

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE NHCOC MEETING OF March 12, 2015

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

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

Others in Attendance:

Denise Merrill, Secretary of State	Leah Pullaro, Kent & Warren
David Elder, ConnDOT	Michael Muszynski, CCM
Peter Calcaterra, ConnDOT	Tammy Ostroski, NWCTD
Steve Silver, Eversource	Phil Birkett, Litchfield
Neil Ryan, ConnDOT	Lile Luxbury, New Hartford
Sue Day, Barkhamsted	Daria Hart, New Hartford
Maria Mullady, Barkhamsted	Anne-Marie Mastroianni, Bethlehem
Phylis Bernard, Norfolk	Janet Lynn, Salisbury
Marcie Vail, Salisbury	Kaitlin McCallem, LCT
Bernie Harrington, LWV	Kevin Branson, SOTS
Richard Lynn, NHCOC Staff	Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOC Staff
Darlene Krukar, NHCOC Staff	Lois Pinney, NHCOC Staff
Media Representatives	

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 10:02 a.m. There was no public comment.
2. Guest Speaker: Denise Merrill, CT Secretary of State. Topic: Update on Current Initiatives of the Secretary of State Including Proposal to Restructure Registrars of Voters. Dennis Merrill commented that the State cannot require training or certification for elected officials. By appointing a registrar you would be able to establish a level of competence for a position that is changing and requiring more skills. Her goal is to make the voting process easier and more consistent. She feels this change will make the elections more efficient and easier for the towns. Barbara Henry stated that she feels the people part of voting is fine, it is the technology that needs to be changed. D. Merrill stated that there has been a lot of technology updates already but it remains an on-going challenge. Leo Paul stated that Litchfield has an

elected Town Clerk and she is required to be certified and wanted to know why Registrars can't be required to be certified. D. Merrill stated that they are not actually required to be certified but there is a process in place to remove town clerks from office if they don't do the job correctly. There is no such provision in place for a registrar. Michael Criss stated he is not in favor of a one size fits all approach. Smaller towns do not operate the same way as cities. He feels that you will have more corruption with appointing a registrar rather than having an elected registrar. D. Merrill stated that we currently have a one size fits all system and that Connecticut is the only state that requires two registrars. She believes that the state statute should be more flexible. Dan Jerram expressed concern that the proposal undermines the democratic process if registrars are to be appointed rather than elected. Mayor Carbone also expressed her objection to the proposed change. More discussion followed and a letter was distributed on behalf of the Town of Salisbury registrars. Don Stein suggested that a broad based working group might be appropriate to address the various issues being raised.

3. Local Impact of Proposed Closing of the Torrington Office of the CT Department Social Services. Leah Pullaro distributed a handout showing the number of people in Connecticut by town who need help for basic necessities like food and health care. She pointed out that Waterbury already has a large caseload and adding the towns in northwest CT would overwhelm that office. She stated that the Torrington DSS office handles about 2% of the state caseload but the issue is more the transportation to the site since we are such a remote area. She stated that the call-in system DSS has is very difficult to navigate and trying to get someone on the phone can take more than 2 hours. She is asking that everyone band together to have a larger voice on this issue. On a motion by Sue Dyer and seconded by Leo Paul, NHCOC members unanimously agreed to send a letter that is signed by all COG members opposing the proposed closing of the Torrington office. Letters from various social services organizations were also distributed. Phil Birkett stated that "our citizens will be intimidated by the travel and the environment they find there, and I fear they will not travel to Waterbury from Hartland, Norfolk, Canaan and everywhere in between, nor should they have to." Bob Valentine suggested that the letters received from area social service directors be attached to the COG letter.
4. Summary of "Let's GO CT" Initiative with a 5-year and 30-year Vision for Connecticut's Best-in-Class Transportation System as it Relates to the Northwest Hills Region. David Elder stated he has been to our region working on developing a transportation vision for Connecticut and that vision is turning into some tangible projects and ideas. He stated that ConnDOT is required to develop a long range transportation plan every 5 years but they have never done a long term strategic plan before. They are looking at needed investments to maintain the current system and implement priority future enhancements. ConnDOT has done extensive outreach in developing a 30 year plan. The plan will include maintaining rail lines, fixing bridges, maintaining local and state roads, and increasing bus service. The proposed vision is posted on-line. He expressed interest in returning to the Northwest Hills to review the full vision in more detail with the COG and other interested parties. Don Stein stated that towns can work more efficiently if they receive funding for road repair directly

