



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

DRAFT MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, May 22, 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
Cathy Lezon, Eversource
George Taylor, Genie Innovations
Jeremy DeCarli, Planner, East Hampton
Larry Laconi, CT Rides

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Robert Haramut
Daniel Bourret
Margot Burns

RiverCOG

Eliza LoPresti
Paula Fernald
Torrance Downes
Janice Ehle/Meyer

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

Chairman Michael Maniscalco called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. at RiverCOG, 145 Dennison Rd., Essex, CT.

Roll was called by Sam Gold, Executive Director.

Public Speaking: Cathy Lezon of Eversource distributed a document that was put together for a recent economic development day at the Capitol. It shows Eversource's work and support of municipalities in that area. She also highlighted the energy efficiency program annual report, of which she brought a few copies.

2. George Taylor, President, Genie Innovations – RiverCOG's new VoIP Telephone Service Provider

Genie Innovations is the authorized state provider for municipalities, schools, libraries and non-profits. This means that there does not have to be a RFP or bidding process if towns would like to use them as a provider.

3. LCRVMPO Business

a. Approval of Minutes of the April 24, 2019 LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting

Upon motion of Ms. Reemsnyder, seconded by Mr. Fortuna, it was unanimously voted to approve the April 24, 2019 Minutes of the LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting.

b. 2018 TIP Amendment #29 – Replace Highway sheet aluminum signs, project 0170-3545, Districts 1 & 2

This TIP Amendment replaces signs on about 400 miles of I-84, I-95, I-291, I-384, Routes 2, 3, 6, 11, and 17. \$4+ million total.

c. 2018 TIP Amendment #30 – Highway sign inventory, phase 2, project 0170-3532, Statewide

Inventory of signs, \$1.5 million in total.

d. 2018 TIP Amendment #31 – Rt 9 CCTV installation, project 0171-0416, Cromwell/Middletown

Install 7 CCTV cameras and 8 miles of fiber optic conduit and cable on Rt. 9. \$10+ million total.

Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore and second of Ms. Goupil, it was unanimously voted to approve TIP Amendments 29, 20, & 31.

Discussion: Ms. Iino asked if the toll project would affect Amendment 30 (sign inventory). Mr. Haramut does not believe so; this is just an inventory to check that all still standing. Mr. Gold asked where the southern-most camera is on Rt. 9 and if this amendment covers the north merge with Rt. 17. Mr. Haramut believes so and stated that this amendment fills in the gaps between I-91 down to Rt. 17. Mr. Salvatore asked why we are approving items out of our district; Mr. Haramut replied that some of our towns are within the districts being approved. Ms. Goupil asked if other towns had received a letter regarding a public hearing on directional signage. Mr. Comerford asked if there were amendments on the transit side as he is expecting an annual 5307 allocation. Mr. Haramut stated there were not.

- e. Endorse FY 20-21 UPWP, Roles and Responsibilities and Authorizing resolutions

Mr. Haramut explained what is contained in the UPWP and the associated resolutions.

Upon motion of Ms. Reemsnyder and second of Ms. Iino, it was unanimously voted to endorse the FY 20-21 UPWP, the transportation planning roles and responsibilities and authorizing resolutions contingent upon taking into account any comments that come in prior to the closing of the public comment period.

- f. Review and prioritize FTA Section 5310 Applications

Mr. Haramut described the applications received and possible funding.

Upon motion of Mr. Bishop and second of Ms. Bransfield it was unanimously voted to approve the applications in the order of 1) Cromwell Traditional Application for the Hartford TMA, 2) AVP Traditional Application in the New Haven TMA, 3) ETD Non-Traditional applications.

- g. Review and prioritize TAP applications

CT DOT has extended the deadline for three months. Hartford TMA has only one application from Middletown. New Haven TMA has five different projects submitted in our region for Old Saybrook, Clinton, Old Lyme, Essex and Westbrook. The Essex project will end up being a LOTCIP job. Old Lyme, Clinton & Westbrook have been scaled back to fit within the plan. There will be a meeting of the involved COGs next month to discuss this further.

- h. Other Transportation Updates

- i. Corridor Studies: Routes 81 & 66

Route 81 is close to done and should be finished this fiscal year. Route 66 is moving along. Advisory committee and public information meetings were recently held. Next steps are to work on some alternatives and design analysis for another round of meetings in the fall in which they would be presented to the public.

ii. Transportation Integration Study

The consultants have been riding buses and surveying passengers. There has been a change in project manager, which is positive. The sub-consultants who are the maintenance facility experts reviewed both facilities and did a thorough job.

i. Transit District Updates

Estuary Transit District launched their microtransit pilot program on May 6. The program is called extra mile and is free until August for a small service area. Ridership has been steadily increasing and more people are using the app rather than calling in. If the program is successful the state may see this as the future of public transit, especially near suburban train stations.

