



Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

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Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments and Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

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:

Pat Bandzes, Eversource
Edgar Wynkoop, CT DOT
Ian Havens, CIRMA
Dan Giungi, CCM

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Robert Haramut
Janice Ehle-Meyer
Margot Burns
Eliza LoPresti

RiverCOG

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

Chairman Michael Maniscalco called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. at RiverCOG, 145 Dennison Rd., Essex, CT.

Roll call was taken by Sam Gold, Executive Director.

There was no public speaking.

2. Presentation on Cyber Security – Ian Havens of CIRMA

Ian Havens gave an overview on CIRMA’s free cyber security training which is typically about 1.75 – 2 hours long. CIRMA member towns that pay for the LAP (liability, auto, property) policy have a cyber security package included. CIRMA is willing to provide a regional training if the towns are interested.

3. LCRVMPO Business

a. Approval of Minutes of the February 27, 2019 LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting

Upon motion of Ms. Gister, seconded by Mr. Salvatore, it was unanimously voted to approve the Feb. 27, 2019 Minutes of the LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting.

b. TIP Amendments

i. 2018 TIP Amendment #26 – Replace LED lamps at traffic signals at intersections in District 1, project number 0171-0449

ii. 2018 TIP Amendment #27 – Replace bridge 02442 on Rt. 68 over Saw Mill Brook in Durham, project number 0037-0103

Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore and second of Ms. Reemsnyder, it was unanimously voted to approve TIP Amendments #26 & #27.

c. Endorse 2019 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The plan has to be submitted to the state by Friday, April 12. So although we are still in the public comment period (which ends April 1), conditional approval is sought. Two public meetings were held on March 13th and 25th. At this time tolls were briefly discussed.

Upon motion of Ms. Reemsnyder and second of Mr. Salvatore it was voted to conditionally approve the 2019 – 2044 Regional Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Discussion: Mr. Gold thanked Mr. Haramut for all his hard work on this plan.

d. Endorse February 2019 Ozone and PM2.5 Air Quality Conformity Determination

Upon motion of Mr. Bishop and second of Ms. Francis it was voted to approve the AQC Determination.

e. Other Transportation Updates

i. UPWP – The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is a 2-year document that is the basis for the transportation planning grant we receive from CT DOT. A draft will be sent to CT DOT by the end of the week and a draft will be sent to the board for comment shortly as approval will be sought for the May meeting.

ii. Corridor/Transit Studies – The Route 81 corridor study will be wrapping up soon. Public advisory meetings for the Route 66 corridor study will be held over the next few weeks. The first conference call for the Transit Integration Study occurred, it went well and is moving forward.

iii. TAP & 5310 Applications Due – TAP applications are due April 10th and 5310 applications are due April 12th.

iv. Transit Providers Update – Joe Comerford reported that the Estuary Council of Seniors will be increasing their transportation program. Concerns were discussed such as the fact that they are charging a fare and may not have the license to do so, their past efforts at transportation efforts did not work (due to insufficient funding) and the ETD had to take over their program at a cost to them and the towns, and they may be duplicating services. It was decided that Mr. Gold will send a letter to the Estuary Council of Seniors asking for a meeting to discuss the extent of services and concerns.

4. LCRVCOG Business

a. Household Hazardous Waste 2019

Ms. Ehle/Meyer distributed pamphlets and flyers for all towns, as well as information on the ongoing compost bin/rain barrel sale and the Repair Café happening on April 7th. Also, a state Agriculture Commissioner was announced.

At this time it was noted that the Regional Agriculture Council needs representatives from the following towns: Deep River, East Haddam, East Hampton, Essex, Middlefield, Middletown, Old Lyme, and Westbrook.

b. Pending Legislation

Mr. Gold discussed some proposed legislation. There is a proposed housing bill that would require municipalities to comply with the state affordable housing zoning regulations or become ineligible for state discretionary funds.

Another bill discussed was SB431 – an act concerning property tax reform. This would establish a state property tax, massively narrowing the tax bases of the municipalities. Testimony was submitted opposing this bill strongly.

