



145 Dennison Road
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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**

APPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, March 22, 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: Ralph Eno
Middlefield: Ed Bailey *
Middletown: Daniel Drew - Joseph Samolis proxy
Old Lyme: Bonnie Reemsnyder *
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna
Portland: Susan Bransfield – Mary Dickerson proxy *
Westbrook: Noel Bishop *

MPO Members:

Middlesex Chamber of Commerce: Darlene Briggs *
Estuary Transit District: Joe Comerford
Middletown Area Transit: Andrew Chiaravallo *

Others Present:

Pat Bandzes, Eversource
Joel Severance, CERT
Carolyn Linn, Chester Selectman
Paul Doyle
Keith Campbell, Scan-Optics
Edgar Wynkoop, CTDOT

* Members Present

Staff Present:

Samuel Gold, AICP
Judy Snyder
Rob Haramut
Torrance Downes
Dan Bourret
Margot Burns
Janice Ehle/Meyer
Paula Fernald

1. CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, PUBLIC SPEAKING

Chairman Bonnie Reemsnyder called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. at the RiverCOG offices, 145 Dennison Road, Essex, CT. Roll call was taken by Sam Gold, Executive Director and guests were introduced.

- a. Joel Severance, CT River Pumpout Boat Program 2016 Annual Report and Region 2 Citizen Corps Program 2016 Annual Report

Joel Severance is the representative for the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) Region 2 which includes the towns of Chester, Clinton, Deep River, Durham, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth, Middlefield, Old Saybrook and Westbrook. He explained that the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is a public safety program, divided into 5 regions in the state. There are 15 teams in Region 2 participating in various activities such as traffic control at major accidents scenes, fire safety, local activations, and search and rescue for missing persons. The town of Durham is part of CERT and also participates in DART, the animal counterpart of CERT, which participates in animal rescue. The water boat pumpout program empties waste tanks on boats to a holding tank on the pumpout boat and then the waste is unloaded into sewer lines. The number of pumpouts increased 25% last year and serves eight towns from the East Haddam Swing Bridge, south to Long Island Sound.

- b. Pat Bandzes said that an Eversource representative will be at the April meeting.
- c. Paul Bongiovanni, Scan-Optics

Bonnie Reemsnyder introduced Keith Campbell saying that due to an accident Paul Bongiovanni was not able to attend and Mr. Campbell would be taking his place. Sam Gold stated that Scan-Optics is the state vendor for scanning paperwork and they have the state contract. He asked Scan-Optics to make a brief presentation to see if any of the towns would be interested in this service.

Keith Campbell said that his company, Scan-Optics, is a 50 year old company located in Manchester, CT that converts paper documents into scanned data. He said there are different types of scanning. The basic scan that most people are familiar with is to scan into a pdf file. Scan-Optics does not do this. He said that once these documents are scanned into a pdf format the majority of people cannot find these files again in their database. Scan-Optics names each document scanned with OCR technology at the time of the scan to capture the index of that document. He said that the files that are scanned do not have to be in paper. *Easy,forward* Managed Capture Service is Scan-Optics cloud based paper to paperless solution

that converts electronic documents into an index forum. There is no charge for a license for the *Easy.forward* program however there is a cost per image between \$.06 and \$.10 an image.

Bonnie Reemsnyder asked what is available for the towns and are we able to take advantage of the state contract. Mr. Campbell stated that yes the towns would fall under the state contract.

Laura Francis asked if Scan-Optics is working with the state librarian and is this service eligible for the preservation of files in the town clerk's office. Mr. Campbell stated that it is and that the State Library Commission has a \$5,000 grant that many of the towns are using to start the process.

Cathy Iino asked if this process is started does it feed into a program that going forward people could use for electronic applications. Mr. Campbell stated that it does and that large size documents and blue print drawing can also be scanned.

Bruce Farmer asked if microfiche files can be scanned. Mr. Campbell stated that they can. Scan-Optics also built a scanner that can scan at a 45 degree angle and moves pages of a book by electronics.

Members asked for additional information on the State Library grant. Paul Bongiovanni will e-mail the grant number from the State Library Commission for the \$5,000 grant.

Sam Gold said that scanning can be done in sections when the funds are available.

4. LCRVMPO BUSINESS

- a. Approval Minutes of the February 22, 2017 LCRVCOG and LCRVMPO Meeting (motion)

Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Noel Bishop, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2017 meeting.

