



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, July 22, 2020

RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Lauren Gister *
Clinton: Karl Kilduff *
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore *
Deep River: Angus McDonald *
Durham: Laura Francis *
East Haddam: Robert Smith *
East Hampton: David Cox *
Essex: Norm Needleman
Haddam: Robert McGarry *
Killingworth: Cathy Iino
Lyme: Steve Mattson *
Middlefield: Ed Bailey *
Middletown: Ben Florsheim
Old Lyme: Tim Griswold *
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna *
Portland: Susan Bransfield * (until 10:00)
Westbrook: Noel Bishop *

MPO Members:

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

Others Present:

Brianna DeVivo, Senator Murphy's Office
Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor
Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office
Robert Gomez, VN Engineers
Bridget Boucaud, VN Engineers
Adam Dawidowicz, BL Companies
Erik Shortell, Federal Highway Administration
Eric Tang
Cathy Lezon, Eversource
Kathryn Dube, COST
Steve O'Neill, VHB

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Torrance Downes

RiverCOG

Eliza LoPresti
Margot Burns
Robert Haramut
Paula Fernald
Janice Ehle/Meyer
Megan Jouflas

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

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 9:01 A.M. This meeting took place via Zoom.

Roll was called by Sam Gold.

Ms. Gister moved to add agenda item 2f) Letter of support for Middletown OSWA grant application; second by Mr. Smith. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Public Speaking

Carol Conklin, Regional Election Monitor, reported that prior to the primary coming up on Aug. 11, ballot boxes have been installed in front of town halls. The state is willing to reimburse towns for extra help hired for the election. She reminded everyone that registrars need to get their emergency polling plans submitted as this will help with the reimbursement request. The state is also paying for a cleaning after the election, towns that want this to occur need to opt in.

Ellen Graham of Sen. Blumenthal's office and Brianna DeVivo of Sen. Murphy's office stated that the Senate is back in session and they are hoping to pass the HEROES act that was passed in the House.

2. LCRVMPO Business

a. Approval of Minutes of the June 24, 2020 LCRVCOG & MPO Meeting

Mr. Cox moved to approve the minutes of the June 24, 2020 regular meeting; second by Mr. Bailey. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. Regional Transportation Safety Plan by VN Engineers

Bob Gomez and Bridget Boucaud of VN Engineers explained that they are tasked with coming up with a regional safety plan for reducing fatalities on local, regional & state roads (not to include limited access highways). Mr. Gold suggested setting up another meeting with VN and town representatives before they begin their visits to each municipality.

c. 2018 TIP Amendment 41 Deployment of battery electric busses (BEBs) on CTfastrak's bus rapid transit corridor, project # 0171-XXX, 2020

Ms. Gister moved to approve TIP Amendment 41; second by Mr. Smith. Vote was unanimous in favor.

d. FTA Section 5310 Review/Prioritization

The Section 5310 program provides Federal funding for capital and operating expenses to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options. Eligible applicants include private nonprofit

organizations, state or local governments and public transportation operators. This year we received one 5310 application in the Hartford TMA by MARC Community Resources and two operating applications in the New Haven TMA by ETD. MARC are requesting to replace a 2012 Ford E350 Minibus and has over 125,000 miles previously purchased with 5310 funds. ETD is requesting funds for feeder service between ETD and Middletown and Hartford and an extension between Chester and Old Saybrook to feed SLE and four local bus routes. The second application is to provide an accessible transportation voucher subsidy program with local taxi companies to fill gaps in existing services so people have greater freedom and flexibility to travel to employment, healthcare, shopping, education, etc.

Mr. Bailey moved to approve the prioritization of the 5310 funding with MARC as the top priority in the Hartford TMA and ETD applications as the top priority in New Haven TMA; second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.

e. **Lower Connecticut River Valley Transit Study Update**

There will be a public meeting tonight regarding proposed service changes. The meeting will take place via Zoom, be broadcast on cable access channels and will be re-broadcast in Middletown and Valley Shore cable access channels after the meeting. Comments are requested by August 8. There is a voice mail number for comments. The recommendations for this project include a merger of the two transit districts with a shared maintenance facility in Middletown and one on the shoreline in Westbrook.

At this time Ms. Francis asked for a LOTCIP updated. Mr. Haramut reported that the Durham job on Higganum Road is almost complete and the Cromwell Coles Road job and the Chester Main Street job are currently funded and in construction. The East Main in Clinton (sidewalk) is currently under review and the Candlewood Road job in Haddam is in design. Other jobs under review include Saybrook Road in Middletown, Smith Street in East Hampton, Saybrook Junction in Old Saybrook and Route 17 in Durham. Funding for the next two years is approved and in the last bonding bill. Projects probably won't be solicited until another two years from now.

f. **Middletown OSWA Grant Application**

Ms. Burns explained that the grant request is for 84 acres within the Guida Farms Greenway which is in an open space preserve. It's adjacent to two undeveloped and forested acres in Durham. The property is included in their POCD and is attached to other open space used for passive recreation in the southwest corner of Middletown.

