

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF June 9, 2016

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Donald Stein	Canaan (Falls Village), Patricia Allyn Mechare
Goshen, Robert Valentine	Hartland, Wade Cole
Kent, Bruce Adams	Litchfield, Leo Paul, Jr.
Morris, Tom Weik	Norfolk, Sue Dyer
North Canaan, Doug Humes	Roxbury, Barbara Henry
Salisbury, Curtis Rand	Warren, Craig Nelson
Washington, Mark Lyon	Winchester, Bob Geiger

Others in Attendance:

JoAnn Jaacks	Ed Fabbri, Torrington City Engineer
Mike Muszynski, CCM	Sara Radasci, ConnDOT
Bernie Harrington, LWV	Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOG Staff
Rick Lynn, NHCOG Staff	Media Representatives

Call to Order and Opportunity for Public Comment.

The meeting, held at the NHCOG office, was called to order by Chairman Don Stein at 10:05 a.m. JoAnn Jaacks stated that she is an Outreach Director for a local church that is helping to distribute 60,000 non-perishable meals in the regional area. She stated that 15 cartons are all that is left and she is offering these at no cost to NHCOG members for placement in their town food pantries. She stated that there are families in all towns that are going hungry and the meals are available to help meet this need. COG members were encouraged to each pick up a box, available at the COG office, containing 30 meal packets.

Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members. Mark Lyon reported that his town budget has been approved, and he remains concerned about the impact of state funding cuts. Leo Paul stated that his budget was also approved and the Litchfield Road Race is scheduled for this week-end. Bruce Adams stated that a former Kent resident is being honored on June 18 for his military service. The resident was recently identified through DNA research at a Pearl Harbor mass cemetery and his remains are being brought to Kent for a funeral and to honor his service as a Naval Veteran. Bruce inquired about municipal practices on salary adjustments for non-union employees when concerns are being expressed about inequities. Ed Fabbri, on behalf of Mayor Carbone, showed several before and after slides to illustrate the streetscape improvements in Downtown Torrington. Wade Cole stated his local budget has been approved and that Hartland is busy with a bridge project and siting of a 3rd cell tower. Curtis Rand commented that construction of the new transfer center is underway, the bridge crossing the Housatonic River has been completed, and he is busy with two road projects being funded through ConnDOT. Pat Mechare showed several before and after slides to highlight the recent streetscape improvements in the center of Falls Village. Doug Humes stated his budget passed and that he is involved with two bridge projects, a sidewalk project and is interested in transferring a historic cemetery to the care of Falls Village due to recent deed research. Sue Dyer and Tom Weik are both anticipating action on their town budgets next week and commented on the issues created for their towns by the uncertainty over state aid. Bob Geiger commented that Winchester has passed their budget and he is helping to negotiate contractual issues with Gilbert School. He stated that the town faces many infrastructure issues due to delayed maintenance and expressed appreciation for the recent state grant that will enable extension of the Sue Grossman Still River Greenway to the town center. Bob Valentine stated that Goshen has passed their budget and that he is able to stick with the 10-year pavement management program for local roads. Craig Nelson commented that his budget has passed and a contentious issue in town is a proposed ordinance to ban sea planes from Lake

Waramaug. Don Stein stated that ConnDOT is repaving Rte 179 and the exposed roadbed base is resulting in many flat tires as vehicles travel over the sharp edged stones.

Process and Timeline for Preparing the “Regional Plan of Conservation and Development for the Northwest Hills” and Summary of Regional Data and Trends. Jocelyn Ayer presented PowerPoint slides on the preparation of the Regional Plan. She stated that a major goal of the Plan is to define how best to move the region forward to meet its land use goals. In addition to serving regional needs, the Plan will also provide information to assist member towns in preparing their municipal plans of conservation and development. Major topics to be addressed in the plan include conservation and recreation, jobs and vibrant main streets, housing, local food and agriculture, climate and energy, infrastructure, and land use. Through a contract with CERC, regional data and growth trends are being compiled to assist in plan preparation. Outreach to area Planning and Zoning Commissions and others is planned in the coming months, and a draft of the Plan is anticipated to be available in the Spring of 2017.

Overview and Request for NHCOC Endorsement of the “Regional Infrastructure Needs and Action Plan”. Jocelyn Ayer reviewed the Plan which was prepared in response to a recommendation in the CEDS. The purpose of the Plan is to define the key infrastructure issues that need to be addressed “to retain and expand existing businesses in NWCT and attract new businesses”. By defining major infrastructure needs, efforts can then be targeted to seek funding and other resources to address the needs. The Plan has been endorsed by the NWCT Economic Development Corporation. Curtis Rand expressed concern that the Plan supports future passenger service from New York City to the Berkshires through the Northwest Hills; a service which he is not sure is in the best interests of the region. Bruce Adams agreed that increased rail passenger service through small community centers like Kent is disruptive and he already receives complaints about the current level of rail use through Kent Center. Bob Valentine stated that with the gloomy outlook for Connecticut’s economy, it is important that the focus be on maintaining basic and essential infrastructure and services. Craig Nelson agreed and the focus should be on maintaining what we have, not on expanding infrastructure at this point. Don Stein suggested that the Infrastructure Plan be revised to focus on the top priority infrastructure needs, with other infrastructure opportunities listed for future consideration.

Request for Endorsement of NHCOC Goals and Objectives and Work Plan for FY 2016-2017. Rick Lynn reviewed the proposed COG work plan for FY 2016-17 that was included in the agenda packet. On a motion duly made and seconded, the proposed work plan was unanimously approved. Pat Mechare suggested that an annual report on the COG achievements under the adopted FY 2015-16 work plan would be interesting.

Administrative Items

a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting of May 12, 2016. On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved following acceptance of a correction by Barbara Henry that Roxbury’s mill rate for this year was maintained, not lowered.

b. Approval of Financial Statement for 4/2016. On a motion duly made and seconded, the financial statement was unanimously approved.

c. Election of NHCOC Officers and Executive Committee for FY 2016-2017. On a motion duly made and seconded, the following officers were elected to serve: Chairman, Mark Lyon; Vice Chairman, Bruce Adams; Secretary, Leo Paul; Treasurer, Bob Valentine with the following two at-large members: Don Stein and Craig Nelson.

d. Request by ConnDOT for Amendments to the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Pertaining to an Intersection Improvement at CT 219/318 in Barkhamsted (see Attachment G). Sara Radasci and Don Stein discussed the proposed improvement, which has been a long-standing regional improvement priority. On a motion duly made and seconded, the proposed STIP amendment was unanimously endorsed.

e. Approval of Authorizing Resolution for Emergency Management Performance Grant Program. On a motion duly made and seconded, the authorizing resolution was unanimously endorsed.

Committee Updates

a. Legislative Committee. Mike Muszynski from CCM provided a brief overview of the recent session and stated that although the Governor has signed the budget, he removed \$20 million that will likely impact municipal aid under MRSA. He stated that another deficit mitigation measure will likely be necessary. CCM is researching the legality of the recent action by the Chief Medical Examiner making municipalities responsible for transporting and disposing of the unclaimed remains of certain decedents. Mark Lyon asked if submitting written testimony to Legislative Committees is helpful since it is generally not feasible for CEOs to attend hearings. Mr. Muszynski said such testimony is very helpful and that CCM also submits on many bills without actually testifying at a hearing.

b. Recycling Advisory Committee. Sue Dyer stated that Clean Harbors did a very good job at the recent HHW Day in Falls Village and that she appreciated the help of Pat Mechare and Bruce Adams on the Collection Day. About 175 residents brought waste to the event.

c. DEMHS Region 5. Mark Lyon reported that the TEEEX training provided a good overview of emergency response for local officials, but that many felt the six hours of training at one time was too much. Mark expressed appreciation to the State Police and Torrington Police Department for the hostile intruder training that was provided at the COG office on June 1st. He stated that the 2016 Homeland Security Grant will be released by DEMHS soon and that local officials are encouraged to consider how this funding can best be spent in Region 5. A Region 5 REPT Steering Committee meeting has been scheduled for July 18th to discuss the 2016 HSG.

Exploring Additional Opportunities for Service Sharing in the Northwest Hills for the Benefit of Member Towns. Rick Lynn reviewed the results of the recent NHCOC Survey of Municipal Interest in Additional Shared Services. He stated that most interest was expressed in a professional engineer, regional animal control, health insurance, GIS, and cooperative purchasing. Mark Lyon stated that he and Rick plan to meet with the new Executive Director of the Education Connection soon to discuss potential back-office partnering opportunities. Curtis Rand stated that Salisbury may be interested in sharing a Fire Marshal with another town. Leo Paul stated that Litchfield and Torrington are also discussing use of a shared Fire Marshal. Bob Geiger discussed the challenges in finding part-time employees that are qualified. Don Stein suggested that a subcommittee of the COG be established to further explore the opportunities, and following discussion Barbara, Leo and Don agreed to serve on the subcommittee.

Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment. Barbara Henry expressed concern about the opioid crisis and invited COG representatives to a public forum on this issue in Roxbury on June 23rd. The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.