- b. Transportation Updates

- i. 5310 applications are due on the March 24th

Robert Haramut said there were no significant changes from previous years. Cromwell and the Estuary Transit District have applied with Durham and Middlefield submitting applications before the end of the week.

- ii. Municipal grant program applications

Robert Haramut said these applications will be coming out soon. Sam Gold said that last year's money would be used. These grants are awarded for disability/handicapped applications.

- iii. UPWP updating

Robert Haramut said that he will be presenting the UPWP to the Board for endorsement at the May meeting.

iv. MPO Certification (CERT) review is March 23rd

Robert Haramut said that the federal MPO certification review will be conducted at the RiverCOG on Thursday and all are invited to attend. Public comments will be heard starting at 3:45 p.m. This review is conducted every four years by the state DOT, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration.

5. LCRVCOG BUSINESS

a. RiverCOG Office Space (motion)

Sam Gold stated that several properties had been looked at both to purchase and lease. As of now there are three choices for new office space. 1.) The Deep River property at 500 Main Street is 4,000 square feet on two floors and both floors are accessible to the outside. Cubicles would need to be created; 2) 50 West Avenue is in the Essex industrial park. This site has offices and a large conference room separate from the offices; and, 3) the Haddam building at 7 Island Dock Road is 12,500 square feet. There is a possibility that the space could be divided with a lease agreement.

Sam Gold stated that the RiverCOG would be eligible for a USDA mortgage. Paula Fernald explained that they had met with a representative of the USDA and an application has been prepared for submission. She explained that applying now will lock in the 3.375% mortgage interest rate for 5 years. This is a fixed mortgage for 40 years.

Sam Gold stated that he does not have a recommendation of any one site at this time.

Upon motion of Laura Francis, seconded by Lauren Gister, it was unanimously voted to authorize the office space subcommittee to make a decision on COG office space.

Ms. Reemsnyder thinks being in contact with others is valuable to us to get a true sense of what we are doing, but it's not something we can wait for until the next meeting, that's really the issue. We have to make a decision as soon as possible. Our subcommittee is Bonnie, Cathy, Tony, Noel, and Angus. Those are the people that have been most active and of course the staff has weighed in.

Sam Gold stated that the properties being looked at are between \$10 and \$11 per square foot and are gross rent not triple net, therefore are cheaper than we pay now. Bonnie Reemsnyder stated that they have been looking at buildings with 4,000 square feet, but depending on the layout we may need more and we definitely need a large conference room. Sam Gold said that there will be a short subcommittee meeting after this and then a site inspection of the 50 West Avenue property in Essex. If the Haddam property is available to rent we can set up a meeting and look at that also. Lizz Milardo said that traditionally that building has been rented, however now that the owner has passed away the heirs want to sell it. She said she had a conversation with Janice Ehle/Meyer about an engineering firm that was interested in the building. She is not sure if it was to purchase or lease. If the RiverCOG was to purchase this building other areas in the building would need to be rented. Ms. Milardo stated that the Haddam/Killingworth Youth and Family Services are in need of space.

Mary Dickerson asked if the RiverCOG was allowed to own a building that is a for profit enterprise. Sam Gold stated that we are allowed to own a building and he had polled the members to see where they stood

on building ownership. He said that the majority was comfortable with it, but others had some strong objections to it and for good reasons. Mr. Gold said that one of the issues with Haddam is that it is large, but even without tenants we could afford it because it is less expense than what we are currently paying. He stated that it looks like the heirs want to sell the building but there were some concerns about that. If the RiverCOG became a landlord the intent would be to rent to like organizations, other governmental entities, or non-profits. Bonnie Reemsnyder stated that if the RiverCOG did purchase the building she believes that we would be in a position to offer a fair rent particularly to youth service organizations and quasi-governmental organizations in keeping with the mission of the COG. We would not be in a position where we couldn't afford it without the rental income. She said that the subcommittee was looking at this as the last choice, but the properties that were looked at have drawbacks too.

Cathy Iino asked if the dues would be reduced if we purchased a building. Paula Fernald said that the grants we receive are not based on the income we bring in. We receive revenues from the dues and that is not looked at when we receive grants either. She said that any revenues we received from rentals could be applied multiple ways. 1. reduce dues; 2. go to capital fund; 3. pay down the debt early.

