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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 REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

NOTES OF MEETING (amendments in bold)

Monday, September 25, 2017 – 6:30 p.m.

Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments Conference Room
145 Dennison Road

//Members:

Chester:	Vacancy
Clinton:	Alan Kravitz *
	Vacancy
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 *
	Vacancy
Essex:	Alan Kerr
	Vacancy
Haddam:	Stasia DeMichele
	Raul deBrigard
Killingworth:	Stephanie Warren
	Alec Martin
Lyme:	Vacancy
Middlefield:	Vacancy
Middletown:	Beth Emery
	Stephen Devoto *
Old Lyme:	Harold Thompson
	Vacancy
Old Saybrook:	Kenneth Soudan
	Karen Jo Marcolini
Portland:	Dan Bourret *
	Vacancy
Westbrook:	Bill Neale *
	Marie Farrell *

* Members Present

Guests:

Eric Lindquist, OPM Environmental Analyst 1

Staff Present:

Sam Gold, AICP
Judy Snyder
Jon Curtis
Torrance Downes

**Presentation by Eric Lindquist, OPM Environmental Analyst 1 on the
Draft State Plan of Conservation and Development**

Sam Gold introduced Eric Lindquist from the CT Office of Policy and Management (OPM).

Eric Lindquist thanked the RPC members for having him and holding a public hearing on the state plan at the RiverCOG. He stated that every COG has had a public hearing and that RiverCOG is the last one he will visit with his presentation. He stated that he will give a presentation and then open it up to the members and the public for their comments and questions. Each person who wishes to speak will be asked to sign in and be recorded so the concerns can be transcribed into the record and addressed. Comments can also be submitted in writing directly to OPM attention Dan Morley.

Mr. Lindquist explained that OPM prepares the State Plan of Conservation and Development for state agencies to implement. The legislature has to approve the plan so OPM effectively acts as staff to the legislative committee to get this plan through. OPM walks a fine line between what the administration might want versus what the General Assembly is looking to pass. He said it is important that OPM receives the RPC's input and reaches out at a regional level to hear from the municipalities and the region staff as to issues of concern and how OPM can interpret those concerns back to the General Assembly for consideration.

Mr. Lindquist said that the state agencies have to be consistent with the policies of the plan for any actions that use state or federal funds that are more than \$200,000 that pertain to the acquisition of real property or the development or improvement of the use of real property or the acquisition of public transportation facilities. The text of the plan is set around six growth management principles that are set in Statutes by the state legislature. The other component is the location guide map. Mr. Lindquist explained the roles of the locational guide map and the delineation in areas between priority funding areas, balanced priority funding areas, village priority funding areas, conservation areas, and undesignated areas. Funding areas are delineated by census blocks. Census blocks usually range in size from larger in less populated areas to smaller in urban areas. The Census Bureau draws the blocks along town boundaries, rivers, roads, and streams making them easier to work with. A block that contains one development criteria, regardless of size, makes the entire block a priority funding area. If a block regardless of size has one criterion from the development criteria the whole area turns pink (chosen color on the map) and becomes a priority funding area (PFA). He asked the members for comments on the different criteria categories. These categories can be changed by input from municipalities, the public, regions, etc. Mr. Lindquist showed an example of a census block with only a small portion having a water service going through it, but because of that this entire block is designated as a priority funding area allowing growth related projects and without needing to consult local plans even in balanced areas.

OPM is supposed to prepare regulations that explain how regional plans will be reviewed for consistency with the state plan. He stated that the state plan is updated every 5 years with the towns and COG's plans updated every 10 years.

Eric Lindquist said that for state action the definition of a growth related project the state agencies would be consulted. The dark lines are the areas of census blocks and the pinkish and yellowish colored areas are priority funding areas. The yellow means the blocks are "balanced priority funding areas" therefore a state agency would have to document why they are undertaking that action in that particular area given the conservation values that exist.

Mr. Lindquist opened the public hearing at 7:46 p.m. and read a prepared statement into the record. He asked if anyone wanted to speak.

Torrance Downes read a statement on behalf of Janice Ehle-Meyer, staff to the Regional Agriculture Council.

Sam Gold thanked Mr. Lindquist for coming tonight and last week to the ZOOP meeting.