rather than through ConnDOT and suggested putting the funds in Town Aid for Roads would be best. Leo Paul suggested that a presentation be given at a Northwest Connecticut Economic Development Corporation meeting. Doug Humes stated that more funding is also needed to properly maintain State roads in the region. Brief discussion followed.

5. Legislative Committee.

- a. *Update on Legislative Session.* Mike Muszynski from CCM stated the budget is a major focus this session, and there are some significant concerns. He distributed and reviewed a summary of the major proposals of concern or interest to CCM including the resident trooper proposal, new unfunded mandates, the ethics legislation, and posting of legal notices in newspapers. Mike stated that the CCM list distributed is just a fraction of the bills that CCM is tracking. Discussion followed.
- b. *Status of Regional Legislative Priorities.* Don Stein reminded COG members that next Wednesday the NHCOC is hosting a legislative forum at UConn Torrington.

6. ConnDOT Municipal Aging Grant Program.

- a. *Overview of Program and Proposed Grant Application by the Northwestern CT Transit District.* Tammy Ostroski briefly reviewed the program and distributed the letters that are required from municipal CEOs. She stated the application is the same as last year. She reviewed some of the trips that have provided under this program and stated that she is available to speak at individual towns upon request.
- b. *Proposed Grant Application by Geer and Request for NHCOC to Serve as Applicant for Towns Served by Geer.* On a motion by Leo Paul and seconded by Bob Valentine, NHCOC members unanimously endorsed serving as the applicant for the Geer grant.

7. NHCOC Interest in Pursuing a Regional Medical Insurance Plan for Member Towns.

Brent Colley previously distributed information to COG members on this encouraging opportunity. He stated he had employees that wanted raises and he told them that if they could find the money they could have raises. They found an insurance policy through a teamster union that saved the town \$12,000 per employee. Discussion followed. It was agreed that a sub-committee of the COG should be established to research this concept. Sue Dyer, Dale Martin, and Brent Colley agreed to serve on the Committee.

8. Administrative Items.

- a. *Request by ConnDOT for Endorsement of Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Amendments Pertaining to De-obligation of Funding for OSTA Traffic Signals, Sign Support Inspections, and Selected Bridge Inspections/Replacements.* On a motion by Leo Paul and seconded by Wade Cole, the above STIP amendments were unanimously approved.
- b. On a motion by Leo Paul and seconded by Mark Lyon, the NHCOC financial Statement for 1/2015 was unanimously approved.
- c. On a motion by Leo Paul and seconded by Craig Nelson, the NHCOC minutes from February 11, 2015 meeting were unanimously approved.

*d.* On a motion by Bob Valentine and seconded by Sue Dyer, the NHCOCG members unanimously authorized the NHCOCG to enter into an agreement with the Foundation for Community Health to continue administering the “Prescription Medication Program” following a brief presentation on the program by Lois Pinney.

*e.* On a motion by Bob Valentine and seconded by Leo Paul, the NHCOCG members unanimously authorized the NHCOCG to enter into an agreement with ConnDOT for “Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LTCIP Administration Funding)” and to contract for consultant engineering review of applications.

*f.* On a motion by Bob Valentine and seconded by Leo Paul, the NHCOCG members unanimously approved the resolution requesting EDA Designation of the 21-town Northwest Hills Planning Region as an Economic Development District.

9. Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment. Bob Valentine encouraged continued progress in pursuing a regional Animal Control Facility. Don Stein asked about interest in hiring a regional building inspector. Jocelyn Ayer announced that NHCOCG has been awarded a Farm Viability Grant and next steps will be discussed at the April COG meeting. Craig Nelson thanked COG members for their feedback on control of snow blowing/plowing onto local roads. On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 12:09 pm.