Ed Bailey said that years ago he had an experience with the USDA and warns to be careful and understand exactly what the USDA expects before issuing the mortgage.

Sam Gold stated that he would not rush into purchasing anything. If the space could be leased, and if the members were interested, maybe we could negotiate a possible lease to purchase, but if not then we would just have the lease. He said that there is no cost for applying for the loan and it does not commit us.

The members agreed to make a motion to apply for the USDA mortgage loan.

Upon motion of Cathy Iino, seconded by Bruce Farmer, it was unanimously voted to authorize the RiverCOG to apply for a USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Direct Loan.

b. RiverCOG Non-Profit

Sam Gold said that he has been working with the CT River Gateway Commission to acquire their 501(c)(3) non-profit status for the RiverCOG. The Gateway Commission has had the tax exempt status for the Lower CT River Land Trust for many years but has not used it. The intent of the RiverCOG is to acquire this status for future use by the COG and some existing projects in particular the Land Trust Exchange.

Sam Gold stated that he has been working with Attorney Steven Mednick on the by-laws for the Lower CT River Land Trust and stated that the COG will take over this non-profit with a by-laws change. The Gateway would approve the new by-law changes which would create a new membership and new board of directors. The membership would be a Board of Directors (the 17 municipalities), plus a Gateway Commission member. The Gateway Commission would retain a seat on the board. Members asked for the by-laws to be e-mailed to them and to place this issue on the April agenda with Attorney Mednick in attendance.

c. Legislation Update

Sam Gold said that the senate has unanimously voted to repeal the MPO reform regulation that was passed and finalized in January. He said other major legislation has come up since the last COG meeting

includes the public health districts in which he gave testimony. He also gave testimony regarding the possibility of tolls on some state highways and there was a bill that would have established an overarching transportation authority that would be able to overrule this entity and how it spent money for transportation planning.

Mr. Gold distributed his testimony on House Bill 7293, *An Act Concerning Regional Consolidation Efforts and Municipalities* (attachment #1). This bill would exempt voluntary consolidation of regionalization of staff or jobs from the existing labor agreements or future labor agreements. Mr. Gold stated that this could be helpful and also underscored that regional employees could still be unionized.

Cathy Iino asked if you have a person that is in the union in one town and now you wanted to shared that person what would happen.

Tony Salvatore said you can consolidate and come together. An example – if both your public works departments wanted to come together today you have to maintain two bargaining units for the two unions. This bill would eliminate that.

Lauren Gister stated that Chester shares an assessor with Haddam and it is quite expensive. Laura Francis said Durham has a full time assistant to the part time assessor. Bonnie Reemsnyder said that Old Lyme has a full time assistant and assessor. Cathy Iino stated that Killingworth does not need a full time assessor. Lizz Milardo stated that she has a full time assistant, recently hired a full time assessor, and now Haddam can do reveals in-house.

Sam Gold said that other revisions were to create a multi-purpose service district so the municipalities would join this service district and the services could be whatever the towns wanted. Examples could be public health, building and planning departments. This is an interesting idea.

Bruce Farmer asked what had happened with the implementer bill with regards to the recommendation of combining some town services. Sam Gold said that issue still exists and that we will probably not know the contents of the budget implement bill, until the very last days of the session. .

d. Regional Plan Update

Torrance Downes said that the RPC workshops are planned for the end of May into June.

e. Resiliency Plan

Margot Burns told the members that the Resiliency outreach meetings are coming and to please take the survey that is on-line. The first workshop is next Tuesday, March 28th at the Haddam Fire Department in Haddam.

f. Shared Staff

Sam Gold asked if anyone had any thoughts about possible shared staff positions. He said that Portland needs a town planner now that the Elcrest property is going to be developed.

6. CHAIRMAN'S AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

Sam Gold said he is working on a draft budget.

Cathy lino asked if we could do a quick survey about each town's budgets.

Noel Bishop – Board of Education came in under 1%, Municipal budget approximately 2.3%- 2.4% putting those two together about a 1.7%.

He asked if the members were putting in the teacher's retirement into the budget.

