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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, October 24, 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: Joe Samolis \*  
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  
James Redeker, CT DOT  
Edgar Wynkoop, CT DOT  
Dawn Parker, The Connection & Shoreline Basic Needs Task Force  
Suzanne Helchowski, Westbrook  
David Maiden, Westbrook Building Official  
Judi Rand, Middlefield

**Staff Present:**

Sam Gold  
Torrance Downes

\*Members Present

Robert Haramut  
Janice Ehle-Meyer  
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 Lyman Orchards Clubhouse, 70 Lyman Road, Middlefield, CT.

Roll call was taken by Sam Gold, Executive Director. He thanked Ed Bailey for hosting the meeting at Lyman's.

### **Public Speaking:**

a. Dawn Parker from The Connection and the Shoreline Basic Needs Task Force explained that the Middlesex United Way ALICE (asset limited income constrained employed) numbers include those that are employed, but are in poverty due to many factors, particularly expensive housing and childcare in our area. She explained the focus of the Shoreline Basic Needs Task Force (SBNTF): food security, household income and affordable housing. 1 out of 3 households in our region are considered to be in the ALICE. A family of 4 needs to make \$78,000/year just to survive in our region. There are jobs in our communities, though not necessarily up to that pay level, which makes it tough for those employed here to live here, especially as 89% of our housing is single family residence. She discussed 8-30g (CT State Statute on affordable housing), the need for mixed housing and advocating for such. Ms. Parker is available to come to any town to facilitate board development.

## **2. CT DOT Budget Update – Commissioner James Redeker**

Commissioner Redeker discussed the state's decision to dedicate the existing new car sales tax to the transportation fund. This enabled CT DOT to operate and fund trains and busses without service cuts or fare increases for the next five years. He noted that for this fiscal year there is about 3.5 million in cash reserve. However given the weather lately, this is probably not enough to avoid a deficit; that amount could be spent in a two-day snow storm. Due to the funding, local transportation, local bridge and community connectivity grant programs have been moving forward.

This past year of holding back on projects and having insufficient staff has done irreversible damage. This means that there will be some future holding pattern on projects, and that since the number of snow plowing staff is down by over 15%, that service will be slow. The Commissioner discussed staffing and the timeline of such, and how the reduced staffing can affect towns.

Laura Francis asked about a way to make it viable for towns to plow their portions of state roads, possibly using financial or other types of incentives. The Commissioner discussed examples where state roads have been transferred to towns, and he mentioned that he is open to creative ideas on the subject.

The Go CT Card for public transportation will be unveiled shortly. This is a pre-paid card with a fare capping mechanism built in. Lisa Seymour asked about a timeline for other districts to be able to use the card, as MAT would like to do so. Commissioner Redeker discussed the need for procurement of new fare boxes, and different platforms to make the program viable. This will be done in an incremental fashion, it's being worked on along with some new strategy/technology to come.

Carl Fortuna thanked the Commissioner for his accessibility and asked about problems with the Shoreline East. Commissioner Redeker explained that earlier this year Amtrak gave one week notice that they were under-cutting the tracks, which took a track out of service this summer. Mr. Fortuna asked about the problem of trains idling in neighborhoods, and the reasons for this were discussed. To alleviate issues, new locomotives are coming in, there will be some swapping of equipment, and Commissioner Redeker has been working with Amtrak on cross-honoring tickets, adding supplemental busses, expanding customer service and offering a customized social media communication system.

Chairman Reemsnyder asked about the outcome of the scenic highway application for the Chester Bowles Highway (Route 9), as there had been no answer given by CT DOT. Commissioner Redeker explained that though the application was thorough, it was denied because it is a major, high-speed highway, not one that people should be touring slowly, and the scenic locations and attractions are located off the highway (not to be seen from it).

Christine Goupil asked about the status on the ground breaking for the Clinton train station. Commissioner Redeker stated that as the bids were being put out, Amtrak said that they could not support the project because of lack of resources. The Commissioner reallocated his resources to make sure the project moves ahead. As of now it is a fully supported project and Ms. Goupil can expect a ground breaking some time in 2019. Ms. Goupil commended CT DOT staff on their handling of the Shoreline East meeting for the rider's advocacy group.

