

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE NHCOC MEETING OF September 10, 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	Litchfield, Leo Paul, Jr.
Kent, Bruce Adams	New Hartford, Daniel Jerram
Morris, Barbara Bongiolatti	North Canaan, Doug Humes
Norfolk, Susan Dyer	Salisbury, Curtis Rand
Roxbury, Barbara Henry	Torrington, Elinor Carbone
Sharon, Brent Colley	Washington, Mark Lyon
Warren, Craig Nelson	Winchester, Dale Martin
Winchester, Candace Bouchard	

Others in Attendance:

Larry Wagner, L. Wagner & Associates	Media Representatives
Katy Shafer, Partnership for Strong Communities	Dan Salazar, CCAT
Jennifer March-Wackers, CRCOG	Rudy Marconi, REPT Chairman
Neil Ryan, ConnDOT	Ella Clark
Jessica Fowler	Other members of public
Richard Lynn, NHCOC Staff	Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOC Staff

Call to Order, Introductions, and Opportunity for Public Comment. The meeting held at the NHCOC office was called to order at 10:05 am. Following introductions, Jessica Fowler provided an update on the work of the Rural Broadband Committee which is exploring how best to build an internet system for the region's future.

Update on the Small Cities Grant Program and Eligible Projects for Municipalities in the Northwest Hills. Larry Wagner distributed and reviewed a handout on expenditures by type of activity under the Small Cities Program in Connecticut. He stated that the vast majority of grants were awarded for housing rehab projects, a trend which Connecticut has experienced for several years now. Of the \$12 million distributed in Connecticut in FY 2014, 85% of the funding went to housing projects. Other projects funded included public facilities improvements, street improvements, flood drainage improvements, and recreational facilities. The program focus is on benefitting low and moderate income households as defined by Census block group data. He stated that the next application round will be in April 2016. He stated that while the Small Cities program is valuable, the paperwork involved is becoming increasingly complex. Mayor Carbone, Ted Shafer, and Leo Paul all expressed appreciation to Larry for his help with the Small Cities program in recent years. General discussion followed.

Overview of 2015 Municipal Housing Data Profiles and Housing Trends in the Northwest Hills. Katy Shafer from the Partnership for Strong Communities distributed and reviewed the municipal housing data profiles recently prepared by the Partnership. She stated that these are updated every two years and provide a helpful reference on local housing conditions and trends. The data shows that the housing market has changed in recent years with the demand for single family homes diminishing and the need for more affordable multi-family units increasing. She stated that there are a number of reasons for this including declining school-age populations, education debts, wage rates, and elderly interest in down-sizing. She encouraged towns to take advantage of the programs that Connecticut has available to encourage workforce housing. General discussion followed. Concern was expressed by several in attendance about the validity of some of the information in the housing data profiles that are based on the American Community Survey or Census Bureau due to the small sample size.

Update on the Five Nutmeg Network Demonstration Projects (i.e. Hosting Services, VoIP, Streaming Video, Electronic Document Management, Human Resources Portal). Jennifer March-Wackers and Dan Salazar distributed and reviewed a fact sheet and PowerPoint slides on five Nutmeg Network Demonstration Projects that they are helping to coordinate. The five projects include 1) IT Hosting Services through the CRCOG data center, 2) Voice Over Internet Protocol telephone systems, 3) Streaming Video of municipal meetings, 4) Electronic Document Management, and 5) Human Resources Portal. The IT Hosting Services, VOIP, and Streaming Video will be available to any town later this fall. Towns are being recruited for the Electronic Document Management and Human Resources pilot projects. Don Stein stated that Barkhamsted is participating as a pilot town for the VOIP project and that he anticipates that the project will save the town money over the long run.

