Attachment C

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF MARCH 10, 2016

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Donald Stein
Colebrook, Tom McKeon
Hartland, Wade Cole
Litchfield, Leo Paul, Jr.
Norfolk, Sue Dyer
Roxbury, Barbara Henry
Warren, Craig Nelson
Winchester, Laurie Besette
Canaan (Falls Village), Patricia Allyn Mechare
Goshen, Robert Valentine
Kent, Bruce Adams
Morris, Tom Weik
North Canaan, Doug Humes
Torrington, Elinor Carbone
Washington, Mark Lyon

Others in Attendance:

Richard Lynn, NHCOG Staff
Joanna Wozniak-Brown, NHCOG Staff
Steve Silver, Eversource
Mike Muszynski, CCM
Bernie Harrington, LWV
Carol Deane, NW CT Transit District
Ruth Epstein, Media
Kay Carroll, PSHC
Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOG Staff
Paul Gibb, REPT
Kevin, Lembo, CT Comptroller
Michael Rooke, President, NW Comm. College
Sara Radasci, ConnDOT
Ben Lambert, Media
Other members of public
Bill Burgess, Partners for Sustainable Healthy Comm.(PSHC)

Call to Order and Opportunity for Public Comment. Don Stein, Chairman.
The meeting held at the NHCOG office was called to order at 10:07 a.m. No public comment was offered.

Introduction of Michael Rooke, President of Northwestern CT Community College with Update on Campus News and Events. President Rooke, who started at the college last fall, thanked NHCOG for its fantastic support for the college. He discussed the college's programs and relationship with 4-year programs in the state. The college is currently focusing on growing their manufacturing program through their relationship with the Northwest Chamber of Commerce and the manufacturing coalition. The nursing program is strong. The Joyner building should be finished in the summer of 2017 for enhanced medical assistant and vet tech training. The current financial situation in the state is a concern and students need better transportation options, especially in the evening. The college has a strong transition program in the engineering and manufacturing programs and is working on 15 other pathways, including sciences, criminal justice, history, etc. Students with a 3.2GPA have guaranteed entry to UCONN Storrs as a junior. The potential closure of UCONN Torrington and the implications for the region were discussed. Bruce Adams asked what the college does to reach out to potential students. President Rooke responded that he meets with regional high schools and area superintendents. They are also looking at dual-enrollment programs for high-school students.

Kevin Lembo, State of Connecticut Comptroller. Topic: Connecticut's Financial Condition and Update on New Initiatives at the Comptroller's Office. Mr. Lembo stated that beginning in July, the state will be moving towards 100% enrollment in Direct Deposit (ACH) for the payment of invoices. This offers faster, more secure payments and reduces mailing costs. Mr. Lembo distributed and reviewed a summary and the rate sheets for the Connecticut Partnership Plan 2.0. He commented that the state budget is currently

running a deficit of $220 million and will likely grow to $300 million. Economic indicators are positive in general but not at pre-recession levels. He noted that there is a pension funding reform plan at the interdepartmental discussion stage and he distributed a one-page summary of the pension funding reform plan. Comptroller Lembo then discussed a state-facilitated plan for retirement to be structured as a quasi-governmental agency ("Retirement Security Board") that would not be held in the state budget system. He provided a one-page description of this program. Leo Paul asked if businesses would be required to contribute to the plans. Lembo explained that the businesses are not required to contribute to the plan and employers can choose a private or public option to host the plans. Employees are automatically enrolled in the plan but can opt-out. No tax dollars are associated with the implementation of this plan. Bob Valentine asked if employers have fiduciary responsibility to offer the retirement plans. Lembo explained that there have been some requirements from plan sponsors but the employer will not have fiduciary responsibility or run afoul of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). Bruce Adams asked about status of the Teacher Retirement Fund. Mr. Lembo said that his office does not host that program but it was in good standing when he last reviewed it, especially because of the bond covenant. Discussion followed. Mr. Lembo stated that a 457 Plan would be a good option for a municipality. He stated that municipality opt-ins are not currently part of the program but if it was, the state could seek out administrative cost savings for municipalities. Bob Valentine and Barbara Henry commented that a municipality option for this program would be helpful and the Comptroller said he would look into the possibility. Mark Lyon asked about the requirements on businesses. Leo Paul asked why employers aren't currently offering them. Mr. Lembo explained that their research showed that uncertainty and discomfort were challenges for those who didn't offer it yet and employers offering plans already said they wouldn't end their programs. Discussion on the state budget followed. The Comptroller concluded that "smarter, faster, cheaper" is the goal of his office and that the bad news out of Hartford hurts business development throughout the state.