Lizz Milardo asked that since Haddam is pursuing a brownfield grant for the old CT DOT garage in Haddam that CT DOT holds off on asking her to purchase the building.

Sam Gold thanked CT DOT employees Dennis Salinsky for helping with the Transit Integration Study and departmental support, and Pam Súcato in the new policy office.

Chairman Reemsnyder stated that the small towns appreciate the grant opportunities and assistance with local bridge. She also stated her appreciation for the COG staff in helping to facilitate the process. Commissioner Redeker said that now that the LOTCIP program has been demonstrated to be successful through the COGs, he believes there are opportunities to do more similar programs. He also stated that there is a forthcoming and probable rescission in 2020 of half of the federal highway dollars and 80% of the transportation funds. His operating and capital program assumes that this gets fixed, but it would be helpful if the COGs coordinated a statement soon about this. This will be discussed at an upcoming meeting.

### **3. LCRVMPO Business**

- a. Approval of the Minutes of the September 26, 2018 LCRVCOG and LCRVMPO Meeting

*Upon motion of Mr. Fortuna, seconded by Mr. McDonald, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the September 26, 2018 meeting.*

- b. Transportation Improvement Program

- i. 2018 TIP amendment #18 – delete Middletown central business district parking garage, project 0082-0308

The funding for this project is still in place, though the draft project is moving from one location to another so it will have a new project number and become a different project.

*Upon motion of Mr. Fortuna, seconded by Mr. McDonald, it was unanimously voted to approve 2018 TIP amendment #18 – deletion of Middletown central business district parking garage, project 0082-0308.*

*Discussion: Mr. Gold noted that there may potentially be more TIP amendments coming as the CT DOT attempts to move money around before the funding issue in 2020 (that was previously discussed by Commissioner Redeker).*

c. Endorse LOTCIP Project Selection Process & Project Rating Criteria

Mr. Haramut stated that once the above is endorsed he will send the solicitation out, probably next Monday. The towns will have 6 – 8 weeks to put together applications, which will be gone through at the January COG meeting. There was discussion on the environmental justice (EJ) factor and how it does or does not affect the towns that do not have that population on a census tract. Mr. Gold noted that if the EJ did benefit a community (like Middletown's North end) it would be a bonus, but if it did not apply it would not harm towns that have only one census tract.

*Mr. Fortuna moved to endorse the LOTCIP Project Selection Process & Project Rating Criteria as is; second by Mr. Maniscalco.*

*Discussion: There was further discussion on the question of the EJ and the possibility of removing it.*

*Ms. Francis moved to amend the motion to include removal of the environmental justice criteria. Second by Mr. Bailey. Voted passed with Ms. Iino and Mr. Samolis opposed.*

*Discussion: Mr. Gold does not think that the EJ portion would affect the applications, other than being a bonus for those that qualify. Mr. Haramut noted that the numbers can be different based on whether a statewide, town-wide or regional average is used, depending on the program. The EJ factor was in the last solicitation and did not seem to give a disadvantage to towns without that EJ census tract. The COG is the determiner of the ranking of applications, using the criteria as a tool, there is no known CT DOT review of the applications. Mr. Gold noted that this is a ranking tool that the staff uses to assess the projects submitted, and then the COG board has the power to actually rank the projects (and do not have to follow staff recommendation, though it is encouraged).*

*The amended motion from above, moved forward by Mr. Fortuna and seconded by Mr. Maniscalco, to endorse the LOTCIP Project Selection Process & Project Rating Criteria with the removal of the environmental justice criteria passed unanimously.*

At this time, Ms. Francis asked if Mr. Haramut had any indication that the moving of utilities by Eversource was holding up decisions on bids. He has not heard anything about this issue in our region, though there may be a meeting in the works about the topic. Pat Bandzes of Eversource stated that there is a state statute that governs when a town can be charged or not charged, which has not been applied or enforced consistently. Mr. Salvatore had the statute reviewed and he believes that moving utility poles cannot be charged to the town; though this wasn't specifically regarding Eversource. All the utilities are treated differently. There was general discussion on delays on LOTCIP projects due to moving of and charging for utilities.

d. Other Transportation Updates

i. Route 66 & Route 81 Corridor Studies

Both studies are moving along – draft existing conditions reports are currently being reviewed by the towns’ advisory committees. Once the future conditions reports come out, meetings with the towns to start going over recommendations will begin.

ii. Transit Integration Study

The selection committee has chosen Nelson Nygaard as the consultant for the plan after interviewing three firms. Mr. Gold received a budget and scope of work which he will review soon and hopes to enter into an agreement with them within the next month.

iii. Regional Long Range Transportation Plan Update

The update is in process; rough drafts will go out to Federal & State agencies by January 4. Once the air quality studies are done by the state DOT, the plan will go to the formal public comment period. All plans need to be in by April 12. We will look for approval at the March 27, 2019 meeting.

iv. Clinton Train Station/Shore Line East Update

A meeting was held in Clinton last week, attended by Ms. Goupil and Mr. Gold. The Shore Line East riders are upset regarding the service. Ms. Goupil noted that due to procurement requirements, it can take up to eight years to purchase new trains. This has led to the current situation of broken-down trains. There also seems to be a lack of coordination with Amtrak. Mr. Gold noted that after everything is worked out, Shore Line East will need to rebuild their ridership. Mr. Fortuna noted that he has had contact with William Hollister of Amtrak, and perhaps he can come to a meeting to discuss.

**4. LCRVCOG Business**

a. Regional Election Monitor Report

Ms. Conklin noted that on October 30 registrar offices will be open from 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. statewide as it voting registration deadline. Regarding a discussion at the last meeting, Ms. Conklin will forward information regarding registrar job descriptions and information regarding salary. Last month she also mentioned the federal funding which the state is putting toward the election monitors, but now it is possibly only funding to the level of cyber security tasks.

Registrars are reporting high voter registration. There is a statewide call tomorrow with registrars. Random fraudulent letters are being sent to state citizens telling them they are not able to vote. These are being tracked and are coming out of Georgia, with possible motives of deterring people from the polls or identity theft.

Ms. Conklin also mentioned that it would be helpful to have a policy or ordinance between each town and their board of finance to not hold a referendum within the three weeks prior to and the two weeks after an election. This is because the registrar’s duties will overlap, and resources such as poll workers may be scarce. Ms. Francis mentioned that there are more approval steps (through the state) to get a referendum on a November ballot, which hinders putting referendum questions on the same election cycle. Ms. Conklin will relay those concerns. Ms. Goupil noted that once someone brings an ordinance forward it cannot be blocked, she asked for management advice on that. The process varies from town to town, and if it’s a continual storage or lock-up process it can be more of an issue.

b. HHW Update

Ms. Ehle/Meyer noted that the coming Saturday is the last collection for the year. The collection on October 13 at Middlesex Community College was very busy. She discussed recycling, as the window of sending recyclables to Mass. is closing up. She sent out a link to a webinar on product stewardship that will occur on Friday. Ms. Francis asked about towns adding collection dates and what that would entail. It would be \$550 for administration, additional cost of traffic, and a little more cost for time of putting up signs, etc. Ms. Ehle/Meyer will send out a projection with more information to the Northern towns.

c. Hydrilla/Invasive Species Update

Ms. Burns reported that samples of plants found in the CT River were sent for genetic testing and were confirmed as hydrilla. This was not on DEEP's radar, but she has talked to them and hopefully there will be plans to move forward with abatement as this is a very invasive plant that spreads out by fragmentation over the water's surface and has tubers that are difficult to remove and can reproduce over 5-6 years. Dealing with this plant is a long-term problem. She distributed a report on how hydrilla has been managed in Croton, NY.

Ms. Burns also noted that last legislative session a bill was passed for a "save our lakes" license plate fund. She would like to see this amended to also include rivers and ponds. She will remind the CEOs of this issue closer to the January meeting.

d. Shared Services Discussion

Mr. Gold reported that the next shared services meeting will be held November 7<sup>th</sup>. He would like to invite Eversource to come so the group can discuss tree issues more in-depth, along with the possibility of shared equipment, or tree services, and working together on a solution for the residual wood. Next week he will be presenting at the CCM conference on shared services within COGs, and opportunities for such. He noted that the NW Hills COG has a shared equipment collaborative which could be a model.

*Ms. Milardo moved to add agenda item 4 e: Letters of Support for DECD Grants. Second by Mr. Bailey. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

e. Letters of Support for DECD Grants

Requests for letters of support were received from Haddam and East Haddam. Ms. Milardo explained that her project in Haddam involves renovation to Scovil Hoe Mill, which was once used as a CT DOT garage and is a contaminated brownfield site. There is now an interested tenant who is eligible for funding from the USDA. This site was one of five identified by the state to receive funding to clean it up. The funding unfortunately ran out before it was used on this project, but now they are in a favorable place to receive DECD funding.

The East Haddam project involves renovation of the old Town Hall property and Mr. Lyman is requesting a letter of support to look at brownfield issues.

*Upon motion of Mr. Maniscalco and second of Ms. Gister, it was voted unanimously to support both letters of support for the discussed projects.*

*Mr. Salvatore moved to add agenda item 4f: Application for Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan; second by Mr. Bailey. Vote was unanimous in favor.*

f. Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans

Sixteen of the seventeen towns would like to participate regionally in pursuing a grant to update the pre-disaster mitigation plans. The non-federal share of the plan will be around \$3,900 per town, if allocated equally. By doing the plan regionally rather than each town on their own, money and resources will be saved as there will be one plan done by one consultant.

*Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore and second of Ms. Milardo, it was voted unanimously to authorize Mr. Gold to write a letter stating that the COG voted to support the regional pre-disaster mitigation plan grant.*

*Discussion: If the individual towns also write letters of support that would be helpful. Mr. Gold noted that a lapse will occur in the existing plans. If a disaster occurs, post-disaster FEMA money is still available whether there is a plan or not. However, there is a small amount of money for mitigation projects, which can be rolled into disaster recovery if necessary. After being advised of the potential risks due to lapsing plans, Old Saybrook, as they are surrounded by water on two sides and have a town planner willing to take on this project, decided to do it on their own with town funds.*

Mr. Salvatore asked that the support letter be shared with all CEOs.

## 5. Chairman's and Executive Director's Reports

Chairman Reemsnyder asked for volunteers for the nominating committee for the next board. Ms. Francis, Mr. Fortuna and Ms. Milardo volunteered.

Mr. Gold stated that at the end of the first quarter the STIF account total was \$908,997 and the Liberty checking account was \$34,724. The COG was looking at other options of money markets or CDs instead of the STIF but decided not to pursue further because the STIF rates went up. He also stated that Jon Curtis recently had surgery that went well, and he will hopefully be back to work by the end of November.

## 6. Other Business

a. Update on DEMHS, Gateway & Interim ZEO Work

Mr. Downes reported that as the fiduciary for DEMHS Region 2, he attended a field day intended to familiarize everyone with the equipment purchased through the program. He will create a presentation for a future meeting.

The Gateway standards have been adopted and now each of the 8 towns needs to adopt them into their zoning standards. The rough edges of the standards are being worked out with a land use attorney.

Mr. Downes and Mr. Bourret have been continuing their work as the interim ZEO in Clinton for 8 hours a week to keep the administrative permits moving forward. There was a candidate for the position, but it did not work out.

b. Next meeting on December 5<sup>th</sup>

Other: Drug take-back day is happening on Saturday, October 27.

Garbage and recyclables need to be discussed in the near future, as there is a possible crisis coming.

## 8. Adjournment

Lower CT River Valley COG and MPO  
Minutes of the Oct. 24, 2018 Meeting

*Upon motion of Mr. Bailey and second of Mr. Maniscalco, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:09 a.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Eliza LoPresti  
Recording Secretary