Alice Kelly said she will submit her comments to OPM. She feels that this plan takes planning and zoning out of the picture especially in the map showing Cromwell.

Stephen Devoto said he likes the idea of planning at the statewide level, however he would like to express his support for option 2 to more narrowly restrict the PFAs and that the municipalities should be able to review the plan similarly to the 8-24 review process.

Bill Neale supports option 2 to restrict the PFAs on the map.

Alan Kravitz strongly supports option 2 and that 2 options must be met for the designation of PFAs and with the consideration that more options could be added.

Alice Kelly said she would like to see at least 3 options that have to be met instead of 2 PFAs.

Mr. Lindquist asked if anyone else wished to speak. There being no one the public hearing was closed at 7:55 p.m.

Members thanked Mr. Lindquist for attending tonight's meeting and the meeting last week.

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / SEATING OF ALTERNATES

Acting Chairman Bruce Edgerton called the meeting to order at 7:59 p.m. The members introduced themselves and attendance was taken. Due to a lack of a quorum no issues would be voted on this evening.

2. AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA / APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There were no amendments to the agenda.
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3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bruce Edgerton asked if anyone from the public wished to speak. There was no one at this time.

4. REFERRAL - Town of Clinton. Temporary Health Care Structures (PA17-155)

Torrance Downes presented the Clinton referral submitted by the Planning and Zoning Commission to allow temporary health care structures on property for the purpose of taking care of mentally or physically impaired people. Under Public Act 17-155 the towns may “opt in” by a positive vote of both the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Selectmen or “opt out” if the P&Z holds a public hearing, “affirmatively votes” to opt out, and cites the reasons for opting out, and that vote is followed by a similar vote of the BOS. This is a two-step process to approve the structures.

Alan Kravitz said that certain criteria have to be met before these structures could be installed. These are temporary structures that have to meet building and zoning codes, are approximately 500 square feet and are for handicapped or elderly persons. These structures have to be removed within 120 days after the person vacates the structure.

Bruce Edgerton said that these structures are prefabricated and are equipped for the handicapped, with width doorways, lifts, etc. however they are extremely expensive to rent.

Michael Kowalczyk said that in East Hampton **the P&ZC believe the law bypasses local zoning, and adds medical units as a use-by right in residential zones. The P&Z is considering an additional text amendment to reflect this (subject to ordinance procedures).** This will be automatically added to the zoning regulations without a public hearing being necessary, however there would be a public hearing at the state level. If a town does not opt out by October 1, 2017 this regulation will automatically be placed in their town’s zoning regulations.

The members decided that this is a municipal issue and does not have inter-municipal impacts.

5. REGIONAL POCD

Chairman Frank DeFelice was not able to attend tonight’s meeting however Mr. Gold read a statement from him.

Fellow Regional Planning Committee Members,

I regret that I am unable to attend this evening's RPC Meeting; as I have been called out-of-state on urgent business. In my absence, I have asked Raul to Chair tonight's meeting; however, I have not yet heard back from him.

I wanted to provide the RPC members with some insight on the recent RPoC&D Public Informational Forum held at Wesleyan University, which I participated in.

First and foremost, most (if not all) of the concerns raised following the first meeting seemed to be addressed. Tables were spread apart, so that participants could engage in intelligent conversation and hear each other; and additional time was provided for more thoughtful discussion to take place.

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Sam, Torrance, Jon and I each contributed to the Opening Remarks, and the Introduction of the Regional PoC&D. The PowerPoint presentation was interesting and easy for participants to comprehend. The working groups provided a number of well-reasoned concepts; and interestingly enough, a common and balanced thread emerged... WELL DONE!

Sam, Torrance, Jon, and indeed, every RPC member, contributed something of value to these events, the surveys and the Pop-Ups. Each of you should take a measure of pride in the outcome; and in the fact that we are now on-schedule to produce the next Regional Plan of Conservation and Development within the next several months.

With regrets for tonight's absence; and looking forward to the next RPC meeting,

Frank

- a. Discussion of Introduction, Built Environment and Natural Environment Sections

Jon Curtis stated that the final draft will be sent to the members shortly.