Presentation of Findings from NWCT Food Hub Feasibility Study, and Request for NHCOG Endorsement of Next Steps. Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOG. Jocelyn Ayer presented on how the regional food hub can help the NWCT farmers, findings from the food hub feasibility study, and the recommended next steps from the study. The feasibility study was funded by the CT Department of Agriculture with in-kind contributions from Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities and Northwest Hills Council of Governments. This study is also part of the CEDS implementation plan. The study, including a market assessment and business analysis, determined that the food hub is very feasible and a self-sustaining business proposition. A "Go" decision would be to take the next steps toward creating a food hub in NWCT by submitting an application to USDA for funds to start-up a food hub next Spring. She thanked the feasibility study team including New Venture Advisors, the advisory committee (including Bob Valentine and Elinor Carbone) and local partners (Bill Burgess and Kay Carroll from Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities). The next steps would be operator identification, business planning, fundraising, and launch. On a motion duly made by Barbara Henry and seconded by Leo Paul, the COG voted unanimously to move forward with the project. Discussion followed and it was clarified that the COG support for moving forward includes the preparation of a USDA grant application to enable further planning and launching of a food hub. Details on the USDA grant application including staff time needed and matching funds that may be required are to be discussed at an upcoming Executive Committee meeting and reported back to the full COG Board.

Regional Emergency Management Update

a. Proposed Bylaws for Northwest Hills Citizen Corps Council. Paul Gibb asked the NHCOG to consider endorsing the previously distributed bylaws to formally establish a regional Citizen Corps Council. This national program assists municipal agencies in times of emergency. The local teams are called Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). There are currently 8 local CERTS in the NHCOG region and Paul Gibb hopes that number will grow. A CERT is afforded certain protections under federal and state law for injury, death, liability etc. The former LHCEO had an informal regional council. Craig Nelson asked about the activation procedure. Paul said that the creation of a

CERT would not impact the activation procedure. Barbara Henry asked if you can have joint CERT teams among municipalities. Paul said yes but one would have to serve as the sponsoring municipality. Mark Lyon asked how the regional CCC would participate with the CERT teams. Paul responded that the NHCCC would assist with administration, training, and activation for an emergency. This would be separate but cooperative with the Public Safety Task Force. Craig Nelson made a motion to approve the by-laws. Leo Paul seconded the motion. Pat Mechare moved that the language in Section 4.5 of the bylaws be stricken. Leo Paul seconded the proposed amendment. With the amendment in place, the motion carried by unanimous vote.

b. Proposed Budget Amendments for 2014 Homeland Security Grant and Upcoming Training Sessions for Chief Elected Officials. Rick Lynn encouraged COG members to attend the upcoming REPT meeting on March 21 to discuss EOC processes and Eversource emergency response. The budget amendments are to spend remaining 2014 grant funds. There will also be a full-day training session on May 17th for the chief elected officials, titled "Senior Officials Workshop for All-Hazards Preparedness". In April, a 'violent intruder' training session is tentatively planned for NHCOG members by Troop B and the Torrington Police Department.

Update on Regional Elections Monitor Position. Rick Lynn. On a motion made by Leo Paul and seconded by Craig Nelson, NHCOG authorized the executive committee to select and hire the Regional Elections Monitor.

