



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, February 26, 2020

RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Charlene Janecek *
Clinton: Karl Kilduff *
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore *
Deep River: Angus McDonald
Durham: Robin Newton *
East Haddam: Robert Smith
East Hampton: David Cox * (until 1:35)
Essex: Norm Needleman
Haddam: Robert McGarry * (at 12:30)
Killingworth: Cathy Iino * (until 1:45)
Lyme: Steve Mattson
Middlefield: Ed Bailey *
Middletown: Ben Florsheim
Old Lyme: Tim Griswold
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna *
Portland: Susan Bransfield
Westbrook: Noel Bishop *

MPO Members:

Middlesex Chamber of Commerce: Darlene Briggs
Estuary & Middletown Are Transit Districts: Joe Comerford

Others Present:

Pat Bandzes, Eversource
Cathy Lezon, Eversource
Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office
Diane Ifkovic, DEEP
Laurie McElwee, South Central Mobility Manager
Julia McGrath, Congressman Courtney's Office
Chris McDermott, CT Examiner

Staff Present:

Margot Burns
Janice Ehle/Meyer
Torrance Downes
Rob Haramut
Eliza LoPresti
Sam Gold

RiverCOG

Dan Bourret
Megan Joufflas

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

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 12:12 p.m. at the Scotch Plains Tavern, 124 Westbrook Rd., Essex, CT. He welcomed RiverCOG's new Senior Planner, Megan Joufflas and notified everyone that Dan Bourret, RiverCOG's GIS Coordinator will be leaving at the end of March for a job in Old Lyme.

Roll was called by Sam Gold.

There was no public speaking.

a. Regional Election Monitor Report – Carol Conklin

Mr. Gold read Ms. Conklin's report as she was unable to be present. Registrars are currently working on their canvass of voters and presidential primary preparation. The canvass is an annual voter list clean up and the primary will be held April 28. Ms. Conklin is offering her time to registrars in March if they need to brush up on any skills prior to the primary.

2. LCRVMPO Business

a. Approval of Minutes of the Dec. 11, 2019 & Jan. 22, 2020 LCRVCOG and LCRVMPO Meetings (motion)

Mr. Bishop moved to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2019 meeting; second by Mr. Fortuna. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Bailey moved to approve the minutes of the January 22, 2020 meeting; second by Mr. Fortuna. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. Transportation Updates

- i. **Route 66 Corridor Study:** The current draft alternatives were presented to CT DOT, they should be getting comments back to Tighe & Bond within the next couple of weeks. Next steps are to get the draft report out to the advisory committee, present it to the boards in East Hampton and Portland, hold two final public meetings and then present the final report in May.
- ii. **Lower Connecticut River Valley Transit Study:** Mr. Gold gave a presentation on the study this morning at the Capitol to the CT Association of Community Transportation. Four scenarios are being considered: two independent transit districts but with investments to get them up to where they need to be with staffing and facilities, two separate transit districts with a shared maintenance facility, one merged district with a shared maintenance facility and a satellite storage facility, or one merged facility with everything on one campus.
- iii. **Transit District Updates:** Mr. Gold reported that Joe Comerford is working at both ETD & MAT as Lisa Seymour has not been replaced and there is some work to be done in Middletown.

3. LCRVMPO Business

a. Community Rating System

Diane Ifkovic of DEEP presented information on the Community Rating System, which is a subset of the national flood insurance program. It's a rating system related to flood insurance policies and can offer discounts based on points earned as a community. Currently no RiverCOG towns are participating in this revenue neutral program.

There is an open space component to the rating system, and one easy way to get points is to document a town's open space within the flood plain. An open space analysis was completed for and distributed to each town. The hazard mitigation plans will also count toward points in the CRS as will other activities that don't take a lot of time or effort to complete.

Towns recertify annually and receive an audit of the program every five years. Mr. Gold asked if the program could be done as a region and asked for calculations on that.

b. Household Hazardous Waste Update and 2020 Budget (motion)

MXI has been selected as the new vendor. There is now a fixed price of \$13,000 per collection, therefore the number of collections has been reduced to 10 to eliminate two of the low-turnout Essex collections. There are no set up or admin fees for MXI. If the collection minimum is met the difference in cost should only be about 2% higher. MXI does not charge per household, instead they charge per barrel based on type of waste. The brochure and schedule will be distributed as soon as possible; the first collection will be in Clinton on March 28.