Durham and Deep River are presenting the teacher's retirement both ways.
Middlefield, East Haddam, and Chester – put it into the budget

Emmett Lyman – 7.4% increase with the teacher's retirement, 2.50 mils
put everything else off 3 weeks to see what the state budget looks like
Without teachers probably up \$100,000

Cathy lino – the Board of Selectmen presented the budget to the Board of Finance with a .08% increase without anything

Mary Dickerson - 3.2% majority was Board of Education, a new park was approved so there is some funding in there. This is the base starting number and this does not including the teachers

Ed Bailey – municipal budget came in at -1%, however the school budget, regional school district with Durham was a 3.14% increase, and the loss of the ECS (Education Cost Sharing) grant and the teacher's pension equals an increase of 7% which equals about 4 mils

Angus McDonald – still working on it but municipal budget 2% increase, equals 2 mils increase education budget are presenting both ways

Lizz Milardo – Less than 1% - increase our regional school district about a 2% increase equals 2 mil increase

Bruce Farmer – 1.75% increase on the town side and 3.77% on the school side
The biggest increase on the school side is the medical insurance premiums 1 ½ -2% mil increase

Laura Francis – 5 mil increase because of the ECS cut and school budget increase and if we add in the teacher's retirement it will be another 1 ¼ mil increase and that also increases the motor vehicle tax at 32

Ms. Francis said if your town has a senior freeze or deferral program you will probably reach your max this year.

Lauren Gister – Municipal budget is barebones and where it has increased is in the state mandates – trooper programs, storm water management, the school, but overall 1 ½-2 mil increase

Tony Salvatore – General fund is a 1.43% increase, Board of Education is 2.31% not including teacher's pension. Ask about special educational budget.

Bonnie Reemsnyder – School budget .49% increase, operating budget in capital coming in as flat until last night when she recommended to add a bridge reconstruction/repair for \$600,000 to budget, 50% increase for capital

She wanted to go to town meeting first to receive a reimbursement from the state.

Laura Francis stated that there isn't anywhere else to cut.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

a. DEMHS Update

Torrance Downes said that Region 2 is looking for a budget.

Janice Ehle/Meyer said that the first Household Hazardous Waste Collection for this year will be April 8th at the Clinton Public Works Garage.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Cathy Iino, seconded by Bruce Farmer, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Snyder
Recording Secretary



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March 22, 2017

Representative Roland Lemar, Co-Chair
Senator Steve Cassano, Co-Chair
Senator George Logan, Co-Chair
Planning and Development Committee
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: H.B. No. 7293 An Act Concerning Regional Consolidation Efforts and Municipalities

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Planning and Development Committee:

The Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) respectfully submits comments on HB 7293 An Act Concerning Regional Consolidation Efforts and Municipalities. RiverCOG has been working to help our seventeen municipalities work together and save money, through sharing and cooperation for a number of years. Although in our experience the implementation of regional services can be complicated and difficult, and not always successful, they are nevertheless worthwhile.

Sections one and two would exempt voluntary regional staff and service sharing from the constraints of each individual municipality's collective bargaining agreements. The exemption removes a significant impediment to municipalities working together. It is important to point out that such an exemption does not do curtail shared or regional employees' rights to union representation.

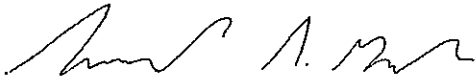
RiverCOG would also like to point out that a larger impediment to our efforts to facilitate shared services is the realization of cost savings. Replacing small town part-time staff, which do not receive benefits, with a better paid shared full-time staff with benefits, has so far not proven cost effective. Although removing the impediment of conflicting municipal collective bargaining agreements will make it more feasible for towns to share or regionalize staff and services, it does not alone make regionalism a certainty.

The concept of empowering regional service districts in sections three, four, and five is interesting and potentially helpful for administering regional services. RiverCOG questions the need for mandating some of the detailed requirements for the governance and operations of regional service districts. These details, such as weighted voting and the composition and powers of the executive committee, may be best decided by the member municipalities through the drafting and ratification of bylaws.

Finally, section six mandates work that is already taking place in the state's nine regional councils of governments. The municipal chief elected officials that sit on the state's COG boards are actively working to identify opportunities for regional shared services and are trying to make them work both at the COG and in their municipalities. RiverCOG appreciates the support of the General Assembly in its regionalism efforts.

I would like to thank the co-chairs and members of the Planning and Development Committee for this opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 860-581-8554 or sgold@rivercog.org if I can be of any assistance with this bill or other regionalism bills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samuel S. Gold". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a distinct "G".

Samuel S. Gold, AICP
Executive Director