

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF February 11, 2015

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Donald Stein	Canaan (Falls Village), Patricia Allyn Mechare
Burlington, Ted Shafer	Colebrook, Thomas McKeon
Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway	Goshen, Robert Valentine
Hartland, Wade Cole	Kent, Bruce Adams
Litchfield, Leo Paul, Jr.	New Hartford, Daniel Jerram
Norfolk, Susan Dyer	Roxbury, Barbara Henry
Sharon, Brent Colley	Torrington, Timothy Waldron
Warren, Craig Nelson	Winchester, Candace Bouchard
Winchester, Dale Martin	

Others in Attendance:

Kevin Lembo, State Comptroller	Jim Harper, Blum Shapiro
Philip S. Chester, CT DOAg	Eric Snowden, CRCOG
Eric Lindquist, CT OPM	Jessica Fowler, Sharon Selectman
Steve Silver, Eversource	Chuck Burnham, Eversource
Neil Ryan, ConnDOT	Bernie Harrington, LWV
Richard Lynn, NHCOG Staff	Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOG Staff
Darlene Krukar, NHCOG Staff	Media Representatives
JoAnn Ryan, NWC Chamber	

1. Call to Order, Opportunity for Public Comment. The meeting held at the NWCT Chamber of Commerce in Torrington was called to order by Chairman Don Stein at 10:10 a.m. There was no public comment.
2. Guest Speaker: Kevin Lembo, Comptroller, State of Connecticut. Topic: Update from the State Comptroller's Office Including State Budget Challenges and the CT Gigabit Broadband Project. Mr. Lembo distributed a handout on the Direct Deposit (ACH) Program and stated that there are 103 towns participating in this program and the State would like to see more since it is a more efficient way of receiving funds. He also promoted the state health plan. He then spoke about the new gigabit program and gave some background on this program. It means speeds about 100 times faster than they have now. He is hoping that this will promote commerce in Connecticut. There are other carriers that offer high speed internet but they may not come to the small communities since it would not be profitable for them. The state is not looking at making a profit from the installation of the fiber optic lines. There were 46 communities as part of the original sign-on, and now it is up to about 100 communities. There is still time to be part of the initiative. He hopes to have the network available to every building in the state in the future. Discussion followed. Mr. Lembo then spoke about the State's rainy day fund. He distributed and reviewed a handout explaining his proposed plan for funding the rainy day fund.

3. Overview and Implementation Phases of the Municipal Uniform Chart of Accounts. Jim Harper from Blum and Shapiro provided background on the development of the uniform chart of accounts program and bench marking that OPM has requested. He distributed and reviewed a PowerPoint presentation. He stated that the UCOA will allow an apples-to-apples comparison between municipalities. The State is looking for transparency, uniformity, accountability and comparability. There are 35 accounting systems being used within Connecticut and the state has received between 75 and 80% municipal compliance for sending information into the state in the first year. The State is using a data mapping approach to allow the information to be added to the system. He stated that they are trying to be the least disruptive as possible to the towns. Blum Shapiro, as a consultant to OPM, will provide training to towns as needed and they are still working on measures to facilitate program implementation. Discussion followed.

On a motion by Leo Paul and seconded by Craig Nelson the following three items were added to the agenda:

House Bill 6343. Restoration to the Housatonic Railroad. Jocelyn Ayer stated that the Transportation Committee is holding a hearing today and if NHCOC testimony is to be heard they need to hear from us by 11:30. A sample letter was emailed to COG members. Jocelyn stated that Roberta Willis is looking to make sure that the 37 miles of track which is over 100 years old and currently serves major employers in the Northwest corner be included in the 30 year transportation plan. She stated that Doug Humes is at the legislature right now testifying in favor of this. This has been on the radar for the former NWCCOC members for a long time. Bob Valentine questioned adding more items to the budget request than there is funding to support. Leo Paul is concerned about the quick pace that this item was brought up to the COG members as there was not enough time to research the issue. Jocelyn stated that she just heard about the hearing on Monday and apologized for the short notice. She stated the track goes from Danbury to the New York line and is owned by the state and rented by the Housatonic Railroad. On a motion by Leo Paul and seconded by Sue Dyer, COG members unanimously voted to send a letter of support. Dan Jerram abstained.

