

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF APRIL 14, 2016

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Donald Stein	Canaan (Falls Village), Patricia Allyn Mechare
Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway	Goshen, Robert Valentine
Hartland, Wade Cole	Harwinton, Michael Criss
Kent, Bruce Adams	Litchfield, Leo Paul, Jr.
Norfolk, Sue Dyer	North Canaan, Doug Humes
Roxbury, Barbara Henry	Sharon, Brent Colley
Torrington, Elinor Carbone	Warren, Craig Nelson
Washington, Mark Lyon	Winchester, Candy Perez

Others in Attendance:

Joanna Wozniak-Brown, NHCOC Staff	Thomas D. Kirk, MIRA President
Steve Silver, Eversource	Sara Radasci, ConnDOT
Lila Tuxbury, Regional Elections Monitor	Bill Burgess, Partners for Sustainable Healthy Comm.(PSHC)
Kay Carroll, PSHC	Bernie Harrington, LWV
Richard Lynn, NHCOC Staff	Alyssa Norwood, Legislative Commission on Aging
Media Representatives	Other members of public

Call to Order, Opportunity for Public Comment, and Introduction of Lila Tuxbury, NHCOC Regional Election Monitor. Don Stein, Chairman.

The meeting held at the NHCOC office was called to order at 10:07 a.m. No public comment was offered. Chairman Stein introduced Lila Tuxbury, the new regional election monitor. She has been the registrar in New Hartford for the past 8 years. COG Members welcomed Lila to this new position. Barbara Henry asked if she would be resigning from her position in New Hartford. Lila Tuxbury noted that she would be resigning from that position in July.

Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members.

Bob Valentine expressed great frustration with the state's attempt to address the state budget crisis. Mike Criss reported on continuing bridge work in Harwinton, and the installation of an electric charging station and voice over internet protocol (VOIP) in town and fire department buildings. He stated that Harwinton now has 10 solar installations under the CT Solarize program. Elinor Carbone also expressed discontent at state proposals to address the budget deficit. Pat Mechare reported that construction of the emergency services facility will begin soon in Canaan. Brent Colley reported that Salisbury-Sharon Transfer Station proposal finally passed, and he found social media to be very effective for information distribution. Gordon Ridgway expressed his discontent about the State's proposed large cut to education cost sharing (ECS). He reported on an upcoming program on bald eagles in West Cornwall on April 26. Wade Cole stated that Hartland has two major construction projects: a bridge project and the school roof project. Candy Perez reported that Winchester is undertaking some significant infrastructure projects such as the Holabird Avenue Bridge replacement, and continues to experience various school related challenges in the community. Bruce Adams reported that the misguided proposal to arm teachers has been defeated and the Town of Kent dispute with Native American land claims continues. Leo Paul reported that he hopes to share a fire marshal/emergency management position with Torrington. Mark Lyon reported that they are going out to bid on a bridge project and he is working on the town budget. Washington is facing a challenge with the CT DEEP fisheries unit and, like many towns, they are also facing school enrollment challenges with population shifts. Don Stein reported that Barkhamsted now has 6 sign-ups for the Solarize program. He stated that towns should beware of signing a long-term contract for a fixed energy price on a school that has a penalty for not using a certain threshold. He then discussed the State's request for an emergency

medical plan from each town. Bob Valentine suggested that COG members share their plans with each other to facilitate efficient preparation of the plans.

