

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF June 8, 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	Litchfield, Leo Paul
Morris, Tom Weik	New Hartford, Dan Jerram
North Canaan, Doug Humes	Norfolk, Sue Dyer
Roxbury, Barbara Henry	Salisbury, Curtis Rand
Sharon, Brent Colley	Torrington, Elinor Carbone
Warren, Craig Nelson	Washington, Mark Lyon
Winchester, Bob Geiger	

Others in Attendance:

Aaron Budris and Mark Nielson, NVCOG; Eileen Schmidt and Cleveland Fuessenich, Litchfield Economic Development Corporation; Steve Silver, Eversource; Tom Vannini, DEHMS Region 5; Joel W. Jones, Falls Village; Felicia Brock Jones; Sean Hayden, Northwest Conservation District; Rista Malanca, City of Torrington; Gertrude O'Sullivan, Foundation for Community Health; Bernie Harrington, League of Women Voters of Litchfield County; 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 10:04 a.m.

Sean Hayden, Northwest Conservation District Director, announced that he will soon be taking a position at the Lake Waramaug Task Force. The Northwest Conservation District is interviewing candidates for the Executive Director position.

Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members.

Most towns reported on the status of their municipal budgets and the challenge of financial planning without a final budget from the state. Warren, Washington, Goshen, Litchfield, Salisbury, Winchester, Roxbury, Burlington and Barkhamsted passed their municipal budgets. Hartland and Colebrook had between 1 and 2 mill increases. New Hartford, Norfolk, Torrington, and Morris have yet to finalize their budgets. Pat Mechare said Canaan has a temporary Certificate of Occupancy for their emergency services facility. Doug Humes raised the idea of a state constitutional amendment to require a state budget by mid-May to improve the municipal budget process. Dan Jerram mentioned that date might be too late as the regional education budget is required by May 2. Curtis Rand announced Salisbury is working on a road project on Lake Road as well as the Sharon-Salisbury joint transfer station. Sharon will be having a Hops on the Green Festival soon and inviting veterans to participate. Bob Geiger explained that Winchester will return to managing their school district at the end of the month. New Hartford is working on a budget but issued tax bills based on last year's rate. Burlington will be hosting its 5th Johnnycake Music Festival, an enrichment fund raiser for the school, this coming weekend. The Litchfield Hills Road Race and Gallery on the Green will also take place this weekend. Roxbury is finishing a major road construction project. Barbara Henry noted that the selectmen sent letters to residents, warning of a potential supplemental tax bill and encouraging citizen participation. Morris is moving forward on their bridge project, and recreational activities are being scheduled at the Morris town beach.

Update on Routing Study for the Naugatuck River Greenway being coordinated by the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments in Cooperation with the NHCOG and Summary of the Economic Impacts of Phased Completion of the Naugatuck River Greenway.

Aaron Budris of the Naugatuck Valley COG (NVCOG) explained that NVCOG, in partnership with NHCOG,

received a Responsible Growth Grant to conduct an alignment study for the Naugatuck River Greenway (NRG). The NVCOG is negotiating with BSC Group, the selected consultant, to determine the scope and fees for the alignment study. BSC will be reaching out to towns in the next couple of months for information and public participation. Rick Lynn mentioned that enhancing the Naugatuck River Greenway has been a long-term priority for the region, with the LHCEO preparing a “Naugatuck River Greenway Assessment” over 10 years ago.

Mark Nielson, also of NVCOG, discussed the process and findings of the recent economic impact study of the anticipated NRG trail enhancement. Mr. Nielson explained that the NRG is a 46 mile corridor stretching from downtown Derby to Torrington. The study itself is funded by multiple community foundations, COGs, US DOT, CT DOT, and member municipalities. Research partners in this study include UConn College of Agriculture, Health & Natural Resources and UConn Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis. Overall, the purpose was to demonstrate the value of the investment including health benefits, development opportunities, brownfield remediation opportunities, increased tourism, and potential trail uses. The study approach included a literature review, infrared trail counts, intercept surveys, focus groups, and economic analysis. The final economic analysis included three scenarios: baseline, current trends and accelerated growth. Although the estimated full build-out cost is \$77 million, the economic study indicated a very high return on investment even before including the health benefits. The incremental monetized health benefits are estimated to be \$259.6 million by 2031. The economic study can be found on the “Projects” tab on the Naugatuck Valley COG website at www.nvcogct.org. They are creating summary sheets for each community along the trail. Mark Nielson offered to attend meetings in the related towns if there was interest.

Discussion about trail surface and related uses followed.

Overview of Community Connectivity Grant Program and Construction Funding Available for Local Initiatives.

Sara Radasci of ConnDOT explained that the Community Connectivity Grant Program provides construction funding for local initiatives towards improving conditions for walking and bicycling to and within community centers. Municipalities are still eligible even if they haven’t completed a Road Safety Audit (RSA); however, participation in a safety audit may enhance their application. The deadline is August 1 for grants ranging from \$75,000 to \$400,000. Questions such as local match requirements would be best directed to Colleen Kissane at 860-594-2312 or CTDOT.CCGP@ct.gov.

Approval of Resolutions Pertaining to OPM’s Request for Applications Under the 2017 Responsible Growth and Transit-Oriented Development Program.

Rick Lynn explained that a resolution is required in order for the NHCOC to submit applications under the 2017 Responsible Growth and Transit-oriented Development program. A resolution included in the agenda packet provides for the NHCOC to apply for funding for the following two projects: 1) Construction of a Regional Animal Shelter, and 2) Northwest Connecticut Food Hub Implementation. On a motion by Leo Paul, seconded by Craig Nelson, the resolution passed unanimously.

Mayor Carbone explained that the City of Torrington will be applying as a municipality for a Responsible Growth grant for an “East Main Street Access and Corridor Management Plan & Sidewalk Construction.” This project is supported in the NHCOC’s Unified Planning Work Program. Mayor Carbone explained that their East Main Street Road Safety Audit from last year indicated a need to improve the downtown Torrington sidewalk network. Don Stein, seconded by Leo Paul, made a motion to support the City of Torrington’s Responsible Growth and Transit-Oriented Development Grant application for the “East Main Street Access and Corridor Management Plan & Sidewalk Construction”. The motion was unanimously approved.

Dan Jerram inquired about endorsement of other potential municipal applications under this grant. OPM’s timeframe for resolutions or letters of support will enable action at the July meeting of the NHCOC. Don Stein stated that a special meeting of the COG could be held if necessary.

Request for Approval of Selection Committee's Recommendation for a Consultant to Design the Litchfield Hills Regional Animal Shelter. Mayor Carbone. Mayor Carbone explained that the NHCOC was awarded a Regional Performance Incentive Grant to hire a consultant to design the regional animal shelter. Following a RFP process, the Selection Committee for this project interviewed three consultants and is recommending the selection of Silver/Petrucci and Associates from Hamden to perform this work. Bob Valentine added that this firm has a great deal of experience in designing animal control facilities. On a motion by Leo Paul, seconded by Curtis Rand, the NHCOC voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Selection Committee and hire Silver/Petrucci and Associates to undertake this work.

Administrative Items

- a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting of May 11, 2017. On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved. Tom Weik abstained.
- b. Approval of Financial Statement for 4/2017. On a motion duly made and seconded, the financial statement was unanimously approved.
- c. Election of NHCOC Officers and Executive Committee Members for FY 2017-2018. Wade Cole, Nominating Committee Chairman, reported that the positions and nominees include Chairman (Mark Lyon), Vice Chairman (Bruce Adams), Secretary (Leo Paul), and Treasurer (Bob Valentine). At-large members would include Don Stein and Craig Nelson. On a motion by Pat Mechare, seconded by Ted Shafer, the proposed slate of officers and Executive Committee members was unanimously approved.
- d. Approval of Proposed NHCOC Budget for FY 2017-2018 as endorsed by the NHCOC Executive Committee. The proposed budget included in the agenda packet was developed and endorsed by the Executive Committee. While state funding for next fiscal year is uncertain, the NHCOC is in good financial shape and staff anticipates coming in under budget this fiscal year. On a motion duly made and seconded, the proposed budget was unanimously approved.
- e. Request for Endorsement of NHCOC Goals and Objectives and Work Plan for FY 2017-2018. On a motion by Don Stein, seconded by Ted Shafer, the NHCOC unanimously endorsed the proposed Goals, Objectives, and Work Plan for FY 2017-2018.

Committee Updates.

- a. Recycling Advisory Committee. Susan Dyer and Don Stein. Mark Lyon and Sue Dyer thanked Pat Mechare and Bruce Adams for participating and volunteering at the recent Household Hazardous Waste Day in Canaan (Falls Village). Sue Dyer reported that 151 households participated. The next household hazardous waste day will be on October 14, 2017 at the Torrington Water Pollution Control Authority on Bogue Road in Harwinton.
- b. Legislative Committee Update. Michael Criss, Chairman. In Michael Criss' absence, general discussion about recent legislation and state budget proceedings ensued. A recent bill may allow municipal flexibility in setting budgets.
- c. DEMHS Region 5. Mark Lyon, Region 5 Steering Committee, reported that on June 14th, DEHMS Region 5 is having a Field Day at Post University for local officials. In addition to guest speakers, the event will have on display much of the equipment purchased for emergency response by Region 5. The equipment includes light towers, message boards, sand bag fillers, etc. Rick Lynn stated that ESF-10, the Regional Hazmat Team, has requested that NHCOC once again serve as the administrative agent for their annual EMPG grant for hazmat training and equipment. On a motion by Leo Paul, seconded by Craig Nelson, the NHCOC unanimously voted to approve a resolution providing for this continued technical assistance.

Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment

No other business was raised and the meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.