Senate Bill 504. A Study of Commuter Rail for Torrington. Rick Lynn stated that Senate Bill 504 is a proposal for a study of commuter rail potential for the Waterbury to Torrington Branch line. He stated that Michael Criss is in Hartford testifying in support of this bill. ConnDOT has stated in the past that there is insufficient ridership to justify an upgrade of this rail line to support passenger service, but there no data to support this conclusion. Tim Waldron stated that the Mayor is in favor of the bill in order to get better documentation on the potential of the rail line. Discussion followed. On a motion by Sue Dyer and seconded by Pat Mechare, COG members approved supporting the study. Leo Paul and Bob Valentine abstained.

Sharon Land Trust. At the request of Brent Colley, following a motion by Sue Dyer and seconded by Leo Paul, the NHCOC endorsed sending a letter of support for the Sharon Land Trust open space application.

4. CT Dept of Agriculture Grant Opportunities & Municipal Guide. Philip Chester distributed and reviewed a handout entitled "A Guide for Municipalities" which describes funding and services available from the CT Dept. of Agriculture. Many of

the grants do require a local match; however that can often be provided as in-kind assistance. Litchfield County has the most farmland in Connecticut and he stated that he would be happy to work with the COG towns on accessing more of these grants and programs. He stated that there is funding out there that will be going to someone.

5. Growing Municipal Use of GIS Technology and Request for NHCOC Resolution in Support of CRCOC's RPI Grant Application for Statewide Aerial Flight. Erik Snowden distributed some sample flight pictures. He stated that OPM has been awarding grants for the past couple of years for aerial flights. The CROCG thought that it would make sense to do the whole state at one time. The 3" pixel resolution allows you to see very small features. He reviewed a list of benefits from having this information. It would be public domain data. Rick Lynn expressed support for this project. Discussion followed. On a motion by Pat Mechare and seconded by Sue Dyer, COG members unanimously endorsed signing a resolution in support of the CRCOC's RPI grant application.
6. Request by ConnDOT for Endorsement of Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Amendments Pertaining to a) Newfield Road Pavement Preservation Project in Torrington, b) Reconstruction of Holabird Avenue in Winchester, and c) Design and Installation of Traffic Signals at Various Locations in ConnDOT District 4. Neil Ryan reviewed the projects. On a motion by Leo Paul and seconded by Sue Dyer, NHCOC members unanimously endorsed the above projects. Dan Jerram abstained.
7. Administrative Items.
 - a. On a motion by Craig Nelson and seconded by Leo Paul, the NWCCOC treasurer's report for 12/2014 and 1/2015 were unanimously approved.
 - b. On a motion by Craig Nelson and seconded by Leo Paul, the NHCOC financial Statement for 12/2014 was unanimously approved.
 - c. On a motion by Craig Nelson and seconded by Leo Paul, the NHCOC minutes from the 1/8/2015 regular meeting and the special meeting of 1/15/2015 were unanimously approved.
 - d. Following a brief presentation by Ted Shafer, and on a motion by Dan Jerram and seconded by Leo Paul, the NHCOC members approved sending a letter of support for the Town of Burlington Open Space Grant Application.
 - e. On a motion by Bob Valentine and seconded by Pat Mechare, the NHCOC members approved a resolution in support of a "Northwest Hills Homeownership Program" grant application.
 - f. Bruce Adams stated that the executive committee is recommending that the dues stay at 80 cents per capita using the 2013 DPH population figures. On a motion by Leo Paul and seconded by Pat Mechare, NHCOC members unanimously approved the 80 cents per capita dues.
 - g. Rick Lynn stated that progress is being made on the new office space. He stated that the landlord has agreed to the installation of a new gas fired furnace, as requested by the Executive Committee, and that Mr. Greenburg has stated that we should be in the new office by the end of March. Discussion followed. On a motion by Bob Valentine and seconded by Pat Mechare, the NHCOC members approved a budget amendment to increase the Office Furniture and Moving Expense line item by \$20,000.

8. Legislative Committee Update. Leo Paul reported on the status of the ethics issue and stated that it doesn't look like it is going away.
9. Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members. Due to time constraints, no town by town updates were given during the meeting.
10. Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment. On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 12:32 pm.