Bill 7192 was discussed, which is an act concerning municipal and regional opportunities and efficiencies. This bill effects PSAPs, Assessors offices, how COGs are funded, etc. Mr. Gold and Mr. Maniscalco attended a meeting at OPM about this bill. The big item is the concept that COGs would act as back offices of Assessor's offices. Instead of this it was suggested that towns that haven't already could reduce work by digitizing. It was noted that although they want COGs to provide this service, the COG funding was cut by 50% in this proposed bill. Johnathan Harris said there is replacement language for this bill, but Mr. Gold has not yet seen it.

Mr. Gold also submitted testimony on tolls, which was a series of questions on issues such as affordability along with objection to the process of proceeding without a plan, and asking that there be no vote before a plan exists.

Ms. Francis stated that language was altered as we requested on bill 521, which is an act concerning MAT. Ms. Goupil noted that the bill on AT systems on towns under consent order did not make it past the environmental committee.

c. Committee Memberships

The Regional Planning Commission is lacking representatives from the following towns: Chester, East Hampton, Lyme, Middlefield, and Old Lyme.

Upon motion of Ms. Reemsnyder and second of Ms. Gister, it was voted to add the following items to the agenda: 4d) New RiverCOG Website and 4e) Request to CT Resource Conservation and Development for an Environmental Review Team study of hydrilla and other invasive aquatic plants on the Connecticut River.

d. New RiverCOG Website

Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore and second of Mr. Samolis, it was unanimously voted to authorize RiverCOG to research and recommend a consultant to create a new RiverCOG website. The recommendation will be brought forth to Chairman Maniscalco for approval.

Discussion: This motion is authorizing the Chairman to approve RiverCOG's agreement with the preferred consultant. Towns that have recently upgraded their websites will send vendor information to Mr. Gold.

e. Request to CT Resource Conservation and Development for an Environmental Review Team Study of hydrilla and other invasive aquatic plants on the Connecticut River

Ms. Burns explained the request to CT RC&D for a collaborative application for an ERT to start dealing with the invasive hydrilla and other species on the Connecticut River. Ms. Burns serves on the board of RC&D on behalf of RiverCOG. She explained the application, showed some photos, and answered questions about the species and the application. It is hoped that this will not cost the towns anything; the RC&D tries to work with volunteers and to find grants to perform the work of the ERT. The goal is create a

consistent survey of the lower river using the CT Agriculture Experiment Station. Ms. Burns obtained signatures on the application for the towns on the river that are affected. The application has been pre-approved by the RC&D board pending the CEO signatures.

Upon motion of Mr. Samolis and second of Mr. Salvatore, it was unanimously voted to approve the application.

Discussion: Ms. Bransfield questioned the towns' jurisdiction over the CT River. She is concerned that the work will be done, then the state will not follow through with remediation. She requested investigation into how the final solution will be accomplished. Ms. Burns noted that the state will be worked with as a partner, though there is currently a service vacuum within the state. She emphasized Sen. Needleman's support of legislation involving river remediation. Mr. Gold noted that the request will technically come from the 12 towns on the river, though whole COG endorsement is helpful.

5. Chairman's and Executive Director's Reports

Chairman Maniscalco announced that after seven years he will be leaving East Hampton to be the new Town Manager in South Windsor, effective July 15. Mr. Gold suggested that the June COG meeting be held in East Hampton.

6. Other Business

Ms. Francis suggested that if towns haven't gone out to bid for healthcare recently, they should look into it. She just went out to bid and is finding cost savings.

She asked what other towns were doing with their budgets – are they following the Governor's numbers and what is happening with teacher's retirement? Discussion occurred.

Mr. Gold briefed everyone on possible funding cuts to the COG's transportation planning grants.

Ms. Gister started a discussion on how towns are dealing with the new statute to certify to OPM that municipal budgets did not go over a 2.5% increase.

7. Adjournment

Upon motion of Ms. Milardo and second of Ms. Gister, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eliza LoPresti
Recording Secretary