Overview of the Important Role of the Region 5 Regional Emergency Planning Team. Rudy Marconi reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the Region 5 REPT, which consists of the CEOs from the 43 member towns. He expressed concern about the lack of attendance of the CEOs at REPT meetings and requested input on whether changes should be made in the operation or representation of the REPT. Craig Nelson stated that the REPT Steering Committee appears to have all the decisions made by the time anything gets to the REPT. Mark Lyon and Bob Valentine agreed that the CEOs should be involved earlier in the process. Leo Paul expressed support for maintaining the current structure of the REPT since it provides the opportunity for maximum input by the CEOs. Jim O'Leary also expressed support for maintaining the current structure since CEO involvement is important during emergency response. Barbara Henry agreed that it is important for CEOs to know the system and key contacts for effective emergency response. Curtis Rand expressed concern that the REPT, Steering Committee, and ESF structure is very bureaucratic for small town volunteers to digest. Following additional discussion, it was the consensus that the current REPT structure should remain in place, but efforts should be made to involve the CEOs earlier in the decision-making process and to develop REPT agendas that offer additional training or exercising opportunities for the CEOs.

Administrative Items.

- a. On a motion by Curtis Rand and seconded by Doug Humes, the NHCOC minutes from the July 9, 2015 meeting were unanimously approved.

- b. On a motion by Susan Dyer and seconded by Bob Valentine, the NHCOC financial statements for 6/2015 and 7/2015 were unanimously approved.
- c. On a motion by Bruce Adams and seconded by Wade Cole, the NHCOC members unanimously authorized the NHCOC staff to serve as Fiduciary Agent for the 2015 Homeland Security Grant and to execute the related Memorandum of Understanding.
- d. On a motion by Leo Paul and seconded by Bob Valentine, the NHCOC members unanimously approved the LOTCIP applications submitted by Burlington and Torrington following a summary of the applications and program by Rick Lynn.
- e. On a motion by Leo Paul and seconded by Bruce Adams, the NHCOC members unanimously approved the STIP amendments pertaining to statewide sign support replacement.

Committee and Staff Updates.

a. Legislative Committee. Leo Paul and Barbara Henry stated that not much has happened during the past few months of a legislative nature. Doug Humes distributed and reviewed a letter prepared by the North Canaan Board of Selectmen in support of federal authorizing legislation to increase the weight limits of trucks in Connecticut so that they mirror the weight limits in neighboring states. He stated that this is important for economic competitiveness and to better accommodate local businesses such as dairy farmers in the area. Following a brief discussion, the COG unanimously agreed to write a letter to Congresswomen Esty expressing support for the letter prepared by the North Canaan Board of Selectmen.

b. Recycling Advisory Committee. Sue Dyer reported that there is another HHW Collection Day on September 26, 2015 at the Torrington Water Pollution Control Plant from 9 am to 2 pm.

c. Public Works Equipment Cooperative. Wade Cole reported on a recent meeting of the Regional Road Supervisors Association. The group will be monitoring municipal experience this winter with the service provided by Morton Salt and Cargill on their road deicing products and deliveries. The group will also be pursuing the cooperative purchase of plow blades and road signs for interested towns this fall with NHCOC staff support. Wade stated that the region's new sweeper and back-up catch basin are scheduled to be delivered in the coming weeks, and that the asphalt recycler continues to be underutilized. Wade then reviewed the Equipment Cooperative's Rental Rate structure for 2016 as proposed by the Association. Following a brief discussion, on a motion by Wade Cole and seconded by Bob Valentine, the COG unanimously agreed to adopt the rental rates as proposed with the understanding that a half day rate could be offered and that municipal invoices would be adjusted to accommodate any equipment breakdowns or inclement weather delays.

d. Farm Viability Program. Jocelyn Ayer distributed and reviewed a handout on food hubs, and updated COG members on the progress being made on the Farm Viability Program funded NWCT Food Hub feasibility study which is exploring the feasibility of developing a regional food hub to support local farms and expand their sales channels. She asked the selectmen to make sure the farmers in their towns know about the opportunity to take our food hub survey and provide their input.

Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members and Adjournment. Bob Valentine expressed relief that the Tier 2 towns are not going to be subject to the onerous provisions initially recommended under the MS4 regulation amendments. On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.