Mr. Smith moved to authorize a letter of support for Middletown's OSWA grant application; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

3. Covid Response and Long-Term Recovery

Mr. Gold reported that the recovery committee is slowly getting more clarity on the tasks the state is asking for them to take on along with what subcommittees should be formed. The COGs submitted a unified fund request to cover Covid-related direct costs and COG staff time and are working on another statewide request to the Economic Development Administration. If this grant is obtained it will cover the whole RiverCOG region, not just Middlesex County.

Mr. Bishop moved to authorize a letter of support from the COG for the statewide EDA application, particularly our portion of it; second by Ms. Gister. Vote was unanimous in favor. Discussion: The application asks for \$400,000 split between RiverCOG and the Middlesex Chamber. Our portion will cover the whole region, not just the towns in Middlesex County.

Mr. Gold reported that towns can get PPE through the CRCOG purchasing council if they are a part of that and that the state is rolling out a testing regime and a plan for temporary housing for those quarantining.

There followed a discussion on municipal employees visiting states that are on the list of states that must quarantine in CT for two weeks and leave for such. Mr. Gold will ask for an opinion from Attorney Mednick that will be shared with everyone.

4. LCRVCOG Business

a. Changes to State DAS Purchasing

Ms. Fernald explained that DAS used to be very clear with their pricing, but have recently changed practices. Now, the contracts RiverCOG uses as fiduciary to DEMHS Region 2 are open-ended and do not include price lists. Therefore, there is no pricing control because there are no base costs defined. She asked if the board wants to change the purchasing policy because as it stands now vendors on the state list can be used for purchases without obtaining other quotes.

Ms. Francis noted that some of the ESF chairs feel put out that they cannot just make their needed purchases, especially as they are volunteers to the commission and this is not their regular job. She suggested looking into other consortiums that could be used to make purchases. It was also discussed that towns may need to change their policies as DAS is used by all facets. Ms. Fernald will look into alternative purchasing consortiums and report back for the next COG meeting.

b. Regional Services Grant

Grant paperwork has still not been received from OPM. Mr. Gold asked for a motion authorizing the form resolution that was received.

Mr. Bishop moved to authorize COG Secretary Ed Bailey to sign the form resolution for FY21 Regional Services Grant; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

c. Regional Plan of Conservation & Development Update

Mr. Gold stated that the introductory presentations went well and we are now moving into the meetings with each municipality, or combinations of similar municipalities where appropriate. The meeting with Middletown is this evening.

d. Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

The annexes are running a little behind but will be out to each town by this Friday. Ms. Burns asked everyone to look at them carefully and comment back as soon as possible. Following that the third planning meeting of the committee will be scheduled and another public meeting will be held when the document is complete.

e. LCRLT Update

Ms. Burns displayed the flyer that will be sent out regarding a small pop up grant opportunity through the Middlesex Community Foundation and the template documents that were created for evaluating land. These documents will be sent to CLCC for use by land trusts throughout the state. Amy Paterson at the CLCC has presented the LCRLT with an opportunity to have a feasibility study done. The study will look at the reality of mergers and long and short-term goals.

f. Household Hazardous Waste Update

Our new vendor has a minimum of \$13,000 per collection. The first collection was over \$20,000 and the next were under. We have been publicizing the events and Ms. Ehle/Meyer put out another call for volunteers.

g. Shoreline Soup Kitchen and Pantries

Ms. Ehle/Meyer read letters from Amy Hollis, Executive Director of the Shoreline Soup Kitchen and Pantry and Ann Faust, the Director of the Coalition on Housing and Homelessness. Both letters discussed changes since the pandemic has taken hold and future needs. The letters are included after these minutes.

5. Chairman's & Executive Director's Reports

Chairman Salvatore discussed the police accountability bill that is in the legislation now. He asked the CEOs to look at it carefully, especially the section on qualified immunity. He is concerned that if this goes forward in its present state the police job will be very unattractive. He also mentioned being appalled at what is being done to POST. This was discussed amongst the CEOs. A memo received from Tom Girard will be distributed to all.

Mr. Gold discussed the zoning bill before the legislature and stated that a complete overhaul of zoning should not be done during a short session and that it is missing nuance.

Mr. Gold mentioned that the executive order allowing for remote meetings expires in September but that this needs to be addressed. Attorney Mednick is working on this.

a. Executive Director's Evaluation

Chairman Salvatore noted that Executive Director Gold received a favorable evaluation and the Executive Board is recommending a pay increase.

Upon motion of Mr. Bishop and second of Ms. Gister, it was unanimously voted that the board has full continuing confidence in Mr. Gold to do his job.

Discussion; Mr. Gold has also taken on a leadership role as Chairman of the CT COGs, which reflects well on him and on our COG.

6. Other Business - None

7. Adjournment

Chairman Salvatore adjourned the meeting at 11:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti