



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, June 26, 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
Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor
Jeremy DeCarli, Alternate, East Hampton
Amy Jackson-Grove, Federal Highway Administration
Kurt Salmoiraghi, Federal Highway Administration
Dan Giungi, CCM
Shawna Baron, Cromwell Assessor & President of CT Assessor's Association

Staff Present:

Sam Gold

RiverCOG

Robert Haramut
Margot Burns
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 9:09 a.m. at the East Hampton Public Library, 105 Main St., East Hampton, CT.

Roll was called by Sam Gold, Executive Director.

Jake Manke, New Region 2 DEMHS Coordinator was unable to attend the meeting.

Public Speaking:

Shawna Baron, Cromwell Assessor & President of the CT Assessor's Association spoke regarding the house bill to regionalize assessor's services within COGs. OPM has created a task force that includes Ms. Baron and Mr. Gold with the goal of working together to streamline processes and save money. She discussed possible future actions and changes. COGs may play a part in helping to share data. The stripped down bill that passed the house gets implemented next year. Other discussion included possible revaluation zones within COG boundaries, relationships with Boards of Assessment Appeals and clearly written and more tightly defined property/motor vehicle tax laws. Mr. Gold stated that he would bring that message back to the group and OPM.

Amy Jackson-Grove, FHA, stated that they work with the COGs to make sure transportation projects happen in the state through use of the federal gas tax (the TIP program is funded with the federal gas tax).

2. LCRVMPO Business

- a. Approval of Minutes of the May 22, 2019 LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting

Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore, seconded by Mr. McDonald, it was unanimously voted to approve the May 22, 2019 Minutes of the LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting.

- b. 2018 TIP Amendment #32 – Load ratings for bridges on NHS and non-NHS roads, project 170-3382, statewide

This TIP Amendment is an existing project that is increasing in price from 1.6 million to 4.85 million due to a FHWA requirement to increase load ratings.

- c. 2018 TIP Amendment #33 – Administrative capital and funding for facility design and rights of way activities, project 478-XXXX, Estuary TD

d. 2018 TIP Amendment #34 – Facility and terminal rehabilitation, project 422-XXXX, Middletown TD

Mr. Haramut noted at this time that there was also a list of TIP actions for transit projects that were sent out to Mr. Comerford and Ms. Seymour for approval.

Upon motion of Mr. Fortuna and second of Ms. Gister, it was unanimously voted to approve TIP Amendments 32, 33, and 34.

e. Title VI review/policy revision resolution

In March 2019, CTDOT reviewed our Title VI policy and we were advised to make minor changes. Our Title VI statement and public participation plan were revised, some documents were translated to Spanish, and in the future we will need to translate other documents into Spanish such as executive summaries of our plans.

It was asked whether the towns can look at RiverCOG's policy for use when writing their own, and that was confirmed. Discussion then occurred regarding the fact that the state may want towns to adopt their Title VI policy rather than writing their own, due to the structure of funding received from the 5310 program.

Upon motion of Mr. Fortuna and second of Ms. Bransfield, it was unanimously voted to authorize signature of the Title VI review/policy revision resolution.

f. UPWP Delegation of Authority resolution

This resolution empowers the officers of the COG to sign the timesheets of the Executive Director.

Upon motion of Mr. Fortuna and second of Ms. Gister it was unanimously voted to approve the resolution for the UPWP delegation of authority.

Discussion: This resolution sets forth the procedure for approving the Executive Director's timesheet and expenses, and provides a provision for the Deputy Director to step into that position if necessary.

g. Endorsement of the 2019 BUILD Grant application for the Haddam Swing Bridge walkway

The towns of Haddam and East Haddam are pursuing a BUILD grant to add a walkway to the swing bridge. As a rehab project is already in the works, this is a unique opportunity to add onto that and CTDOT has included in the walkway in their design. Last year's application for the same was not approved.

Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore and second by Ms. Bransfield, it was unanimously approved to endorse the 2019 BUILD grant application for the Haddam Swing Bridge Walkway.

h. 2021 TIP Update

Mr. Haramut distributed a tentative list of projects and a schedule for 2021. He asked for comments and will send them to CTDOT by July 29.

i. TAP Update

The list of projects should be sent to CTDOT by September. After meeting with the Hartford TMA (New Haven area TMA is still accepting applications until the end of July), it looks like the Thomaston job will be ranked first followed by the Middletown job. If the Thomaston job does not receive their funding match support the Middletown job will go ahead.

j. Other Transportation Updates

Mr. Gold reported that the consultants for the regional transit study are working on data collection and getting a website up. Brian Higgins, RiverCOG summer intern, has done counts on the new Clinton/Killingworth bus route. There has been a positive change in the project manager for the consultant. A sub-consultant has conducted a review on the maintenance facilities.