- b. Summaries of August 17, 2017 Westbrook and September 16, 2017 Middletown Kickoff Meetings

Sam Gold said that the two workshops and the eight pop-ups went well. Torrance Downes thanked Marie Farrell, Stephanie Warren and Karen Jo Marcolini for attending the Westbrook workshop. Marie Farrell said that she and Bill Neale were at the Westbrook town beach for the pop-up. Jon Curtis said that between the August 17th workshop and September 16th workshop approximately 60 people attended. Both of these workshops were introducing what the POCD is, what the region is, and what the RiverCOG is. The workshops were then opened up to the attendees to come up with their challenges that they want to prioritize for the region and also brainstorm some solutions for that.

The top priorities that were repeated by the various groups were:

1. Attracting and retaining young people in the region
2. Housing, costs of living and range of housing options
3. Need to promote the regional identity - "branding"

Jon Curtis said that a comment that was made was that there is no one source for all information of what is going on in the region. Other issues were economic opportunities, keeping employers, addressing climate change, and improving the transportation network.

Jon Curtis said that the highlights of the first workshop have been written and he is working on the second one. These reports will be combined when finished. Mr. Curtis said at the February meeting the recommendations will be presented with the regional visions and the goals for the region.

Torrance Downes said that at the first workshop in a conversation with Frank DeFelice and Patrick Pernel (architect and planner in Haddam) the "cool factor", thinking outside the box was discussed. An example would be developing and promoting very small houses, close together, with common open space areas for young and old. What other ideas could we do to be a "cool factor"? Alan Krantz told the members to investigate "vest pocket" communities.

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- c. Next Steps

Jon Curtis stated that the full draft of the existing conditions is slated for November. The survey is being sent out again and he asked the members to circulate the business cards again. The survey will be open to the January or February meeting. Marie Farrell asked if the agriculture section was sent to the area farmers. Mr. Curtis said that the survey was begin worked on and when completed will be sent.

Mr. Curtis said that a ZOOP meeting was held last week presented the state plan map with Eric Lindquist. OPM as the guest speaker. The staff is hoping to have a ZOOP meeting every two months.

Mr. Curtis said that he had been to an Old Saybrook meeting to discuss the process and some of the statistics we have regarding housing. The commission is working on their affordable housing regulations.

Marie Farrell asked if we have all the local communities' greenway conservation maps. Dan Bourret said he will contact the town planner for her.

6. APPROVAL OF JULY 31, 2017 MINUTES

The approval of minutes was tabled to the next meeting.

7. MISCELLANEOUS

Sam Gold said that as of now the state does not have a budget signed by the Governor. The Governor has 10 days to veto the budget if he doesn't it becomes law.

Jon Curtis updated the members on the responses from the first pop-up survey distributed in June at the first public meeting. The largest number of surveys received was from the town of Durham with Clinton next. Economy was the first priority people listed and high taxes, next access to jobs and housing affordability. In terms of physical resistance for storm preparedness and how prepared they think their communities are for the next major storm 37% of residents said they were very prepared, 30% said they were better than they used to be. When asked how we should get prepared for the next major storm the number one response was limiting development in threatened areas.

In the transportation section participants were asked what would make people take public transportation. The answer was more frequent service and better parking. When asked how do you plan to get around in ten years 72% of the respondents said drive a motor vehicle, 48% said walk, and 43% said train.

For the natural environment the issues that were of most concern was the loss of habitat/native species, and vacant and contaminated properties.

On the question of great places what changes would you like to see – 45% said more restaurants, stores or other commercial properties and 42% said attracting young people.

Housing – What type of residences do we need more of in the region? 63% said mixed use, 47% said senior housing and third highest answer at 40% was affordable housing.

What infrastructure do you want to see expanded through the region? Number one at 60% was sewers, 50% said natural gas, 45% fiber optics and water service at 42%.

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When asked how to address the lack of sewers? The number one answer was to install neighborhood or community sewer systems and then on site and install public sewers.

76% said that agriculture is very important to the region. 24% said it was somewhat important. What should be done to preserve farmland? Everyone picked all of the above.

Mr. Curtis said he has just been voted onto the board of the Hope Partnership. The Hope Partnership is an affordable housing development entity based out of Old Saybrook and develops affordable housing in the region.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Snyder
Recording Secretary

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