



Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

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

Regional Planning Committee

LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Monday, September 23, 2024
7:00 p.m.

Members:

Chester	Carlie Dailey *
Clinton	Lawrence Edwards *
	Eddie Alberino *
Cromwell	Nick Demetriades *
	Anthony LaCava *
Deep River	Daniel Smith *
Durham	Frank DeFelice *
East Haddam	Crary Brownell
	Debbie Langdon *
East Hampton	Michael Kowalczyk *
Essex	Carey Duques *
	Thomas Pinkowish
Haddam	Raul deBrigard *
Killingworth	Alec Martin *
	Stephanie Warren *
Lyme	Mary Stone *
Middlefield	Paul Pizzo *
Middletown	Beth Emery *
	Nathaniel Spencer
Old Lyme	Harold Thompson *
	Howard Margules *
Old Saybrook	Douglas McCracken
	Michael Bender *
Portland	Chantal Foster
	Bob Ellsworth
Westbrook	Bill Neale *
	Marie Farrell

*Members Present

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Eliza LoPresti
Susie Beckman
Megan Jouflas

RiverRPC

Elizabeth Rolison
 Brendan Geraghty
 Robert Haramut
 Kevin Armstrong
 Marcos Gonzalez

1. **Call to Order**

Chairman DeFelice called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The meeting was conducted via Zoom.

2. **Roll Call** - Eliza LoPresti called the roll call.

3. **Seating of Alternates**

Daniel Smith (Deep River), Debbie Langdon (East Haddam), and Michael Bender (Old Saybrook) were seated.

4. **Adoption of Agenda**

Mr. Alberino moved to adopt the agenda; seconded by Mr. Edwards. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Staff Introduction of Elizabeth Rolison, new Financial and Administrative Assistant at RiverCOG. Ms. LoPresti has been promoted to Community Planner and is helping Ms. Rolison transition into her new role over the next weeks/months.

5. **Public Comment** – None

6. **Approval of Minutes of Past Meetings**

Mr. Neale moved to approve the minutes of the June 24, 2024 meeting as amended; seconded by Mr. Alberino. Vote was unanimous in favor. Motion passed.

Discussion:

1. Ms. Langdon regarding the presentation about a cable across CT River between Haddam and E. Haddam. Please reflect in the minutes that Commissioner Langdon asked that it be run **under** the river. (This was later identified to be a comment for a different commission)
2. Mr. Neale regarding Referral B Westbrook: Mr. Neale clarifies that height is meant to address the height any building, not just hotels
3. Mr. Bender: Correction to date – minutes for June, not May.

7. **Referrals**

To view current referrals: <https://www.rivercog.org/regional/services/referrals/>

Mr. Gonzales will now be the liaison to the RPC in regards to referrals. Mr. Downes has provided Mr. Gonzalez with a memo that outlines referrals from April through September.

Ms. Emery asked about a referral request that was submitted by her planner that they never heard back on. It does not seem like RiverCOG has received this request; staff will look into it.

8. Updates on RiverCOG Programs

a. New Transit Services, River Valley Transit

Mr. Geraghty briefed the group on expanded transit services and other changes at RVT.

[See full Power Point Presentation here:](#)

Mr. Geraghty answered questions from the group including about the Xtra Mile program and ADA accessibility.

b. SS4A Update

Mr. Haramut explained the SS4A (Safe Street and Roads for All) program under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This discretionary program provides 5 billion in appropriated funds over 5 years (2022-2026) for Planning and Demonstration and Implementation grants. The goal of the plan is to reduce traffic related injuries and fatalities for all road users.

[See full Power Point presentation here:](#)

Mr. Haramut asks Committee to please Spread the word about the interactive Map:

<https://www.rivercog.org/ss4a/>

Ms. Emery noted that none of the steering committee members are from the past Complete Streets committee and thinks it is important that the steering Committee include members of the town itself. Mr. Haramut noted that the current committee is not closed, so reaching out to ask about additional members is possible.

c. Central CT Loop Trail Study (ALT-FCT) Update

Mr. Haramut explained the focus of the study is to look for opportunities to connect the Air Line and Farmington Canal Trails.

For more information and updates, please visit:

<https://www.rivercog.org/plans/cctloopstudy/>

Comments and questions included a suggestion to continue bike lanes down Rt. 17 from Durham to Middletown to the area with Big Y, Dunkin, etc; clarification on the program, and discussion about lit paths.

d. Regional Housing Committee's Work

The Regional Housing Committee has been working on a Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) which was recommended in the Regional Housing Plan (RHP; 2022) The group is working on a formula that will create a picture of housing needs in the region, using data. The goal is to have a report written for the COG board by

Ms. Jouflas gave a brief preview of what the RHP worked on during one of their recent workshops

e. **Regional Economic Development Committee – Economic Development District Application**

Ms. Beckman told the Committee that she completed and submitted the application to become a federally designated economic development district. It was confirmed received. It is not known when we will hear back.

As per Ms. Beckman, this would make us eligible for federal funding related to economic development which could include growth and retention of businesses, job creation, bringing in workers and worker development.

Questions included: what is the eligibility, size, and scope? Example: A local business had a water table issue. Ms. Beckman would have to investigate this but there could be funding available for projects that are part of a larger revitalization plan; How does this compare with the Chamber's economic development tourism state funds? Ms. Beckman stated that this is in addition to those funds.

9. **Miscellaneous: State, Regional and/or Local Planning Issues**

Mr. Gold is currently working with staff on the RSG (Regional Services Grant) report for fiscal year 2024. Kevin Armstrong gave a brief update on the digital documentation project with our towns.

Chairman DeFelice mentioned that he has been talking with the office of the state building inspector about one statewide form for municipalities for ease of use.

Ms. Stone mentioned that Lyme has become political when discussing affordable housing. There is Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) in the town, which is not counted toward a town's affordable housing stock. She is wondering whether there will ever be any movement on this. Mr. Gold mentioned that this is a statutory issue.

Mr. Neale mentioned that on Wednesday night, Clinton will vote on selling Pearson school to HOPE Partnership for the purpose of building 50 affordable units. Further discussion occurred about affordable housing.

Chairman DeFelice reminded everyone that the Durham Fair is this weekend.

10. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50pm.

Minutes recorded by Elizabeth Rolison