation of this COG to the Chairman and the Executive Director for the outstanding job with their initiative to go to Washington DC.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Lizz Milardo reminded the members that tomorrow is the CT Tourism Caucus in New Britain at 10:30 a.m. Bonnie Reemsnyder asked Judy Snyder to send out a reminder for that event. Ms.

Reemsnyder said that the board had discussed joining the Tourism board and this should be on the next agenda.

Noel Bishop suggested that a letter be sent to the Senator with copies to the representatives summarizing the points that were made today. What was said today not just on the health issue but the disconnection that is occurring when the state does not consult municipalities.

Laura Francis reminded the members that the statewide drill on emergency management is Saturday and Wednesday. She asked about the possibility of the RiverCOG helping her with a HR consultant to talk about this new role with employee overtime. Ms. Reemsnyder asked the members if they would like her to get a couple of consultants to come and talk about this. Ms. Francis said if all the towns need to look at their job descriptions then it may be feasible to do a RFP. Cathy Iino asked if we could get someone from CCM or COST. Ms. Reemsnyder will contact them.

Pat Bandzes said that the Clean Energy communities are having free regional energy workshops. The closest one will be in Berlin. If members have not received that information let her know and she will get it out and please share that information with your Clean Energy Committee.

Cathy Iino asked if the RiverCOG could conduct a workshop on the MS4 (municipal separate storm sewer system) as public education.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Ed Bailey, seconded by Lauren Gister, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Snyder
Recording Secretary