



Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

145 Dennison Road Essex, CT 06426 | +1 860 581 8554 | www.rivercog.org

Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments And Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

April 28, 2021

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: Bob McGarry *
Killingworth: Cathy Iino *
Lyme: Steve Mattson *
Middlefield: Ed Bailey * (10:00)
Middletown: Joe Samolis *
Old Lyme: Tim Griswold
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna *
Portland: Susan Bransfield *
Westbrook: Noel Bishop *

MPO Members:

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

*present

Others Present:

Brianna DeVivo, Senator Murphy's Office
Christine Goupil, Representative House District 35
Grayson Wright, CT DOT
Jonathan Ferrigno, Eversource
Julia McGrath, Congressman Courtney's Office
TJ Magnoli, Eversource
Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office
Alessandra DeStefanis, Kolmar Americas
Elias Peterson, Kolmar Americas
Paul Teta, Kolmar America
Jake Manke, DEMHS Region 2
Steve Ciocca
Frank DeFelice, Chairman RPC

RiverCOG

Staff Present:

Torrance Downes
Eliza LoPresti
Margot Burns
Robert Haramut
Kevin Armstrong
Ben Lovejoy

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

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. This meeting took place via Zoom. Roll was called by Sam Gold.

Public Speaking

Julia McGrath of Congressman Courtney's office stated that implementation guidance for ARPA has not come out yet. Rep. Courtney has asked that it be written into the guidance that state and local aid can be used to defray education costs. There is a grant program coming out for restaurants that their office is tracking as well.

Ellen Graham of Senator Blumenthal's office noted the senate is bringing back earmarks. They are currently waiting for details and will get information out as soon as possible.

Brianna DeVivo of Senator Murphy's office noted that a grant program for summer enrichment programs was released by the state.

Jake Manke, DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator, noted that we are on day 422 of activation for Covid. The next long term recovery steering committee meeting is May 13. They are seeing a decrease in demand for testing and vaccinations. The FEMA mobile unit is in the state now. There will be a DEMHS exercise on May 4 with little to no impact to municipalities. Town CERT and MRC teams are putting in an unprecedented number of volunteer hours, they deserve a big thanks.

2. Presentation – American GreenFuels

Eli Peterson, of American Greenfuels (a subsidiary of Kolmar American) spoke on the benefits of replacing a portion of municipal petroleum-based oil with biofuel. American Greenfuels is a biodiesel processing plant located in New Haven that provides a clean burning, renewable finished fuel. There will be another meeting specifically on this topic for CEOs or public works to attend.

3. Discussion on Possible Regional Project with ARPA Funds

Mr. Gold discussed ideas that had been brought up for regional project(s) using a portion of ARPA funding from participating towns. One possibility is document digitization, another is recapitalizing the Middlesex County Revitalization Commission. Ms. Francis stated that the structure is already in place for the latter idea. Also discussed was a regional EDC presence in the form of a staff person at RiverCOG dedicated to regional economic development. Mr. Gold will discuss these ideas further with the Middlesex Chamber.

Chairman Salvatore stated that in order to take the money out of town budgets they will need to know shortly the amount being asked for. There is no money going directly to the COGs, all funds will go directly to municipalities or route through OPM and be distributed to municipalities.

4. LCRVMPO Business

a. Approval of Minutes of March 24, 2021 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Meetings

Ms. Gister moved to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2021 meeting; second by Mr. Smith. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. FY 21 TIP Amendment #4, Upgrade RR Crossing on Portland St. and close access to Rt. 9 via Miller St. project #0082-0322 Middletown

Mr. Bishop moved to approve FY21 TIP Amendment #4; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

c. Draft 22-23 UPWP Update

The UPWP (Unified Planning Work Program) draft covers July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2023. The public comment period is open from April 26 to May 25, 2021, with a public information meeting being held on May 12, 2021. The board will be looked to for endorsement at the May meeting. The Federal and State comments are already included so there will probably not be any significant changes before then.

5. LCRVCOG Business

a. Appointment of RiverCOG Auditor

Mr. Cox moved to appoint Henry, Raymond & Thompson as the RiverCOG Auditor for fiscal year 2021; second by Mr. Smith. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Discussion: This appointment exercises a one-year extension on the three-year contract. Mr. Cox asked if we will go to RFP next year, Mr. Gold replied yes. Mr. Bishop asked if the cost stays the same, Mr. Gold believes it does but he will follow up. If there is a difference in cost it would be very small.

b. Letter of Support: State Greenway Application for Portland

Ms. Bransfield discussed the application and thanked Mr. Armstrong for the map he created. This greenway will connect Portland's portion of the Air Line Trail to East Hampton's. Portland owns the twenty-two acres which includes a stream, vernal pools and other areas of significance that they hope to retain in its state. The land is an open area that leads up to the trail and other adjacent walking areas.

