

## MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF March 9, 2017

### Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Don Stein	Burlington, Ted Shafer
Canaan, Pat Mechare	Colebrook, Tom McKeon
Goshen, Bob Valentine	Hartland, Wade Cole
Harwinton, Michael Criss	Kent, Bruce Adams
Litchfield, Leo Paul	Morris, Tom Weik
Norfolk, Sue Dyer	North Canaan, Charles P. Perotti
Sharon, Brent Colley	Torrington, Elinor Carbone
Warren, Craig Nelson	Washington, Mark Lyon

### Others in Attendance:

Hedy Ayers, Maureen Goulet, and Pauline Yoder, CRCOG; Allison Fulton, HVCASA; Jeffrey Kitching, EdAdvance; Bernie Harrington, League of Women Voters of Litchfield County; 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 2:02 p.m. No public comment was offered.

### Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members.

Most towns reported progress on the municipal budget process. Don Stein explained that several NHCOG members were present at the public hearing on the teachers' pension costs in Hartford today. He also announced a public hearing on Monday on the resident trooper program. Tom McKeon reported that Colebrook is facing a potential 3 mil increase in their municipal budget this year due to the Governor's budget proposal. Pat Mechare said the Canaan Emergency Services Facility will be finishing construction soon, on-time and under budget. Brent Colley noted a 1 and 2% increase in Sharon's municipal budget this coming year. Elinor Carbone remarked that Torrington is facing a substantial increase in their municipal budget to account for potential municipal responsibility for the teachers' pension plan and they are challenged by a cap on motor vehicle assessments. Ted Shafer thanked the other members for their outreach to the state legislature and commented that such efforts help to reassure residents that local officials are looking out for their best interests.

Update on Statewide Services Available to Towns through the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) Including EZIQC for General Contracting and New HR Portal. Pauline Yoder, Interim Municipal Services Director. Mark Lyon introduced Pauline Yoder, Interim Municipal Services Director at CRCOG. Pauline commented that the CRCOG offers a number of services that are available to other regions and towns in the state. Hedy Ayers, also of CRCOG, announced the new Human Resources website and services available. The website, NutmegHR.org, is a gateway for online resources for HR professionals around the state. The website also displays salary survey data and model employee handbooks, job descriptions, training opportunities, and job announcements for a variety of municipal functions. They also have on-call consulting services. The legal liability for these services would be the same as any other professional liability coverage. The HR services are free to all municipalities.

Maureen Glam, Purchasing Manager, explained another potential regional services offering: annual and semi-annual bids for a variety of goods and services. She described the ezIQC program, a competitive bid program for on-call construction and construction-related services. Municipal-related projects could include general construction and road and bridge maintenance. Towns can join at \$500 per year for membership. CRCOG currently has 42 members of the ezIQC program. Pauline Yoder also explained that they've had several RFPs for technology services through the cooperative bid program. CRCOG also offers a regional

online permitting program, IT services, and a variety of cooperative purchasing opportunities such as fuel oil, grass seed/fertilizer, and protective clothing.

Opportunities for Municipal Service Sharing in Cooperation with EdAdvance Including IT Services and Purchasing of Supplies. Jeffrey Kitching, Executive Director, EdAdvance.

Dr. Kitching expressed appreciation for recent productive conversations with municipal officials about potential ways EdAdvance could provide services in region. He distributed a handout describing the IT services offered through EdAdvance. As the second largest employer in Litchfield County, they have a large IT staff, 150 vehicles in their transportation fleet, and a competitive purchasing plan. They are especially interested in offering transportation services as they have buses all over the region with available hours and staff. They also have the potential to offer larger purchasing power such as an insurance collaborative and other goods or services. He sees EdAdvance as a partner for communities and schools. Mark Lyon commented that it is encouraging to see the willingness of EdAdvance to work with the NHCOC, and to explore other opportunities for voluntary regionalization. Don Stein expressed interest in potential efficiencies that could be achieved between the Northwest Transit District and EdAdvance and asked for a list of EdAdvance vans in each of the towns.

Overview of Housatonic Valley Coalition Against Substance Abuse (HVCASA) and Services Available to the Northwest Hills. Allison Fulton, Executive Director. Allison Fulton introduced herself and explained that the HVCASA is one of 13 regional action councils that together create the Connecticut Prevention Network. Through a contract with the state Department of Health, HVCASA is a non-profit that tracks substance abuse trends, offers funding to each town's individual prevention council, and applies for federal grants. She asked that the CEOs visit with their community's prevention council and support their efforts publicly. Prevention councils perform a lot of work in schools with education and events. Besides schools, they also work with law enforcement and medical/health professionals. HVCASA has a quarterly newsletter. Allison also announced an upcoming opiate symposium on March 29, 2017 at Danbury Hospital from 8am to 2pm. She has an office in the Goshen town hall with office hours mostly on Tuesdays and Fridays. Brent Colley asked what strategies work to reduce substance abuse. She replied that there are seven proven strategies but raising awareness and education is vital as well as connecting kids to groups and creating positive relationships and role models. She distributed booklets developed in partnership with CCM, entitled "How Local Officials Can Combat Drug Abuse". Discussion followed.

Regional Transportation Planning

- a. Request for NHCOC Endorsement of Municipal Applications for Funding under the LOTCIP and Rural Collector Programs. Rick Lynn reviewed the attachment in the agenda packet on the status of the LOTCIP and Rural Collector programs and the new applications submitted. On a motion by Michael Criss, seconded by Don Stein, a motion was unanimously passed to endorse Torrington's Sawmill Hill Road project and the Alain White Road project in Morris with Rural Collector Program funding, and Torrington's Prospect Street, Litchfield's Moosehorn Road, and Burlington's George Washington Turnpike projects under the LOTCIP program.
- b. Capital Replacement Plan and Proposed Rental Rates for Public Works Equipment Cooperative. Wade Cole reviewed the proposed Capital Replacement Plan that was included in the agenda packet, and requested NHCOC approval of the proposed equipment rental rates for 2017. Mark Lyon asked if the plan remains to replace asphalt recyclers. Wade Cole responded that the replacement was tabled for one more year to see if local public works departments will use the machines more. Bob Valentine thanked Wade and the Public Works Equipment Cooperative for preparing the plan. Craig Nelson said the Sharon catch basin cleaner was out of service much of last year and suggested replacement with a smaller piece of equipment. Wade responded that it was a priority for replacement and the committee was considering a smaller, more flexible piece of equipment for the rural towns. Rick Lynn noted that one of the benefits of the road supervisor's association is information exchange as Burlington DPW offered to provide a demonstration on the equipment they use to clean catch-basins in a cost-effective manner. On a

motion by Bob Valentine, seconded by Michael Criss, the proposed equipment rental rates for 2017 were unanimously approved.

Request for NHCOG Acceptance of Pre-qualified Consultant Regional Engineers. Don Stein, Selection Committee Chairman. Don Stein explained that NHCOG issued an RFP for engineering consulting services and fifteen proposals were received. The selection committee reviewed the proposals and, following interviews of the top candidates, recommends 1) the selection of Lenard Engineering as the NHCOG's Regional Consultant Engineer to provide direct assistance to the NHCOG, and 2) Lenard Engineering, Cardinal Engineering, and WMC be pre-qualified to provide on-call engineering assistance to NHCOG towns on an as-needed basis at municipal expense. More detail on the specific consultant work tasks is available in a Memo from Rick Lynn to COG members dated March 2, 2017. Rick noted that all three consultants agreed to reduce their typical municipal billing rates for work undertaken through the NHCOG Regional Engineer program. On a motion by Craig Nelson, seconded by Sue Dyer, the NHCOG unanimously voted to accept the Selection Committee's recommendation.

Update on NWCT Food Hub. Jocelyn Ayer.

Jocelyn Ayer announced that Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities (PSHC) received a \$40,000 Farm Viability grant from the State Department of Agriculture to fund the pilot year of the food hub. The PSHC hired a Food Hub Manager to start connecting buyers and farmers in the region. They plan to work with five to eight farms in the region this year, while building contacts and scaling up for next year. Jocelyn Ayer and PSHC are working on another application for the highly competitive USDA local food promotion program funding to allow them to work with more farms in year 2 and 3 of Food Hub operations. They've partnered with New Opportunities in Torrington and plan to use shared warehouse and cooler space in year 2 of operations which will reduce costs as well as create other synergies. Sue Dyer asked about potential distribution of extra food to the food bank. Jocelyn explained that they don't expect to offer that at this stage but might be able to down the road. Sue Dyer then asked how this service might impact farmers' markets in the region. Jocelyn explained that the Hub is designed to sell to wholesale channels like grocery stores, schools, and restaurants not directly to consumers like farmers markets do. The Hub provides another channel for farmers looking to sell their products. Farmers will have pre-season contracts with the Hub for specific products and amounts, providing farmers additional reliability in sales.

Administrative Items

- a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting of February 9, 2017 and Special Meeting of February 23, 2017. On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved.
- b. Approval of Financial Statement for 1/2017. On a motion duly made and seconded, the financial statement was unanimously approved.
- c. Request for NHCOG Letter in Support of Town of Morris Small Cities Program Application. On a motion duly made and seconded, the preparation of a letter of support was unanimously approved

Committee and Staff Reports

- a. Legislative Committee. Michael Criss, Chairman, reported on recent efforts to represent the region to the state legislature. Today, the legislature had a hearing on teachers' pensions and on Monday, will have a hearing on the resident trooper program. Bob Valentine urged members to participate and he was pleased to see legislators challenge the DPH Commissioner on the proposed regionalization of health districts. He believes the DPH proposal has little chance at this point. Discussion about the level of engagement by the state legislators followed. Many members felt that the legislators are engaged, appreciate input from local officials on the various topics, and are working very hard at the start of this busy legislative session. Members also reiterated the coordination available through COST and CCM to streamline testimony

procedures. Elinor Carbone noted that another option is submitting testimony online. Rick Lynn reviewed the proposed joint letter dated March 6 by the NHCOC and NECCOC to the General Assembly expressing deep concern about the governor's proposed budget. Following discussion, submission of the letter was unanimously endorsed.

Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment.

Mark Lyon announced an REPT meeting on Monday, March 13, in Watertown. He asked members to complete a proxy if they couldn't attend. It is mainly an informational meeting with some amendments to the adopted spending plan. The REPT will have an equipment demonstration in June at Post University.

No other business was raised and the meeting was adjourned at 3:26 p.m.