



Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

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LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Monday, January 28, 2019 - 7:00 pm

Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments conference room
145 Dennison Road, Essex

Members:

Chester: Vacancy
Clinton: Alan Kravitz
Eric Bergman
Cromwell: Alice Kelly
Chris Cambareri
Deep River: Bruce Edgerton *
Tony Bolduc *
Durham: Frank DeFelice*
Joe Pasquale
East Haddam: Crary Brownell
Lou Salicrup
East Hampton: Michael Kowalczyk
Essex: Alan Kerr *(until 8:30)
Sandra Childress *
Haddam: Raul deBrigard *(7:20)
Stasia DeMichele
Killingworth: Stephanie Warren *
Alec Martin *
Lyme: Mary Stone *
Middlefield: Vacancy
Middletown: Beth Emery *
Stephen Devoto
Old Lyme: Harold Thompson
Old Saybrook: Kenneth Soudan *
Karen Jo Marcolini
Portland: Elwin Guild * (7:10)
Westbrook: Bill Neale *
Marie Farrell

*Members Present

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Eliza LoPresti
Jon Curtis
Janice Ehle/Meyer

RiverCOG

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman DeFelice at 7:00 pm.

2. Roll Call

Roll call was taken by Eliza LoPresti

3. Seating of Alternates

Sandra Childress of Essex was seated.

4. Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Edgerton moved to adopt the agenda. Second by Mr. Martin; voted unanimously in favor.

5. Public Comments

None

6. Elections

Mr. Neale nominated Ms. Stone Temporary Chairman during elections; second by Mr. Edgerton. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Edgerton nominated Mr. DeFelice as Chairman. This was seconded by Ms. Emery. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Neale nominated Mr. deBrigard as Vice Chairman; second by Mr. Edgerton. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Neale nominated Mr. Edgerton as Secretary. This was seconded by Chairman DeFelice. Vote was unanimous in favor.

The slate of elected officers for 2019 is as follows:

Chairman – Frank DeFelice

Vice Chairman – Raul deBrigard

Secretary – Bruce Edgerton

7. Approval of Minutes of Past Meetings

Mr. Guild moved to approve the minutes of the September 24, 2018 meeting; second by Mr. Martin. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Edgerton moved to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2018 meeting; second by Mr. Neale. Vote was unanimous in favor.

8. 2019 RPC Meeting Dates

Ms. Emery moved to accept the 2019 RPC Meeting Dates; second by Mr. Neale. Vote was unanimous in favor.

9. 2019 CT Active Transportation Plan/Bike-Ped. Committee

Ms. Emery distributed information on the state's plan, and a timeline. Her goal is to have a working regional Bicycle-Pedestrian plan and to get out education on the benefits of Complete Streets, whether it's through the RPC or the COG as it is felt that people are not getting information. The process of adoption of the plan was discussed, along with the CT DOT's short comment period. Ms. Emery suggested a Complete Streets committee appointed within the next 60 days, and volunteered her time toward that effort.

There was further discussion on a committee, Sustainable CT, tourism due to mountain biking, and more. It was suggested that there be a dedicated area on the RiverCOG website for Complete Streets. Mr. Gold then explained the process that the steering committee for the state plan went through and issues with the CT DOT's process and the plan itself. It was noted that the handling of the plan by the state necessitates a regional plan, as major items are missing. A regional bike/ped. committee should fall under the MPO; Mr. Gold will seek names of others that are interested.

There was further discussion on bike and pedestrian safety, especially in the more rural areas, and the Sustainable CT program; there are new guidelines coming out this month that Mr. Gold will forward to everyone. A regional bike/ped. plan committee will be discussed again at the next RPC meeting.

10. Referrals

a) Update, Chester POCD: It was noted that the RPC is charged with assessing the town POCDs for conformity with the state plan and its six smart growth principles. Mr. Downes, who could not attend the meeting due to a conflict, wrote that this plan does conform, but there are some areas where they could have done better such as more mention of or discussion on affordable housing, and some technical items. One item of interest that could possibly have inter-municipal impacts is the plan for sewer expansion. All of the expansion would be done inside the town, however.