The Route 81 corridor study is complete, but the town is still waiting for Fitzgerald & Halliday to do their final presentation and for Sam to edit some documents.

The Route 66 study is moving along; Mr. Haramut attended a meeting with the town of Marlborough to try and coordinate more with that town and learn about activity in Marlborough that may affect East Hampton.

Mr. Gold received the Friend of Transportation award from the CT Association for Community Transportation last week.

Ms. Francis announced that Durham voted to join MAT.

Ms. Bransfield thanked Mr. Haramut for his traffic studies; Portland will be getting solar powered speed warning signs.

Mr. Comerford stated that the ETD microtransit pilot project is about 30 days in. 130 unique users have been served through 670 trips on the service. Just over half of the users are utilizing the app, the rest are using the phone.

3. LCRVCOG Business

a. RiverCOG FY2020 Budget

Mr. Gold discussed the budget; he explained that the Regional Services Grant funding was increased for the upcoming year by about \$68,000. The draft work program is due to OPM next week; this will be on the agenda for approval in July. Mr. Gold is suggesting hire of a consultant to finish the RPOCD and to restart work on the Grow Smart region project along with other

possible projects that can be completed. He also noted that the state match for the federal transportation grant has been restored to 10%.

Ms. Francis asked about the amount received from the Secretary of State's office to fund the Regional Election Monitor (REM). The position was not funded by the SOS office, though the COG will be paying her through RSG funds, which are through the state. The agreement with the REM will be for \$5,000 in year 1 and \$7,000 in year 2 (which includes the Presidential election).

Ms. Francis objected to this item being included in the budget. She stated it is an unfunded mandate from the state and that the town of Durham could be better served if the funds were not applied to the REM position. A discussion occurred about the REM position funding and the services that the position supplies. The general feeling is that the services of the REM are valuable to the towns, though it is a disagreeable unfunded mandate that the SOS's office should provide funding toward. All the other COGs but one are pursuing funding for the REM position due to the fact that that particular COG wants no involvement in elections in Bridgeport. It was agreed that Mr. Gold will draft a letter about this subject to the SOS and send it to the CEOs for comment. It was suggested that a point be included that the system of elected registrars could be reformed.

Upon motion of Ms. Bransfield and second by Ms. Reemsnyder, the RiverCOG FY20 Budget was approved. Ms. Francis and Mr. Salvatore opposed.

b. New RiverCOG Officers

The Executive Board previously moved to recommend the following for the Executive Board moving forward after Mr. Maniscalco's departure:

Anthony Salvatore – Chair
Lauren Gister – Vice Chair
Ed Bailey – Secretary
Noel Bishop – Treasurer
Bonnie Reemsnyder – At Large Member
Cathy Iino – At Large Members

Ms. Bransfield moved the slate of nominees above, Mr. McDonald seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

The new Executive Board positions begin on July 1, 2019.

Ms. Bransfield moved to formally thank Mr. Maniscalco, this was seconded by Ms. Francis. The motion was unanimous, with all in agreement that Mr. Maniscalco will be missed.

c. Agreement between the RiverCOG and the Lower Connecticut River Land Trust, Inc.

Mr. Salvatore moved to table this discussion to give members more time to look over the agreement. Second by Ms. Gister; vote was unanimous in favor.

d. Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan RFP

Ms. Burns stated that a RFP for a consultant to write the regional plan is out, responses are due July 19, 2019. The grant application has been elevated to “further review” status by FEMA, which means that we are most likely going to receive the funding. She asked each town involved to send her their nominations for a community representative to sit on the regional steering committee for the project. The first meeting would be at the end of August or beginning of September. An interview panel will also be needed for consultant selection.

e. Authorization of Executive Director to Enter Into an Agreement with OPM for FY20 Regional Services Grant

An agreement from OPM will be received some time in July. It was noted that there will probably be two agreements: one initial agreement and then a separate one for the supplemental payment discussed earlier.

Upon motion of Ms. Francis and second of Mr. Salvatore, it was unanimously approved that the Executive Director has authorization to enter into both agreements with OPM for the FY20 Regional Services Grant.

f. Regional Election Monitoring Program 2019 and 2020 Contract

Mr. Maniscalco suggested it would be beneficial to have language in the contract tying the position to state funding. Mr. Gold stated that he will add that in, and that the contract can be terminated at any time. Mr. Salvatore asked if the contract must be for two years; Mr. Gold replied that it does not have to be. Ms. Reemsnyder asked if there were any significant changes from the last agreement; Mr. Gold stated there were not.

Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore and second of Ms. Bransfield, the contract was approved with the addition of a state funding clause. Ms. Francis opposed the motion. Discussion: The clause should be put under article 1.

At this time, Ms. Conklin gave an update. The election season has started. Registrars have had to complete a certification process, she will follow up with those that have not completed the process. Moderators are being trained and certified. The REMs have been meeting regularly on their own during the past few months while the funding has been in a gray area. The week of July 22 is caucus week for all. A webinar was attended on cyber security during elections. Ms. Bransfield asked for the information on cyber security to be sent to CEOs. Ms. Conklin believes there is a good chance that money for cyber security will be available from the SOS office.

4. Chairman’s and Executive Director’s Reports

Chairman Maniscalco announced that the Executive Board is in the process of evaluating the Executive Director.

Mr. Gold stated that the Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) was renewed, though there are not yet specifics on this. There was discussion on possible preference given to the COGs that did not receive the supplemental funding this budget cycle, which Mr. Gold is pushing back on. Ms. Francis suggested looking back at the economic development report for project ideas.

6. Other Business

a. Milone and MacBroom Community Rating System Open Space Project

Ms. Burns stated that this project by Milone & MacBroom is in regards to the amount of open space in a town's flood zone, and potentially corresponding credit for residents toward flood insurance. M&M asked the COG to distribute the information to each town, which was done. They have asked for review and comment by June 30. If any CEO is interested in working with them, please let M&M or Ms. Burns know.

b. DEMHS Update

Two of the four grants are set to close on June 30. They will be replaced with two similar grants; one is the EMPG Special Hazards grant starting on July 1, the other is a Homeland Security grant starting October 1. Mr. Downes also distributed an annual report on the Region 2 EPPI and a report on the Tabletop exercise. Collection is almost complete on the necessary MOAs and resolutions needed to complete the grants.

c. Invasive Species Update: Hydrilla and Water Chestnut, Intern's work with Clinton

Ms. Burns reported that the Environmental Resource Team (ERT) for hydrilla has received funding from the Gateway Commission and the Eight Mile Wild & Scenic toward a river survey. We are still about \$19,000 short to complete the survey. A meeting was held at CRCOG in an effort to get some of the northern river towns signed onto the ERT as well. Ms. Burns has been conducting marina outreach/education.

Ms. Burns was a presenter at a Clean, Drain & Dry program in June. She would like to expand this program and asked for CEOs to speak to their conservation commissions. There was discussion on collectively speaking with DEEP about invasive species because help is needed in the river.

Upon motion of Ms. Milardo and second of Mr. Salvatore, it was unanimously approved that a letter should be written to Katie Dykes regarding identification of the invasive species in the river and the need to do something about it.

Ms. Francis suggested including more action items around this topic in the Sustainable CT program, which could incentivize municipalities to do more.

RiverCOG Intern, Brian Higgins, has been working on removal of invasive species along the roadside in Clinton, especially pertaining to concerns around the use of pesticides.

d. Sustainable CT Interns

This summer RiverCOG is hosting two Sustainable CT fellows, Mackenzie Pias and Catherine Xi. They will be reaching out to towns that do or would like to participate in the program. 12 of our 17 towns are participating. 50% of towns in CT are participating.

e. Other

Mr. Gold stated that he was asked to participate in Senator Murphy's Transportation Advisory Committee to help generate ideas for the next transit bill.

There is also a study to look at connecting the Airline Trail to a trail in Middletown, Meriden & Cheshire.

Mr. Salvatore discussed legislation on nursing homes; new 501c3 nursing homes will now be exempt. Existing will still be non-exempt. He expressed concern, and COST and CCM are looking at this piece of legislation as well. Dan Giungi from CCM noted that they fought this legislation and will continue to engage on it.

Ms. Francis brought up the language in a bill regarding resident state troopers which is still not interpreted, and it is unknown whether it is favorable to the towns. Ms. Reemsnyder noted that the new contracts are three years instead of two.

6. Adjournment

Upon motion of Mr. Salvatore and second of Ms. Reemsnyder, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti, Recording Secretary