Update on the Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA). Thomas D. Kirk, MIRA President. Thomas Kirk presented on the status of MIRA (formerly CRRRA). MIRA was designed to replace municipal landfills and does not depend on the state budget for operation. Their new focus is on next generation changes in solid waste management. There is a new system for energy production from trash, called the CT Solid Waste System. MIRA is challenged with declining revenue and an aging facility. Revenue streams come from electric energy sales and trash/waste tipping fees but current energy prices are at an all-time low due to the declining natural gas price so they cannot earn as much from energy generation. Over 60% of power in New England is generated by gas. The trash to energy process does not benefit from other renewable resource benefits such as renewable energy credits. To combat the challenges, MIRA is implementing some changes: reducing administrative costs, setting energy rates at a fixed rate, using the tip-fee stabilization fund to mitigate fluctuations, temporarily reducing the recycling rebate, increasing capital and maintenance spending to manage legacy issues, and accessing other revenues to subsidize operating revenue to maintain acceptable tipping fees. They have raised tipping fees for FY 2017 although the new levels are still lower than 2011. CT DEEP is examining the state's waste management system. DEEP has issued a Resource Rediscovery RFP, asking for new energy proposals. New technologies to be considered could include anaerobic digestion, gasification, and production of other fuels. Sue Dyer asked how much the tipping fees would be if they did not have the stabilization fund. Mr. Kirk responded it would be an increase of \$17. Barbara Henry asked how long they can stabilize the fees. Mr. Kirk responded that at the end of the year, the cash reserves will be depleted but they expect additional income from increased capacity in their jet turbines at that time.

Overview of Livable Communities Initiative of Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging. Alyssa Norwood, Project Manager. Alyssa Norwood described the work of the non-partisan public policy research Commission on Aging. She described the Livable Communities initiative. She reported that Connecticut is undergoing a large demographic shift with a large percentage of the population at 65 and older. Northwest Connecticut now has some of the largest proportion of residents aged 65 or above compared to the state. In ten years, most of the state will have 20% or more of their population above 65 years. Connecticut is the 3rd longest lived state in the nation. The Livable Communities initiative, created by state law in 2013, focuses on place-making for communities. The Commission on Aging has purchased copies of the report "Planning Aging-Supporting Communities" for partner COGs. She noted that she has worked with NHCOC staff on this topic and that staff plans to incorporate these principles into their regional planning efforts. Aging supportive communities offer choices such as transportation alternatives. She described several examples of livable communities. Bethany, CT, for example, has created the state's first co-housing development ("Rocky Corner"), an intentional community with privately owned living spaces surrounding common spaces. Parking is around the periphery to allow for chance encounters. Such communities are usually centrally located to allow access to the town facilities such as grocery stores. The Commission on Aging is hiring a consultant to help towns audit their livable community policies to make it easier to implement such intentional spaces. The commission is proposing a fall workshop for planners on topics such as a walkability audit. She shared a guide for municipal leaders ("Shaping Livable Communities and Promoting Aging in Place") and two fact sheets about the work of the Commission, including a frequently asked questions and a description of their austere budget use. She announced a partner summit in December at the state capital.

Alyssa noted that the governor's proposed budget may eliminate the Commission on Aging, the only legislative commission proposed to be cut. She asks the NHCOC for its support. Leo Paul made a motion for the NHCOC to become a partner with the Livable Communities Initiative. The motion was seconded by Michael Criss, and passed unanimously.

Request for NHCOG Letter of Support to Keep UConn Torrington Open. Mayor Carbone.

Elinor Carbone presented on the topic of UConn's proposal to close its Torrington campus due to budgetary concerns and declining enrollment. She noted several areas of concern with the proposed closing including: the adverse impact on educational opportunities in the northwest region, the property was a gift and carries certain obligations, there may be mutual benefits to bringing additional education enterprises to the campus, and the northwest region is not represented on the UConn board of trustees (contrary to its by-laws). Torrington will host a town-hall meeting at Coe Park to address this topic, and the Mayor requested COG member support and attendance at the meeting. She suggested that UConn look to marketing and new investments to address their concerns. She stated that UConn has not invested in the Torrington campus in recent years, and the only investment made into the campus was a \$250,000 gift from a Washington resident to expand the library and art space to expand their humanities offerings. Don Stein asked if there has been any discussion about moving the campus to the center of the city to increase business traffic. The Mayor stated that she is open to that discussion and the investment of the gift with present-day value of \$5.3million to downtown Torrington. Elinor requested COG approval of the letter drafted by NHCOG staff with one edit. Leo Paul moved to approve the draft letter with the one proposed modification. The motion was seconded by Barbara Henry. During discussion, Leo Paul stated "as Torrington goes, so goes the region" and the COG should support this effort. He also said that the UConn board of trustees should have northwest representation. Bob Valentine stated that communities need manageable costs for education, such as what is now provided by UConn Torrington. He also stated that communities should publicize the use of the school from their communities. Gordon Ridgway proposed an amendment to the motion to include an additional letter to the governor and state and federal officials to request their support. Leo Paul seconded the amendment. All voted in favor of the proposed amendment, and then all voted in favor of the motion as amended.

