

Capitol Region Council of Governments

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MINUTES OF REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

January 18, 2007

ATTENDANCE

Members and Alternates

Lamont Aheart
Sandra Bobowski
Sue Errickson
Pat Kennedy
John Larensen
Thomas Manning
Karl Profe
Daniel Velcofsky

Town

Vernon
Hartford
Tolland
South Windsor
Marlborough
Bolton
Windsor
East Granby

Others Present

Mary Ellen Kowalewski	CRCOG
Rebecca Augur	CRCOG
Karen Olson	CRCOG
Sarah Raposa	CRCOG

Chairman Larensen called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.

Adoption of Minutes

Errickson moved to adopt the minutes from the November 16, 2006 meeting. Velcofsky seconded. The motion passed, with one abstention.

Capitol Region Transportation Plan

Karen Olson, from CRCOG's Transportation Department explained the upcoming revisions to the Capitol Region Transportation Plan. The Transportation plan was last completed in 2004, but recent federal legislation requires additional items be included in the Plan. These items include promoting consistency between state and local planned growth and economic development, a discussion of environmental mitigation activities, and an emphasis on safety. CRCOG has to get a revised list of transportation projects into ConnDOT by March 2007, and a revised Plan completed by May 2007. Ms. Olson described the current Transportation Plan as a strategic plan that sets forth the policies, goals and objectives of the region. CRCOG strives to include in the Transportation Plan projects that can be implemented, thus specific transportation projects are identified through special studies – either regional or corridor studies.

According to Ms. Olson the current Plan contains a chapter on connecting land use and transportation, and it will likely retain the chapter in the update. The Plan also includes a strong emphasis on transit, and some projects are already moving along, such as the New Britain-Hartford busway and the New Haven-Springfield commuter rail. The Plan does not encourage any major roadway improvement projects such as widening or

new roads, but does call for making the existing network more functional through things like access improvements. One project that is listed in the 2004 Plan, whose status will likely change in the 2007 update, is the relocation of Route 6. Because various state permitting agencies cannot come to agreement on the project, it will likely remain in the Plan as a desired project, but listed as an “unfunded need.” Finally, the Plan contains goals and projects surrounding environmental justice and air quality issues. The updated Plan will likely retain all of these existing components. However, it will not only more directly address the new federally required components, but also incorporate several studies that have been completed since 2004.

Mary Ellen Kowalewski then reviewed the consistency between the regional Plan of Conservation and Development and the regional transportation Plan. She explained that the two already are largely consistent because staff and commissions have relied on each of the plans in revisions. Ms. Kowalewski handed out possible comments that the Regional Planning Commission may want to make on the Transportation Plan. The comments suggest: including a discussion of recent state legislative initiatives, such as the growth management principles of the new State Plan of Conservation and Development and Responsible Growth initiative; ensuring a strong land use component to corridor studies; supporting livable community goals through context sensitive design and “complete street” planning; continue to provide consistency between the regional Plan of Conservation and Development and Transportation Plan, especially with respect to economic development areas; incorporating changes to the Transit Oriented Development discussion; and, offering CRCOG as a pilot region for build-out analysis to help improve forecasting tools.

Commission members decided to defer formal adoption of these comments to its next meeting.

Updates on Community Development Projects

Rebecca Augur updated the Commission on the Agriculture Viability project. She reported on the major concerns that emerged from listening sessions conducted with the agricultural community. Some of these concerns included: a need for greater consistency in regulations among and within towns; problems with regulations on signs, farm stands, and definitions of agriculture; a need for town officials to make better use of existing resources like the Dept. of Agriculture, agricultural organizations, and UCONN Extension System; a need to incorporate specific, strong and clear language in local Plans of Conservation and Development to promote working farms; recognition that permitting costs and times are burdensome to farm businesses, given seasonal agricultural interests or demands; a desire to explore agri-business zones or overlay zones; and, a desire to explore agricultural commissions, either local or regional.

Ms. Augur then updated the Commission on the regional Pre-Disaster Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. She explained the series of meetings CRCOG is currently conducting to get each town to develop planning goals and objectives, and handed out examples of what towns are coming up with.

Ms. Augur also passed out a press release announcing the availability of the UCONN/DEP Community Resource Inventory website that John Rozum had mentioned in his presentation to the Commission. The new site provides a series of maps, by town, that serve as a natural resources inventory. The website is:
<http://nemo.uconn.edu/tools/cri>

Mary Ellen Kowalewski then reminded the Commission about CRCOG Brownfields Assessment project, and the availability of funding for assessments of contaminated sites that are not currently owned by the responsible party. She reported that five towns have identified sites, and that the program is providing assessment assistance to several sites that will be part of the Goodwin College Riverfront Campus in East Hartford.

Report on Zoning, Subdivision, and Plan of Development Referrals:

Rebecca Augur reported on several zoning and subdivision referrals. There was no discussion or changes to staff comments.

Kennedy moved and Errickson seconded adoption of the referral comments. The motion passed unanimously.

Announcements

Mary Ellen Kowalewski announced that CRCOG would be sponsoring a training series for new commissioners through the Connecticut Land Use Academy this spring. She indicated that invitations would be sent directly to RPC members, Planning & Zoning Commission Chairs and Town Planners.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40pm.