



TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK  
**Planning Commission**

302 Main Street  
Old Saybrook, Connecticut 06475

**oldsaybrookct.gov**

*Thomas R. Cox, Chairman  
Paula S. Kay, Vice Chairman  
Robert D. Missel, Secretary*

*Kathleen A. Sugland  
Mark M. Patterson  
Douglas S. McCracken, Alternate  
Vacancy  
Vacancy*

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
**Wednesday, July 15, 2020 at 7:00 P.M.**  
via teleconference

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

The Chairman called the teleconference to order at 7:07 p.m.

II. **ROLL CALL**

Present: T. Cox, P. Kay, D. McCracken (seated for R. Missel)

Absent: R. Missel, K. Sugland, M. Patterson

III. **REGULAR BUSINESS**—None.

IV. **DISCUSSION**

A. **Regional Plan of Conservation & Development (2021)**

The Chairman, one of two representatives from Old Saybrook to the Regional Planning Committee of the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (“Rive COG”), stated a brief welcome to the RiverCOG staff: Megan Joufflas, Margot Burns and Eliza LoPresti. Ms. Joufflas presented an overview of the region and some commonalities she found between River COG’s Town members’ Plans of Conservation & Development throughout the region. Ms. Burns moderated a focused discussion among the members and the audience around issues shared between the towns and various goals as to how coordination between towns might address them. Without objection, the Chairman submitted the attached memo prepared by the Town Planner on these issues for the record.

V. **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** to **adjourn** at 8:07 p.m. to the next regular meeting on Wednesday, August 5, 2020 at 7:00 P.M. in the First Floor Conference Room of Town Hall, 302 Main Street and via Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/96382281249>; Teleconference Dial: 929 436 2866, Meeting ID: 963 8228 1249; or One tap mobile: +19294362866,,96382281249#; **MADE** by P. Kay; **SECONDED** by D. McCracken; **APPROVED** unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Nelson

**From:** Christine Nelson

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 14, 2020 8:36 AM

**To:** Thomas R. Cox (R) 11/21/23 (); 'Robert D. Missel (R) 11/19/19 (); 'Paula S. Kay (R) 11/15/21 (); 'Mark M. Patterson'; 'Kathleen A. Sugland (D) 11/15/21 (); Douglas S. McCracken

**Subject:** RiverRPC: Comments for Discussion

Tom,

You asked me to give the Commission some ideas to consider from their own perspective in answering each of the questions the Regional Planning Committee has posed to Old Saybrook. Below, I offer some axioms of land use in Old Saybrook, but please do not limit yourself to that realm of what the Region could be championing on the Town's behalf. The expectation is that members will contribute during the presentation next Wednesday evening but everyone is welcome to send their opinions along singly to Megan Joufflas at the Region.

### **Discussion Questions:**

#### **1. What is your vision for the Lower Connecticut River Valley?**

- In years past, the 9 member towns of the previous Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency (Killingworth, Clinton, Chester, Deep River, Essex, Westbrook, Old Saybrook, Lyme and Old Lyme) considered the (land use planning) region as it was-then: a sort of introspective “space between the places” of New Haven, Hartford and New London (or even Madison, Middletown and East Lyme).
- Today, our region is expanded to include the perspective of the member towns of the previous Midstate Regional Planning Agency—rural Middlefield, cosmopolitan Middletown, commuting Cromwell, recreational Portland, hilltop-lakeside East Hampton, agricultural Durham, historical Haddam, and entertaining East Haddam—to act as the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments. The RiverCOG region is aware of its standing now in relation to other collective municipalities’ regional ability to:
  - represent itself as a substantial unit;
  - compete for limited funding opportunities; and
  - manage local government services with the benefit of economies of scale.
- *In the coming decade or more, what vision for the Region guides our efforts? Consider what we are not: metropolitan... what else? Consider what we are: pre-industrial history, industrial land patterns, suburban security, multicultural context... all make for strong roots and, most recently: comradery in resilience.*

#### **2. What do you see as your town's role in the region?**

- Traditionally, Old Saybrook calls itself a commercial “hub” of the River Valley and the Shoreline.