Regional Food Hub Funding Request

Bill Burgess, Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities, requested a \$25,000 commitment from the COG as a local match for a USDA application to move to the second stage of the regional food hub project. He stated that there is available office space at the Agricultural Extension office in Torrington for the food hub. He stated that the COG's Executive Committee considered this request in some detail at a recent meeting and supports the investment in the regional food hub project. In response to a question from Bob Valentine, NHCOG staff stated that the COG budget for this fiscal year currently has a \$31,000 consultant contingency line item that could be used to accommodate this funding request. On a motion by Mark Lyon and seconded by Bruce Adams, the COG unanimously approved the \$25,000 local match request for the food hub project.

Administrative Items

- a. Approval of Minutes for March 10, 2016 meeting. On a motion duly made by Leo Paul and seconded by Bruce Adams, the minutes were unanimously approved.
- b. Approval of Financial Statement for February 2016. On a motion duly made by Barbara Henry and seconded by Candy Perez, the financial statement was unanimously approved.
- c. Appointment of Nominating Committee for NHCOG Officers and Executive Committee for FY 2016-2017. Don Stein appointed Sue Dyer as Chairman and Barbara Henry and Leo Paul to the nominating committee.
- d. Appointment of Northwest Hills Citizen Corps Council. Rick Lynn briefly discussed the role of the Council and Paul Gibb's previous presentation on this topic. On a motion made by Don Stein, and

seconded by Bob Valentine, the NHTCOG unanimously voted to approve the proposed membership of the Citizen Corps Council as listed in the agenda packet.

e. Request for Extension of NHTCOG Agreements for Road Deicing Salt and Crack Sealing Services. Rick Lynn stated that Morton Salt and Cargill have both offered to extend their Agreement with the NHTCOG for road salt next year. In addition, CT Sealcoating has offered to extend their Agreement with the COG for crack sealing. The Northwest Hills Road Supervisor Association recently met and recommends that all three Agreements be extended. On a motion by Mike Criss, seconded by Craig Nelson, the NHTCOG unanimously voted to extend the agreements as proposed. Barbara Henry asked if others had used the crack sealing company. Brent Colley and Bob Valentine both stated that their towns have had success with this vendor and appreciate their level of service.

Committee Updates

a. Legislative Committee. Leo Paul reported that there is some movement on thresholds for prevailing wage. Gordon Ridgway made a motion that the COG write a strongly worded letter to our area legislators and the governor regarding the proposed cuts in ECS funding that is totally unfair and unacceptable. Leo Paul seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved with a suggestion that it include the signature of all 21 COG members. Bob Valentine stated that Goshen has a \$7.1million obligation to Region 6 School and receives approximately \$260,000 in ECS contribution. He said the proposed ECS cuts are insulting to town residents. Mayor Carbone stated that the proposed budget cuts Torrington's ECS by \$1million and MRSA by \$1million and never addressed the \$800,000 cut under SB-1 of 2015.

b. Recycling Advisory Committee. Sue Dyer reported that the RAC meeting, which discussed the state's new solid waste management plan, was well attended and informative. The upcoming household hazardous waste day will be June 4 using Clean Harbors. Lee Sawyer from DEEP will attend an upcoming meeting of the NHTCOG to provide an overview of the new municipal solid waste management plan.

c. Public Works Equipment Cooperative. Wade Cole reported that the recent meeting of the Northwest Hills Road Supervisor Association went well and that the Equipment Cooperative continues to operate smoothly.

d. DEHMS Region 5. Mark Lyon encouraged COG members and other senior emergency management officials to attend the "Senior Officials Workshop on All Hazards Preparedness" workshop on May 17th in Litchfield.

Other Business as Raised by Members. This agenda item was tabled.

Adjournment

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