ConnDOT Municipal Aging Grant Program

a. Overview of Program and Proposed Grant Application by the Northwestern CT Transit District. Carol Deane, NWCTD. Carol distributed proposed letters and requested signatures from selected towns so that the NWTD could apply for funding under ConnDOT's Municipal Grant Program.

b. Proposed Grant Application by Geer and Request for NHCOG to Serve as Applicant for Towns Served by Geer. Kevin O'Connell, Geer Administrator, could not attend. Rick Lynn presented on this topic. NHCOG has previously served as the official grant applicant under ConnDOT's Municipal Grant Program with a sub-grant to GEER who provides transit service to 5 towns. On a motion made by Leo Paul and seconded by Tom Weik, the NHCOG endorsed serving once again as the official applicant for this grant so that Geer can benefit from the funding available under the Municipal Grant Program. .

Administrative Items

a. Approval of Minutes for February 11, 2016 meeting. On a motion duly made by Leo Paul and seconded by Craig Nelson, the minutes were unanimously approved with one correction of removing the second listing of Curtis Rand.

b. Approval of Financial Statement for January 2016. On a motion duly made by Craig Nelson and seconded by Leo Paul, the financial statement was unanimously approved.

c. Request for NHCOG to Serve as Administering Agency for Proposed Housatonic River Wild and Scenic River Designation (see Attachment F). Jocelyn Ayer reported that the designation requires an administering agency and CT DEEP will not serve that role. She does not anticipate any additional required staff time beyond the current commitment. Following a brief discussion, and on a motion made by Sue Dyer and seconded by Leo Paul, the NHCOG unanimously voted to accept the position of administering agency for the designation.

d. Overview of Priority Infrastructure Plan for the Northwest Hills Region. Jocelyn Ayer stated that preparation of the Plan was identified as a CEDS strategy and she asked COG members to review

and offer any comments on this draft plan so that it can be acted upon at the COG's April or May meeting.

Committee Updates

a. Legislative Committee. Leo Paul reported that the Labor Committee and CCM have been meeting to develop an agreement on prevailing wage with a couple of language changes to a proposed bill. The proposed thresholds to activate prevailing wage are $1.5 million for new construction and $1.5 million for renovation or $1 million for new construction and $2 million for renovation. Mike Muszynski clarified that these adjustments would not require prevailing wage unless it included 3 trades. It would otherwise fall back to the previous plan and only for projects under 100% municipal funding. Bob Valentine expressed concern about prevailing wage qualifications under other funding arrangements such as abatement. Mike Muszynski noted that this topic is still under discussion with the legislature. Mike Muszynski reported that CCM will be having meetings shortly on the budget, and that municipal aid may be cut. To date, there are 45 mandates proposed with 18 mandate relief proposals. Mike Muszynski then discussed the MORE commission. CCM is concerned that the initiatives put forth by the MORE commission were never formally acted upon by the full Commission. Don Stein and Leo Paul both stated they are also concerned with this practice. CCM maintains that the MORE "initiatives" are not reflective of the municipal members. Bob Valentine said that the MORE Commission presentations should be made more public and a matter of public record. Don Stein asked if a position from the COG would be useful. Mike said it would be helpful. Craig Nelson made a motion to authorize Rick Lynn to draft a letter representing the COG's position. Bob Valentine seconded the motion and all voted in favor. Barbara asked about the cancer presumption bill. Additional discussion followed.

b. Recycling Advisory Committee, with Request to Contract with Vendor for Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days in 2016 and 2017. Susan Dyer, RAC Chairman. Based on the responses to the COG's Request for Proposals, Sue Dyer recommended that the NHCOG contract with Clean Harbors for the upcoming household hazardous waste days in Falls Village and Torrington. Wade Cole made the motion and Bob Valentine seconded and all voted in favor.

Town by Town Updates and Other Business as Raised by Members. Bob Valentine asked if other towns are being required to create an OEMS plan. Other towns said yes and that they are working on them. Discussion followed and concern was expressed that OEMS will not provide samples of model plans.

Adjournment

On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 12:17 pm.