- Today, we recognize other hubs in the region (Cromwell/Middletown), as well as our place as a link in corridors of land use (shoreline transit-oriented development, river valley villages, etc.)
- *In the coming decade or more, what role does Old Saybrook play for the Region?* Our town has inherent credence based on: its iconic New England setting and its range of typical patterns of land use:
  - Old Saybrook's imagery is symbolic of how RiverCOG is a region of distinct character. Therefore, Old Saybrook can demonstrate to the other towns in the region how to use their own qualities of life as a powerful, compelling brand OVERALL for an edge in competing for limited resources (lifestyle choices, employment offerings, disposable income, funding opportunities, etc.)
  - Old Saybrook is among the towns in the region with an extensive and varying infrastructure to support its town center grid, shoreline commercial corridor, dense beach communities, and woodland suburbs. Therefore, Old Saybrook can readily work with the Region as a whole as to how to continually, methodically upgrade municipal facilities, utilities, or on-staff expertise to adapt any town's offerings to the evolving needs/desires of local, regional and statewide users.

### **3. What are the challenges your town is facing that would be easier to address working regionally or with neighboring towns?**

- Over the years, Old Saybrook has joined joint arrangements to address mutual, geographically-limited concerns for the natural environment, public health and “environmental health” (outside influences on people, including cultural pressures that cause physical stress or mental distress). Many of “major initiatives of the day” continue decades later and have expanded both geographically and functionally as other towns found commonality with Old Saybrook's challenges—the Gateway Conservation Commission, the Connecticut River Area Health District, Hope Partnership, for example.
- Currently, we are facing the same major crises in natural environment, public health and environmental health as our neighboring towns—climate change and sea level rise, epidemics and drug abuse, and racial and gender discrimination. State and local policymakers are doing their best to act in tandem with the federal directives, but much of it would be easier for Old Saybrook and its already-assembled partners to address by bringing more municipalities of our Region into the efforts.
- *In the coming decade or more, what are the challenges Old Saybrook is facing that would be easier to address working regionally or with neighboring towns?* It would be helpful for the Region to assist the towns' and regional entities' professionals, as well as for those trying to run a business or employ others, in building resilience—equitable communication, asset protection, and mitigation of preventable crises in natural environment, public health and environmental health.

### **4. What do we do well in our region? What don't we do well?**

- Historically, the Region was a straightforward planning agency with a representative of the Board of Selectmen (often a Selectman) and a representative of the Planning Commission (typically a member of the Commission). The circle of coordination had a short radius that bridged geographic and political differences within towns and within the region out of practicality. The Region's staff specialized in expertise to bring regional initiatives that were also available for towns to champion in more depth locally. The Region also coordinated a [quarterly?] lunch for the Selectmen of CRERPA and Midstate to come together for a few hours to share and compare concerns.
- Following consolidation of the regions, there is now a necessary, yet challenging, bifurcation of policy-making:
  - The leaders of the COG come together for intergovernmental oversight of mutual “municipal business” concerns: property taxation and other revenues, collective bargaining, shared services, equipment loans, sharing part-time employees among town halls, etc.
  - The COG leaders have appointees to the now-many satellite agencies handling matters of regional land use: agriculture, environment, places of special concern, economics and land use planning.
  - The exceptions to the COG's delegation to satellite agencies are in land use matters with strict Federal formats and big-ticket implementation—transportation, natural hazard mitigation planning, and emergency preparedness.
- In the coming decade or more, what will we do well in our Region? Our Region might refine its competitive strategies:
  - Less competition for resources among the region for local tactics—IT services, human resources, scoping/pricing/bidding construction services, cooperative purchasing, energy purchasing, regional election monitoring, back office service sharing, etc.
  - More successful competition as a Region for regional objectives: human services, solid waste management, public safety, land use, brownfields, natural hazard mitigation, transportation, housing, sustainability/green infrastructure, public health.

##### **5. How could a Regional Plan of Conservation and Development support your town?**

- Classically, a regional plan of conservation and development is an archetype of statistical analysis and demographic projections. Towns usually do not have the time or expertise to conduct such work on their own, whether from secondary sources (census data, etc.) or primary research (traffic counts, boat counts, invasive plant occurrences, etc.). Our Region has always offered an outlook of the intermediate context between Federal/State data and inter-local preferences for regional coordination of: physical improvements, programs and standards.

- As a Council of Governments, the scope of our regional effort has grown from planning solely for land use and preservation. The current era of planning in our region emphasizes more qualitative benchmarks of government effectiveness: ableism/accessibility, sustainable development, social equity/environmental justice, community resilience, economic vibrancy, and healthy places.
- *In the coming decade or more, how could a Regional Plan of Conservation and Development support Old Saybrook?* The Plan being developed by the region could support Old Saybrook by being drafted to also serve as a “draw-down” template for updating our Plan(s), whether in whole or in part, with an especial strength in recommendations for regional coordination.

- *Christine*

**Christine Nelson**, AICP  
Town Planner

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