There was further discussion on the potential plan for extending the sewer lines as well as the use of the wording of "attainable" housing. This is most likely a pseudonym for "affordable housing", and the need for it to be defined further. As "affordable housing" has a legal definition, the RPC commented that this needs to be explained in detail in the plan.

b) Westbrook Zoning Regulation Re-write: There is a great deal of reorganization in the proposal, and there are very few inter-municipal impacts. There is the creation of two new zoning districts: one is a high density district around the Pilot's Point area, and the other is a resort district around Water's Edge. These will be expanded, but will be well within the 500' boundaries. There is language about accessory structures, though setbacks are still in place. Mention was also made of the TIC (turnpike interchange) district. All zoning districts were also clarified to follow parcel lines. Mr. Downes feels that these items mentioned here do not have inter-municipal impacts.

c) Report on staff-prepared referral responses: Mr. Gold read Mr. Downes’s review on the following referrals: Clinton for type A recreational structures –there is no impact with Westbrook; Colchester regulation for signage that has no impact on East Hampton or East Haddam; Rocky Hill regarding the addition of restaurant use in the BP2 district, which has no impact on Cromwell; and Old Saybrook did their annual housekeeping, which includes cleaning up existing regulations on signs, fences, roadside stands, Gateway zone regulations, and flood plain building regulations all which have no impacts to surrounding towns.

Ms. Emery moved to support the recommendations made by Mr. Downes regarding agenda items 10a through 10c; second by Mr. deBrigard. Vote was unanimous in favor.

There was discussion at this time of town POCDs, and challenges that may occur when updating.

11. Updated Regional Plan Schedule

Mr. Curtis distributed a timeline and answered questions related to it and the public process for the plan. The intention is that the plan will be written and adopted by the COG by the end of the year.

There was discussion on the process of commenting on the plan, presenting it to P&Z Commissions, and a timeline of revisions. It was noted that there had been a good amount of feedback sent in already for the drafts that had recently been circulated. There was also discussion on what recommendations will come out of the plan, and how they may be implemented (and by who).

12. Updated/reworked Introduction, History, Agriculture, Housing

Mr. Martin would like to see two graphics added into the Housing section for each town: the percentage drop in home values and the property tax grand list loss. He noted that on page 12 of that section, the word “labor” should read as “laborer” in one instance. Also, there was discussion on the summary; Mr. Martin feels that it does not include as much urgency as the rest of the document and he would like to see it - in reference to the vicious cycle of people leaving, home depreciation, construction stopping, etc.

Ms. Emery discussed the conclusion in reference to “demand” and its variability. For example, there is a demand for affordable housing, city infrastructure, etc., like in Middletown, for certain ways to live, therefore it’s not all “low demand”. This concept was discussed further.

Chair DeFelice believes that there are a lot of properties that could be considered “affordable” but are not deed-restricted. Since the price is in the affordable range, could or should we take advantage of that somehow? Discussion on the pros and cons of deed restrictions occurred.

In reference to the agriculture section, there was discussion on the fact that there was no mention of anaerobic digesters as a possibility for additional revenue source for farmers. Ms. Ehle/Meyer, who was present during this portion of the meeting, mentioned there is one in the state and that research could be done on this. Mr. Curtis noted that this could be a possible

action item. Mr. deBrigard feels that there is not a strong conclusion to the agriculture section. Mr. Soudan suggested not splitting charts over multiple pages.

13. Draft Long Range Transportation Plan

A draft will be uploaded to our website and a link will be sent to RPC members for commenting by February 28 (to Rob Haramut). There will be a public hearing regarding the plan prior to a RPC meeting in the future.

14. Regional and/or Local Planning Issues

Mr. Gold distributed a summary of proposed legislation. This is legislation that has been proposed to the various committees, which may or may not move forward. Mr. Gold will be tracking the bills and if they go to hearing he will let the RPC members know. There was discussion on the bills affecting COGs.

15. Adjournment

At 9:51 P.M., Mr. Neale moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Edgerton seconded. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti