

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF October 13, 2016

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Burlington, Ted Shafer	Canaan, Patricia Allyn Mechare
Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway	Goshen, Bob Valentine
Hartland, Wade Cole	Kent, Bruce Adams
Norfolk, Sue Dyer	North Canaan, Doug Humes
Roxbury, Barbara Henry	Salisbury, Curtis Rand
Warren, Craig Nelson	Washington, Mark Lyon

Others in Attendance:

Nancy Heaton and Gertrude O'Sullivan, Foundation for Community Health; Janet Carlson and Briana Juliano, One Eleven Group; Felicia Brodzky Jovles, Canaan; Zachary McKeown, CCM; Robert Rubbo and Robert Collins from Torrington Area Health District; Bill Burgess, Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities; Steve Silver, Eversource; Lila Tuxbury, NHCOG consultant; Jocelyn Ayer, Joanna Wozniak-Brown, and 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 10:05 a.m. No public comment was offered.

Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members. Bruce Adams reported that they have decided to live stream their selectmen's meetings on YouTube for a trial period of 6 months. Kent's town attorney indicated that the video is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act since the meeting minutes remain the official record of the meeting. Pat Mechare noted that the local cable access channel films Canaan's town meetings. She also reported that the emergency services facility construction is underway and should be finished in early spring. She asked COG members if local roads are lined in other towns. Discussion followed. Ted Shafer asked COG members if they are closing their town departments for election day. COG members had a variety of responses with decisions based on the polling place, scale of election, etc. Doug Humes said the reconstruction of the railroad station started. Curtis Rand reported that Salisbury is finally opening bids for construction at the Lakeville intersection in Lakeville. He did note that under their rural collector grant, they have to do an Indian Artifact evaluation along the project's extent. Sue Dyer reported that Norfolk received an extension on their Main Street Investment Fund grant for the City Meadows project. According to Wade Cole, Hartland will start a bridge project in March. Bob Valentine reported that Goshen finished their fiscal year and audit with a \$5,000 surplus and that a Goshen-Cornwall Senior Bus is now in operation. The Northwest Transit District coordinates the schedule and employs a driver from each town. Craig Nelson reported a generally successful Warren Fall Festival. Discussion on the CHRO process ensued. COG members expressed frustration on the expense and challenge of the process. Bob Valentine offered to host a CCM workshop on parliamentary procedures in municipalities. Members generally expressed interest. Mark Lyon reported that there are free CIRMA presentations coming up on the workers' compensation program. He also noted upcoming bridge projects in Washington.

Village Center Revitalization Opportunities in the Northwest Hills: Findings and Results from the 8-Town Revitalization Project. Mike Goman, Goman + York and Janet Carlson, One Eleven Group. Jocelyn Ayer introduced Mike Goman and Janet Carlson to report on recent economic development efforts, coordinated by NHCOG and funded by a Regional Performance Incentive (RPI) grant. The RPI grant focused on 8 towns: Cornwall, Canaan (Falls Village), Goshen, Kent, Norfolk, North Canaan, Salisbury, and Sharon. Mike Goman

gave a slide presentation highlighting some of the work completed under this contract to date. For example, Goman + York organized community visioning meetings in 2 participating towns to identify local economic development priorities and assist the community in moving forward with each project. Other project highlights included: West Cornwall community septic system project; Falls Village Inn; Sharon Hospital and general business marketing in Sharon; creation of a Goshen Business Circle group; Kent public restrooms design and research/design of potential collaborative work space for local businesses; Salisbury Lime Rock Park impact study and conceptual design of Visionary Computers expansion; Norfolk Country Store and existing town center parking/road/traffic analysis; and North Canaan downtown commercial center plan. Mr. Goman offered the following recommendations to towns based on his experience with what was successful under this contract: create a local economic development committee, focus on local growth and development from within; and work with commercial property owners to get them to understand realistic commercial rental rates that better reflect market realities. While primary retail sales are moving online, food/beverage and art/entertainments businesses are growing and businesses should focus on being an experience. They also stressed the importance of tourism marketing. Jocelyn Ayer offered her assistance on continuing the activities and expanding efforts to additional towns throughout the region. Janet Carlson presented slides highlighting the outcomes of the DiscoverNWCT tourism marketing piece of this project. Using a visually appealing website and active social media, DiscoverNWCT offers original content on regional experiences to attract additional tourism participation. Janet explained that advertising the regional offerings has greater impact than each town competing for tourism dollars but continued work will require coordination among the region's municipalities. Janet offered that any interested town in the NHCOC region can be added to the DiscoverNWCT.com website and tourism marketing effort for \$5,000. Towns should contact Janet or Jocelyn for more information on how your town can participate.

Proposed Legislation to Consolidate Existing Health Departments into County Health Departments. Robert Rubbo, Director of Health, Torrington Area Health District.