Clinton has a new trolley that ETD will be operating.

j. Report from CT Rides

Larry Laconi, commuter program manager for CT Rides, discussed the program, which is the outreach arm of CT DOT whose mandate is to reduce single-vehicle miles traveled. Mr. Laconi offered to reach out to any businesses in the area larger than 150 employees and any economic development professionals. He is also open to reaching out to citizens of a municipality, through a town meeting. He discussed the ETD last mile solution and the positive impacts of that. There was a discussion of statewide initiatives to aid employees/companies with transportation.

4. LCRVCOG Business

a. Draft FY20 RiverCOG Budget

The budget is in draft form because it is not yet known what funding the COG will receive from the state. It will be adopted in June. Mr. Gold explained some of the items that are in still question such as RSG funding, transportation planning state match, salary increases, Regional Election Monitor funding, and staff positions (as the COG is understaffed at the moment).

b. RiverCOG Agreement with the Lower CT River Land Trust, Inc.

The draft agreement has been reviewed by the Executive Committee and is being forwarded to the full board for review. There will be a LCRLT meeting during the June COG meeting to appoint a different president of the non-profit other than the Chairman of the COG (so that different people will be signing both sides of the agreement). Mr. Gold will email this document out.

c. Letter to Legislators

Mr. Gold created a letter to the Governor based on discussion at the last COG meeting. This will be additionally sent to the Hartford Courant, other media, House leadership,

area legislators, CCM & COST. He will discuss this with his colleagues at the other COGs.

d. Legislative Update

Mr. Gold reviewed pending legislation. He wrote testimony for SB 1141, an act concerning property tax reform, which would establish a municipal capacity fund similar to the old RPIP grants to provide grants for regional services. He also submitted testimony on SBs 1137 & 1138 which would open up non-profits for a fee related to property tax. The COG's concern is related to possible impacts on land trusts.

There was discussion on special session/details of tolls and possible diversion of funds through a loophole. Mr. Salvatore and others discussed HB 6935 addressing the JANUS ruling and how they provide information to employees regarding unions.

Ms. Francis discussed STEAP; it is believed that the administration is not looking to open that program at this time.

e. Invasive Species Discussion

Ms. Burns updated that Gateway is funding \$20,000 of the cost for the survey of the river through the ERT. There may also be \$5,000 coming from 8 Mile Wild & Scenic. Army Corp of Engineers declined to fund at this time. The Coast Guard is sending out a SOS for expertise/information and a meeting will be held with the Marine Trades after this meeting.

Japanese knotweed was discussed as it is in all the region's towns. There are other sustainable abatement options rather than using herbicides. Discussion occurred on what towns currently do as far as integrative roadside vegetation management. Ms. Burns will send out information on possible programs for management and training for public works departments, such as classes at T2. Ms. Lezon added that Eversource has extensive experience in maintaining the roadsides and work closely with DEEP, and that their internal training could be a regional resource. She will send information to Ms. Burns on possible collaborators. Ms. Francis stated that there will be a workshop at Snow School in Middletown on June 23 from 1 -3 to educate residents on how to handle invasives and to possibly adopt certain areas in town to help clear.

5. Chairman's and Executive Director's Reports

Chairman Maniscalco announced that Jeremy DeCarli will be his appointed liaison to the COG until East Hampton has a new Town Manager.

Mr. Gold plans on making some IT equipment purchases before the end of the fiscal year. A new RiverCOG website is currently being designed. RiverCOG has been supporting efforts for Long Island Sound; there is a meeting for the Blue Plan at 6:30 on May 23 in Old Saybrook.

6. Other Business

a. Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Committee

Grant funding for the plan has not yet been approved or denied. Ms. Burns will need names of people that can serve on the committee from each town participating in the regional plan.

b. DEMHS Report

Upon motion of Ms. Iino and second of Ms. Francis, it was unanimously voted to authorize the Executive Director to enter into agreements on behalf of the COG for the 2018 EMPG grant.

Upon motion of Mr. Bishop and second of Ms. Francis it was unanimously voted to authorized the Chairman to sign the resolution for the EMPG grant.

c. HHW Update

Anchor Engineering will be conducting an audit at one of the next collections. Line painting is happening at the site on Dump Rd. We are experimenting with internet options at the site to save on costs but also support the security cameras.

Update on the Regional Agriculture Council: a hemp bill passed recently and there have been workshops on how to get seeds and grow them. They are working through issues of taxation on horse farms. Westbrook has a new farmers market starting this weekend.

We have two fellows from Sustainable CT coming next week. There is a water workshop on June 20, Ms. Ehle/Meyer will forward information. There will be another compost bin & rain barrel sale in September.

d. GIS Data

Mr. Bourret discussed data collection from each town, which is now a state statute. It is a mandate that each town turn over their GIS data, which the COGs will provide to OPM. He is still missing East Haddam and Chester data.

At this time Mr. Gold stated that he spoke with the Association of Tax Assessors regarding the possibility that has been described by the state of regionalizing some of their services to the COGs. What that bill really means for the COGs and Assessors is yet to be seen.

7. Adjournment

Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore and second of Ms. Reemsnyder, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:42 a.m.

Respectfully submitted, Eliza LoPresti, Recording Secretary