

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF September 8, 2016

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Donald Stein	Burlington, Ted Shafer
Canaan, Patricia Allyn Mechare	Colebrook, Tom McKeon
Goshen, Bob Valentine	Hartland, Wade Cole
Kent, Bruce Adams	Litchfield, Leo Paul, Jr.
Morris, Tom Weik	New Hartford, Dan Jerram
Norfolk, Sue Dyer	Roxbury, Barbara Henry
Salisbury, Curtis Rand	Sharon, Brent Colley
Torrington, Elinor Carbone	Warren, Craig Nelson
Washington, Mark Lyon	Winchester, Candy Perez

Others in Attendance:

Ruth Fitzgerald and Carol Gould of Fitzgerald and Halliday Inc; Sara Radasci, ConnDOT; Jessica Fowler and Kim Maxwell, NWCONNECT; Steve Silver, Eversource; Valerie English Cooper, Mental Health CT; Noreen Laurinaitis, USDA; Connie Manes, Housatonic Valley Association; Bernie Harrington, LWV; Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOG Staff; Joanna Wozniak-Brown, 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 Mark Lyon at 10:03 a.m. Valerie Cooper from Mental Health Connecticut reported on the free training they offer to interested community members. So far, they've trained several hundred people in mental health "first aid". This training teaches community members how to recognize the signs and symptoms of a developing mental health issue and how to connect that person to appropriate resources. This is a federally funded program available throughout Connecticut. Two trainings in Northwest Connecticut are scheduled for September in Litchfield and Torrington. Valerie Cooper said they are able to bring trainings to interested communities and she thanked the towns that have already participated.

Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members.

Bob Valentine reported that there may be a wind turbine project in town. Discussion followed about CHRO requirements for state funded projects. Bruce Adams said that NHCOG would benefit from a CHRO presentation. Dan Jerram responded that the process held up their bridge process. Tom Weik reported that Morris is still working on the town budget and that they are really struggling to account for the ECS cut. Don Stein reported that the solar energy system on Barkhamsted's school is fully operational. Estimates show that the solar will account for half of the school's energy. Tom McKeon said Colebrook is in the midst of a lawsuit with wind turbine site developers. Curtis Rand asked COG members about recent correspondence regarding accessible ballots for disabled votes. Sue Dyer followed and mentioned that Norfolk purchased new voting machines. Pat Mechare reported that the Emergency Services Center construction is underway with an expected completion in March or April 2017. Elinor Carbone stated that Torrington is pursuing LRAC and ZRAC funding. The city is creating shovel-ready renewable energy projects including a land lease for a solar array on their landfill and micro-grid and/or fuel cell projects. They've made progress on Naugatuck River Greenway and Susan Grossman Greenway trails and are about to contract with consultants for a Brownfields Area Revitalization (BAR) Grant. She noted that the Torrington Water Treatment Facility may add the Woodridge Lake area to their service area which illustrates Torrington's role as a regional center. Dan Jerram reported on the bridge project and school renovation projects. The school renovation came in \$1.5 million under budget so the selectmen are considering a solar array or air conditioning on the building. New Hartford is preparing an RFP for the sale of its public water and sewer systems since it is no longer economically prudent for the municipality to operate them. He also highlighted a lot of economic development along Route 44 and an increase in

housing permits this year. Brent Colley stated that they have some new businesses and housing in Sharon. Candy Perez mentioned that Northwestern Community College was ranked highest of Connecticut community colleges by WalletHub. She also reported they've started the Holabird Bridge project near the college and that they are looking for ideas for a recently closed school building. Wade Cole said Hartland will start their bridge project in spring. Bruce Adams said Kent is working on two projects: replacement of a major culvert and the welcome center/public restroom building behind railroad station purchased with STEAP grant money. Leo Paul mentioned that the Litchfield bridge project should be done by winter. Barbara Henry said Roxbury is working on finishing a road project and thanked Rick Lynn and Don Stein for their CHRO guidance. Mark Lyon reported that their culvert project is progressing and the town is having a unique Gilmore Girls weekend-long festival. Ted Shafer reported that he and Don Stein represented the small-towns at a CCM sustainability group meeting. He briefly explained the proposed sustainable community rating system under development by CCM and the Institute for Sustainable Energy. Virginia, Massachusetts, and New Jersey have similar programs.

Regional Transportation Planning: Summary of Draft Final "NHCOG Regional Transportation Plan". Ruth Fitzgerald and Carol Gould, FHI Incorporated. Ruth explained that this is the last Transportation Plan presentation and she thanked NHCOG for allowing them to work on the project. She summarized the project and their concerted outreach efforts. The key regional transportation priorities are: asset management, more focus on non-auto mobility, enhance livability, improve connections, and maximize resources and economic opportunity. They concluded that transit is the highest unmet need in the region and would be served by collaborative coordination. She stressed that the unique changing landscape within Northwest Hills presents challenges and opportunities. Discussion followed on the challenges and opportunities of attracting millennials to the region and planning for an aging population. She said the region's agri-tourism, natural landscape, and village/downtown centers offer opportunities.

Don Stein made a motion to approve the Regional Transportation Plan with the suggested edits already submitted. With a second from Barbara Henry, the motion carried unopposed.

Regional Transportation Planning: Overview of ConnDOT's New Transportation Alternatives Program. Sara Radasci, ConnDOT.

Sara Radasci gave a brief update on the TAP program, funded by FAST Act. It's for smaller projects, such as off-road trail facilities and bikeways. It is a competitive grant, broken out by urbanized area. There is \$500,000 minimum for each project, and projects require a 20% non-federal match. In addition to new projects, Hugh Hayward, ConnDOT's coordinator for the TAP program, will be sending out a list of contingency projects that may be eligible. These contingency projects are in addition to other applications and does not deduct from the \$500,000 available. There is a teleconference on October 18 to explain the program. Project needs to be designed and construction started by 2020. The application deadline is December 30. NHCOG members asked Rick Lynn to re-send grant details.

Update on NWCONNECT and Status of Regional Performance Incentive Grant. Kim Maxwell and Jessica Fowler. Jessica Fowler reported that NWCONNECT hired a telecommunications attorney to draft a contract that municipalities may use as a template when entering contract negotiations with telecommunications firms to bring additional fiber optic internet capacity to their town. NWCONNECT hopes to create a package of information to assist municipalities when the infrastructure becomes available. NHCOG did receive a Regional Performance Incentive Grant from the Connecticut Office of Policy & Management to fund a broadband feasibility study and NWCONNECT will be directing the work under that grant over the next nine months. NWCONNECT now has a Certificate of Incorporation, board members, and by-laws.

Request for Municipal Assistance in Designating Local Important Farmland Soils. Connie Manes, HVA Greenprint Manager.

Connie Manes introduced herself as the Manager of the Greenprint, a regional conservation partnership. She

explained that there are federal and state farmland soil designations but there are also local important farmland soils important to rural qualities. They include fields used for historic farms and grazing fields and soils that may be very rocky. Having these soils designated as locally important soils makes them eligible for funding. Designation is simple and requires a letter to the NRCS requesting the mapping. A sample letter that can be used by towns was included in the board packet. The designation does not commit towns to any other requirements. She explained that they would be useful to the regional POCD to make better land use decisions. She shared the map from Norfolk that illustrates a significant increase in land coverage by mapping the locally important soils.

#### Test Drive the COG's New Survey Response Clickers for the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development and Hear About Upcoming Outreach Events. Jocelyn Ayer.

Jocelyn explained the public outreach efforts for the new regional Plan of Conservation and Development (RPOCD). She will be visiting all 21 towns' Planning Commissions in the region (to which other town commissions are being invited). Jocelyn stated that she and Joanna Wozniak-Brown will attend several regional events in an effort to solicit input on the Plan. Residents may also participate through an online survey and 5 focus group sessions offered through the COG's 5<sup>th</sup> Thursday events. Don Stein offered that the Riverton fair gets 15,000 attendees on Columbus Day weekend. The NHCOC members also utilized the COG's new electronic clickers, which are handheld real-time voting devices, in completing the RPOCD survey. Jocelyn will be sending text to NHCOC members to place in their town newsletters and websites to request that residents take the on-line Regional Plan resident input survey.

Governor's Council on Climate Change and Stakeholder Outreach in the Northwest Hills. Joanna Wozniak-Brown. Joanna reported on the July stakeholder outreach event for the Governor's Council on Climate Change. Held July 26, 2016, six attendees listened to a webinar from Hartford and generated responses to questions on renewable energy strategies for the state. The state has a goal of 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. NHCOC plans to host for the fall stakeholder outreach event.

#### Administrative Items

a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting of July 14, 2016. On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved.

b. Approval of Financial Statements for 6/2016 and 7/2016. On a motion duly made and seconded, the financial statements were unanimously approved.

c. Resolutions for Responsible Growth and Regional Performance Incentive Program Agreements. Following a brief discussion, and on a motion duly made and seconded, the proposed resolutions were unanimously endorsed.

d. Authorization for NHCOC Staff to Serve as Fiduciary Agent for 2016 Homeland Security Grant and to Execute Related Memorandum of Understanding. Following a brief discussion, and on a motion duly made and seconded, the authorization was unanimously granted.

#### Committee Updates

a. Animal Control Facility Committee. Mayor Carbone stated that the committee is creating a scope of services. They will regroup to finalize the RFP and potentially create a public-private partnership. The existing grant is for engineering and design of the facility.

b. DEMHS Region 5. Mark Lyon reported that a "Crisis Leadership & Decision-making" training session for Chief Elected Officials has been scheduled for November 3 at the Litchfield Inn. A flyer on the training session was distributed.

c. Public Works Equipment Cooperative. Wade Cole reported that the program is operating well and that all equipment is in working order as the season wraps up.

#### Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment.

No other business was raised and the meeting was adjourned at 12:08 p.m.