Robert Rubbo presented on draft legislation proposed by CT DPH to consolidate and regionalize health departments into 8 county health departments from the current 73 departments. If accepted as is, the process would likely begin in New London and Litchfield Counties. The State would continue the existing \$1.85 per capita support but municipalities would be required to contribute 1.5% of their total budget (both operating and education) to the county health department. The Torrington Area Health District currently collects \$5.48 per capita from their member towns. Robert Rubbo reported that members of the CT Association for Directors of Health expressed concerns about this legislation, including: no existing county government in CT, costs on the municipalities, staff changes (e.g. union contracts), existing mortgages on existing health district properties, and removal of local control on health services, etc. Bob Valentine expressed discontent and said this is another strategy by the state to move costs onto municipalities. He said the COG should look to stop the bill completely. Zachary McKeown of CCM stated that CCM is also dissatisfied with this draft legislation and requests that towns submit the additional costs to their budgets. Barbara Henry questioned what the motivations are for this legislation. She noted that large geographies make some services difficult such as distribution of emergency vaccines. Zack McKeown commented the legislation is in the very early stages as it had not yet been approved by OPM. Rick Lynn asked if there is any appreciation by DPH of the existing regional health districts or any consideration of their potential exclusion from this legislation. Rob Rubbo explained that no existing districts are excluded. Barbara Henry said at the very least, each community should call their legislators. Ted Shafer noted that COST is also interceding for towns as well. Gordon Ridgway proposed that NHCOC write a letter directly to the Governor, OPM and DPH. Gordon Ridgway, seconded by Bob Valentine, made a motion for Rick Lynn to write a letter on behalf of NHCOC, expressing disapproval of the proposal. The motion was unanimously approved.

Roundtable Discussion: Municipal Procedures for Capital Improvement Planning. Doug Humes.

Doug Humes asked members towns about their budget strategies for capital non-recurring accounts. Several towns responded that they have recurring accounts with set-asides every year to pay for equipment, bridges, vehicles, road projects, etc. Goshen requires every department to submit a 5-year capital plan, with a 10-year capital plan for the Public Works department.

Regional Food Hub Update. Jocelyn Ayer. Jocelyn Ayer reported that the Food Hub was not awarded the USDA grant it had applied for but will be applying for a CT Dept. of Agriculture farm viability grant to allow them to launch the Food Hub in 2017. The food hub project team asked that the previously approved \$25,000 in matching funds from NHCOC towards the USDA grant be used to match the farm viability grant request. Bill Burgess said that Partners for Sustainable Communities has had previous success in farm viability grants. He noted that the NW CT Community Foundation has expressed interest in future funding as food insecurity is a priority for them. Mark Lyon, seconded by Curtis Rand, made a motion to approve the re-assignment of funds to match the Farm Viability grant request that will be submitted in November. All members voted in favor of the motion.

Recent Activities of the COG's Regional Election Monitor. Lila Tuxbury.

Lila Tuxbury reported that she's been meeting with other election monitors and local registrars and provided a training session for moderators in the region. Following discussion, COG members requested that she request a position statement from the Secretary of State's office on who decides if a town hall should close for elections. Several chief elected officials mentioned that they do not work at the town hall if it is a polling place and they are on the ballot. Lila encouraged COG members to continue to contact her if questions arise about election procedures.

Administrative Items

- a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting of September 8, 2016. On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved.
- b. Approval of Financial Statement for 8/2016. On a motion duly made and seconded, the financial statement was unanimously approved.
- c. Resolutions for Regional Services Grant Program. Following a brief discussion, and on a motion duly made and seconded, the proposed resolutions were unanimously endorsed.

Committee Updates

- a. DEMHS Region 5. Mark Lyon, Region 5 Steering Committee. Mark Lyon noted that the TEEEX Emergency Preparedness training will take place in November. The state-wide DEMHS-directed drill will be October 29 or November 2 and is an opportunity for towns to run a drill. The Steering Committee will meet next Monday in Watertown. They will discuss a disinfecting system, listen to an emergency response planning presentation from Yankee Gas, and hear about UCONN forecasting on potential damage from disasters.
- b. Recycling Advisory Committee. Sue Dyer, Chair, noted that the Household Hazardous Waste Day will be held on October 15. She asked for volunteers for the event.
- c. Status of RPIP and Responsible Growth Projects in Region. Rick Lynn reported that the NHCOC was awarded two RPIP grants: 1) design of a regional animal control facility, and 2) a NWCONNECT Broadband Assessment. Currently, the paperwork is with OPM. Two Responsible Growth program projects are also underway. The West Cornwall Water/Septic contract has now been fully executed and the project has begun. Regarding the alignment study for the HouBike trail, the NHCOC is waiting for the fully executed contract to be signed by DEEP. Upon receipt, the first step will be a critical habitat study. Following a RFP process, the Consultant Selection Committee recommends that NHCOC retain Klemens Consulting LLC to conduct the study. Pat Mechare made a motion to accept the Selection Committee's recommendation, which was seconded by Doug Humes. Following a brief discussion, the NHCOC voted unanimously to approve the motion.
- d. WUCC Update. Joanna Wozniak-Brown reported that she has been attending the monthly meetings of the Western Water Utility Coordinating Committee. She explained that the state started this efforts to coordinate use of the state's water supply while providing adequate

potable water. She noted that the Western WUCC will be discussing Exclusive Service Areas (ESAs) soon. These arrangements do not impact current systems; however, towns in NHCOC must carefully consider if they want to hold the Exclusive Service Area, permit an external entity to hold the ESA, declare that they do not want an established ESA, or some combination thereof. Towns should be proactive in this process. She also noted that ESAs, although requiring warning at WUCC meetings, can be established by external entities without town approval.

Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment.

Jocelyn Ayer reported on the responses to the regional Plan of Conservation and Development online resident input survey. As of that morning, Kent had 88 responses but Winchester was still in the lead with 98 responses. In total over 500 responses have been received. Jocelyn asked COG members to continue to encourage participation by putting a link to the survey on the town website or in a town e-newsletter and reminded them that the winning town receives a free ice cream social.

No other business was raised and the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.