To provide better information in a more timely manner, RiverCOG will be billing towns for their portion of the events rather than the vendor doing so. The contract with MXI is for 3 years plus a RiverCOG option for 2 more if we want. There was discussion on using DPH's population numbers to distribute the cost (amongst participating towns) that will occur if the minimum is not met.

Ms. Iino moved to allocate the excess cost on the same formula as the base costs; second by Mr. Bishop. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Bailey moved to approve the household hazardous waste budget; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

c. MIRA Intent Letters (Trash Talk)

Mr. Bailey & Mr. Fortuna (MIRA board members) explained that the towns that utilize MIRA have received non-binding letters of intent regarding the redevelopment of the South Meadows trash to energy plant. All responses to date are indicating that the towns see this as the most environmentally-friendly and proper way to move forward. Though the towns do not want to see the trash shipped out of state, the consensus is that they would like to see the State get involved somehow through providing bonding, credits or power purchasing agreements to help offset the cost, which is now being proposed at \$145/ton tip fee. There has been a significant reduction in money coming in due to energy rates and rates received for recyclables.

It is unlikely that the towns will commit to a 30-year agreement without subsidy within a few months. Additionally, Hartford is against the proposal. Meanwhile, the plant is obligated to take trash until 2027, though it probably won't be a trash to energy plant past 2023. The facility could be converted to a transfer station, which requires a separate permit which Hartford is against. Without a renovation there will most likely be an orderly shut-down to come. There are a few plants that might have some capacity, and there is the option of sending the trash out of state still. Leadership from the state is needed, especially as this is a very complicated situation.

Ms. Ehle/Meyer asked if there were any actions the region could take to get better terms, and it is felt that right now there is not due to limited capacity at other plants. CEOs were asked to submit their letters of intent if they have not already done so. There was further discussion about the possibility of anaerobic digestion development in the state. There was also discussion on paying for recyclables which will be coming up in 2021 and what will happen if there is another catastrophic breakdown at MIRA similar to last year.

d. Ransomware Recovery

There are still some outstanding licensing issues for our GIS software and others. We still need a new backup system up and running, which is considered "system hardening" and will not be paid for by insurance. Right now staff has no external access. A draft report will be coming soon and will be circulated to the towns. When asked what were the most important lessons learned Mr. Gold stated that longer passwords are better than shorter, more complicated passwords, cloud backup is the best, subscribing to software is better than having proprietary software installed, and that remote access is only as safe as computers that it is being utilized from so RiverCOG may provide laptops to staff for this purpose.

e. Regional Plan of Conservation and Development Update

Fitzgerald & Halliday (FHI), consultants for the project, are working on coordinating a meeting with each town's land use commissions starting in April and running through June. The RPC members will be used as conduits for information through the process. Mr. Gold notified everyone of which towns do not have representation or have representatives that are not able to attend meetings.

f. Legislation of Interest

Mr. Gold will be updating everyone as bills of interest move forward. Chairman Salvatore noted that he testified for CCM for a bill regarding PTSD with expansion to include EMS and other first responding personnel. He believes this may be another unfunded mandate coming from the state. Chair Salvatore also testified against another bill addressing JANUS that could threaten management rights. Mr. Gold asked for an email if any members learn of bills they would like RiverCOG to weigh in on.

g. RPIP Applications

The full applications are due Friday Feb. 28.

4. Chairman's and Executive Director's Reports

Chairman Salvatore had no report.

Mr. Gold gave a brief financial report; RiverCOG is currently spending within the parameters of the adopted 2.1 million dollar operating budget.

5. Other Business

a. DEMHS Report

Two of the four current grants will be closed out in April and June of this year. The ransomware report will be presented with DEMHS to a wider audience. Jake Manke, our region 2 field coordinator will be working his field office hours in the RiverCOG office.

6. Adjournment

Mr. Fortuna moved to adjourn at 1:54 p.m. Second by Mr. Bishop; vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti