

Attachment E

MINUTES OF THE NHCOC MEETING OF April 13, 2017

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Don Stein	Burlington, Ted Shafer
Canaan, Pat Mechare	Colebrook, Tom McKeon
Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway	Goshen, Bob Valentine
Hartland, Wade Cole	Harwinton, Michael Criss
Kent, Bruce Adams	Litchfield, Leo Paul
Morris, Tom Weik	New Hartford, Dan Jerram
Norfolk, Sue Dyer	North Canaan, Doug Humes
Salisbury, Curtis Rand	Torrington, Elinor Carbone
Warren, Craig Nelson	Washington, Mark Lyon
Winchester, Laurie Bessette	

Others in Attendance:

Kayla Briere, Office of Congresswoman Esty; Joel W. Jones, Canaan citizen; Stephen Silver, Eversource; Betsy Gara, CT Council of Small Towns; David Kraiker, US Census Bureau; Sara Radasci, CTDOT; David Wilson, State Representative; Gertrude O'Sullivan, Foundation for Community Health; Bernie Harrington, League of Women Voters of Litchfield County; Joanna Wozniak- Brown and Rick Lynn, NHCOC staff; Media Representatives

Call to Order and Opportunity for Public Comment.

The meeting, held at the NHCOC office, was called to order by Chairman Mark Lyon at 10:02 a.m.

Kayla Price, district aide for US Representative Elizabeth Esty, introduced herself as the Representative's contact for the northwest corner. She explained that the office is preparing a Northwest Corner Day on May 5 and asks for suggestions or events of interest that the Congresswoman should attend. She also welcomed requests for letters of support for grant applications. She provided her email to the NHCOC members.

State Representative David Wilson mentioned that the state legislature and appropriations committee is working on their budget proposals and will be releasing them towards the end of April. Bob Valentine asked if there are alternative proposals on the teachers' retirement to which the representative replied proposals will emerge in the next three weeks. Bruce Adams asked him about the funding for the state trooper program. David Wilson felt there was consensus that any cuts to the resident trooper program were unpopular. Discussion followed.

Valerie English-Cooper of Mental Health Connecticut reminded NHCOC members about the free mental health first-aid training available to the region. Mental Health Connecticut offers two types of training, one for adults and one for children. She also explained that May is Mental Health Awareness Month and there are several opportunities to participate in the free training.

Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members.

Most towns reported continued work on their municipal budgets. Craig Nelson thanked Harwinton for allowing them to use their resident trooper to support local tree trimming efforts. Bob Valentine urged other CEOs to sign a petition (available on the Goshen website) to support the Neighborhood News show conducted by Jeff Zyner and provided through Optimum. He explained that the news program is important to the community, especially for seniors and home-bound individuals. Tom Weik followed and said the Morris website also has a link to the petition. Morris is working on their emergency medical plan. The state suggested they use Litchfield's plan as a model. The town is also moving forward on the Smoky Hollow bridge project. Don Stein said they are working on budget and a STEAP grant application. Tom McKeon reported that

Colebrook is facing a 1.6 mill rate increase this year. Tom McKeon said Paul Gibb was a huge help on their emergency medical plan. Colebrook Planning & Zoning Commission is working on an application for a farm brewery and distillery. David Wilson said the legislature passed a bill reducing fees for farm distillery. Sue Dyer said they are using the Governor's proposal for their budget process and will be working on it for the next six to eight weeks. The City Meadow project is in the final Planning & Zoning process with hope to break ground in May. Curtis Rand is also using the Governor's budget to set their municipal budget with the resident trooper program and teachers' pension as separate line items. They are starting a new Transfer Station, moving into WPCA improvement for phosphorus, and starting the Lakeville intersection project. Pat Mechare said the EMS facility will be finalized by the beginning of May and the town is looking into possible uses for the old firehouse. Doug Humes said the town will likely need to increase the tax rate by four mills. Elinor Carbone reported that the city is keeping their department budgets flat with no increase. Laurie Bessette explained Winchester is worried about the Governor's teachers' pension proposal budget. The Winchester Planning & Zoning turned down the proposed health center so there is an effort to create a regional co-op and she invited members to attend an upcoming meeting on Saturday. Gordon Ridgway noted Cornwall is borrowing money to rehabilitate 13 bridges. Wade Cole stated that Hartland's bridge project is underway. Ted Shafer reported that Burlington is breaking ground on a library expansion project. Bruce Adams said the Kent Welcome Center is almost ready to open and the town is considering crowd control measures around Bull's Bridge. He also noted that there is potential interest for a rehabilitation facility in the former nursing home and the town recently installed aesthetic wayfinding signs. Along with a budget update, Leo Paul noted his support of Jeff Zyner and the neighborhood news program. Litchfield is also applying for a joint STEAP grant with Morris for the Bantam Lake jams project. Michael Criss updated members on Harwinton's budget process as they consider their policing options. The waste management issue with the unclaimed newspapers is ongoing. Dan Jerram reported issues with forming the budget. Mark Lyon commented that Washington is considering a very small increase in their budget.

Rep. David Wilson noted that this years' budget deficit is approaching \$100 million.

Update on Status of Small Town Legislative Priorities. Betsy Gara, Executive Director, CT Council of Small Towns. Betsy Gara, Executive Director of the CT Council of Small Towns, recounted the current state budget process and the financial challenges faced by municipalities. She emphasized and strongly encouraged participation by municipal representatives in the legislative budget process. The state may be facing a \$1.7 billion deficit. Key proposals that could have significant impacts on municipal budgets include sharing of teachers' pension costs, mandate relief, municipal spending cap, and a car tax reduction. Betsy Gara reported on a Boston College study that showed municipal provision of one third of teachers' pension costs will decimate municipal budgets. Since the state underfunded its pension liability for 70 years, the costs have grown. The deferment may result in an almost \$1 billion increase in property tax over time. Even a phased approach to municipal coverage of the pension costs will decimate local budgets. Although some spending cuts are likely, there is a general assumption that there will be some type of tax increase such as sales tax. The Connecticut Conference on Municipalities (CCM) has proposed expanding the sales tax base and increasing it to a certain threshold; however, COST is concerned that these proposal do not include provisioning some of the sales tax to the originating towns. No one is talking about giving towns the money, only as a backfill to the state budget. Whether there will be any mandate relief (notices, prevailing wage, binding arbitration, minimum budget requirement) remains to be seen. Betsy Gara explained there are budget legislative sessions on April 19 and 20 and municipal officials can ask their representative to introduce them as there will be introductions between every bill. COST plans to host a day at the capital on May 11. Elinor Carbone expressed relief that there is attention to the motor vehicle tax cap as a reduction in mills for the motor vehicle tax could be devastating to the city of Torrington. Betsy Gara offered to forward the COST alert on that topic to the mayor even though the city is outside of their membership. General discussion about the budget process followed. Ted Shafer asked if there had been any movement on legal proceeding regarding the proposal to require municipalities to contribute to the teachers' pension. Betsy Gara noted that the town of Ridgefield did start investigating the legality of transferring the pension liability.

CSCU Proposal Pertaining to Administrative Consolidation of CT State Colleges and Universities. Don Stein explained the important role of community colleges in northwest Connecticut, especially Northwest Connecticut Community College. He referred to a recent press release announcing consolidation of administrative functions for CT state colleges and universities. He noted the sensibility of reducing back-office administrative costs but expressed concern about the potential leadership budget cutting measures and if future internal plans also include closure of campuses in the region. There will be a meeting on May 2 from 9:00 am to 11:00 am with Marc Ojakian, President of Connecticut State Colleges and Universities. Mark Lyon encouraged members to attend. The President offered to attend a NHCOC meeting but can't attend the May meeting. Leo Paul also supported the presence of the community college in the region and agreed that cost-cutting measures such as back-office consolidation measures should be encouraged. Mark Lyon agreed and said the NHCOC needs to be cognizant of all our regional resources and issues. Rep. Wilson asked for notice to the regional legislators if a meeting between NHCOC and the Marc Ojakian is planned so they may also attend.

Overview of 2020 Census "Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA)" David Kraiker, U.S. Census Bureau.

David Kraiker, US Census Bureau, explained the LUCA program, a voluntary geographic partnership to identify changes to addresses to better inform the 2020 Census. The LUCA process is authorized by the Census Address List Improvement Act of 1994, Public Law 103-430. Updating the addresses helps direct Census resources and improves the accuracy of the reporting. Consequently, Census data has important connotations for any decisions that rely on the population and demographic data. In preparation for LUCA, towns should update their contact information form, develop a strategy for address review, and review the Census Bureau's count of residential addresses by census block. Towns can download the list of addresses by census block on their website. Participants will have to sign a confidentiality agreement as required under Title 13. Towns will need to appoint a LUCA liaison that must follow the process guidelines. The liaison can be a volunteer. There are three participation methods: "GUPS" (a digital mapping program designed by Census), a Geographic Information System (GIS) file (requires GIS software and knowledge), and a paper address list (not generally recommended, and only available for towns with less than 6000 addresses). The process will start in the Fall of 2017 and the Census Bureau will send information to towns in the winter. Towns will need to return the corrected information within 120 days of receipt of the materials. Questions should be directed to GEO.2020.LUCA@census.gov or the New York office of the US Census Bureau at 212-584-3430.

Status of Western CT Water Utility Coordinating Committee and Exclusive Service Area Designations.

Joanna Wozniak-Brown updated the towns on the WUCC process. The Exclusive Service Area (ESA) designation process is in the end stages with the proposed ESAs available for public comment until April 22. The NHCOC member municipalities had a variety of ESA arrangements outside of existing systems including: no ESA assigned, ESA designations by utilities for small concentrated areas with buffer areas around existing services, or ESA designations for the entire municipality by either utilities or the municipality. The Western WUCC expects ESA holders to sign a statement of confirmation that they agree to the boundaries of their ESAs.

Regional Transportation Planning. Rick Lynn.

- a. Update on Rural Independent Transportation System (RITS). Rick Lynn announced that NHCOC has signed agreements with ConnDOT to provide two handicap-accessible vans to support the region and to be operated by GEER and the Northwest CT Transit District. The vans are designated for on-demand non-emergency medical appointments for the elderly and disabled. For towns outside of the GEER and NWTD service area, EdAdvance has agreed to serve the same purpose. Operating costs and marketing of the service will also be covered under this RITS program. Rick Lynn is coordinating the operating procedures and bus procurement and will update NHCOC members as the details are finalized.
- b. Action on Applications Submitted for Funding under ConnDOT's Section 5310 program. On a

motion by Leo Paul, seconded by Michael Criss, the draft letter included in the agenda packet to endorse the submitted applications was unanimously approved.

- c. Request for Extension of NHCOC Agreements for Road Deicing Salt. On a motion by Leo Paul, seconded by Wade Cole, the extension was unanimously approved.

Request for NHCOC Approval of Proposed Plan for Update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Coordination of Tourism Information for CT Tourism Website. Don Stein explained the proposed plan for the update to the CEDS plan. The update of the CEDS increases opportunities for funding from state and federal sources. The proposed plan included a grant for the update of \$20,000 from the federal EDA, \$10,000 NHCOC contribution, and \$10,000 of in-kind services. He explained that updating the CEDS document is critical as it has been influential in establishing the NHCOC as an economic development district. He also conveyed that Jocelyn is available to facilitate the CEDS update process.

He also explained a separate proposal to hire a consultant to help towns funnel information to the CT Visit Tourism website.

Craig Nelson agreed with updating the CEDS plan but expressed concern about the proposal to hire a tourism consultant as the CT Visit tourism team recently stated at a meeting in Litchfield that they are available to set up municipal tourism web pages at no cost to the towns. Mark Lyon likewise supported the CEDS update and suggested tabling of the second proposal.

Elinor Carbone supported the movement to update the CEDS. She said there is a proposal to shift the economic development districts to areas that have over 75,000 residents so maintain the regional economic presence is important. Doug Humes expressed concern about any additional spending in these uncertain state budget times. Discussion about the state business climate followed. Don Stein reminded members that the CEDS request is just a proposal to put in the application and said that if situations change, NHCOC can adjust the plan. Sue Dyer stated that the COG allocation would only be utilized if the EDA grant request was approved. On a motion by Bob Valentine, seconded by Michael Criss, all voted in favor of submitting the CEDS application and allocating the local match. On a motion by Don Stein, seconded by Craig Nelson, the second proposal to hire a consultant to support the tourism website was tabled.

Administrative Items

- a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting of March 9, 2017. On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved.
- b. Approval of Financial Statement for 2/2017. On a motion duly made and seconded, the financial statement was unanimously approved.
- c. Appointment of Nominating Committee for NHCOC Officers and Executive Committee for FY 2017-2018. Mark Lyon asked for three volunteers to be on the nominating committee. On a motion duly made and seconded, Don Stein, Dan Jerram, and Wade Cole were approved as the nominating committee.
- d. RAC Chairman Susan Dyer stated that Regional Refuse Disposal District One (Barkhamsted, Winsted, and New Hartford) would like to participate in the household hazardous waste day in Torrington this year on trial basis. On a motion by Leo Paul, seconded by Bruce Adams, the COG unanimously voted to allow RRDD1 to participate in COG-sponsored household hazardous waste collection days.

Legislative Committee Update. Michael Criss, Chairman, reported on recent efforts to represent the region to the state legislature. On May 3rd at 10:00am in Room 1A, the NHCOC will meet with the

Northeastern CT COG and area legislators to discuss rural legislative issues. Mark Lyon noted that previous collaborations between the two rural COGs have been helpful.

Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment.

Elinor Carbone announced the public hearing on the Memorandum of Understanding between Charlotte Hungerford and Hartford HealthCare. She favors the merger. The public hearing is on May 8 at 4:00pm at City Hall. She asked Rick Lynn to re-send the email notification to NHCOCG members.

No other business was raised and the meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.