Mr. McGarry moved to create a letter of support from the COG for Portland's Greenway application; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

c. Regional Plan of Conservation & Development Overview

A draft of the plan was presented to the public on April 26, 2021. Mr. Gold asked everyone to please circulate it for comment. The public comment period is open until June 30, on which date there will be a public hearing. The board will most likely be asked to adopt the plan at their September meeting.

d. Possible GIS Project

Originally a GIS project proposal was going to be discussed, but this week the state announced that they would be using some of the ARPA funding to create a statewide parcel layer.

The mandate to submit parcel layers to the state has been given a ninety-day extension, though they also indicated they would roll out new CAMA standards which have yet to be finalized. Mr. Armstrong will send information and a request shortly. The state will be working with assessors to create statewide data.

e. Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

FEMA reviewed the plan with no substantial changes. They suggested for the next update that the plan focus more on mitigation (rather than emergency preparedness). They felt strengths included the flood susceptibility mapping project and the fact that invasive species was included as a hazard. Once the plan is adopted in every town we can apply for grants as they become available in the fall.

f. Lower Connecticut River Land Trust Update

The meeting was postponed until April 29. The Cape Cod Compact is being reviewed as a possible model to base collaborative services upon.

g. Hydrilla Update

Ms. Burns has been working with Senator Blumenthal's office, which is submitting a letter to the environmental subcommittee of the appropriations committee for funding to abate hydrilla in the CT River. The River Conservancy put together a meeting of partners that are looking at this problem, which was significant because it acknowledged that there is a significant issue in our area and throughout the river. They are working on outreach and messaging. The CT Ag Experiment Station has been funded by DEEP to do a pilot abatement program in Wethersfield Cove, CT River Conservancy will be implementing mats that smother the vegetation and Fish & Wildlife will be working around Dead Man's Cove in Cromwell. We did not receive the grant for the shared boat cleaning station.

There was a partner meeting on water chestnut. The Friends of Whalebone Cove will be working in Whalebone and Selden coves this year. There is a large group of volunteers to work in the Middletown (Mettabessett) area where it is expected to be heavy.

Representative Goupil was able to be on the meeting for a few moments and at this time discussed that the Senate is in session and removing the religious exemption on vaccinations has passed to the Governor's desk with amendments. The budget is through finance and appropriations. There are significant differences between the Governor's budget and the one that emerged from committee. She was happy to see that non-profit organizations are included for funding.

h. Household Hazardous Waste Update

The season has started with the first event being held in Clinton. The numbers were up 50% from that same event in 2019. There have been a group of volunteers for each collection that worked out well.

Ms. Ehle/Meyer reported that there is a possibility for the Regional Agriculture Council to obtain a grant for shared equipment.

i. Municipal Solid Waste Concerns

Mr. Gold stated that leadership is needed on this topic; he will talk to Mr. DeLong at CCM regarding. Ms. Iino stated that waste needs to be on an infrastructure bill (state or federal). Ms. Francis stated that Durham has a group of concerned citizens that are organizing a pilot program for organic waste collection at the transfer station, she will forward information to all CEOs to see if they would like to participate and to put in a bulk order. Mr. Fortuna stated that DEEP doesn't believe new infrastructure is needed, they are on the path of reduce and reuse and pay as you throw. They aren't talking about new burn or trash to energy plants. He also mentioned that DEEP commissioner Dykes has been spending a lot of time on this issue, though the Governor may not be paying a lot of attention to it at the moment.

j. Legislative Update

Mr. Lovejoy discussed the legislative update which was distributed to CEOs prior to the meeting.

Mr. Fortuna moved to write a letter of support HB 6386 (an act concerning extended producer responsibility for tire, smoke detectors and certain gas cylinders), Ms. Iino seconded. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Chairman Salvatore moved to write a letter of opposition to HB 6655 (an act concerning municipal taxation and incentivizing regionalization); Mr. Smith seconded. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Ms. Francis asked if there was something we could do about extended producer responsibility on the federal level. Ms. McGrath of Congressman Courtney's office encouraged those interested to reach out and set up a meeting with his legislative staff to discuss.

Ms. Gister noted that CCM is in support of HB 6655. Mr. Gold will discuss with CCM.

k. Gateway Update

Gateway processed an application for an outdoor restaurant at Saybrook Point. As the application is a little controversial, Mr. Downes invited those with questions to reach out to him for details.

l. DEMHS Update

A written update will be emailed out. The FY18 grant expires on June 30, 2021. There is a little over \$5,000 remaining but there are plans to spend that down in time.

6. Chairman & Executive Director's Reports

Chairman Salvatore had no report.

Mr. Gold gave a brief financial report. Our spending is within the parameters of our adopted budget, though we will go over on the IT equipment line item because of the vendor switch from Absolute Logic to Spectrum Virtual.

Mr. Gold updated that the lawsuit between CT and NY over LI Sound clean dredging spoils disposal is still ongoing. The CT Port Authority has filed an amicus brief which NY is appealing. He is confirming that we will support the amicus brief as we did in the past.

He also discussed upcoming meetings and whether they will be in-person. There was a suggestion to hold a summer meeting at Parmalee Farm in Killingworth, probably in July.

7. **Other Business**

None

8. **Adjournment**

Mr. Cox moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:07 AM, second by Ms. Gister. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti