

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF September 14, 2017

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Don Stein	Burlington, Ted Shafer
Canaan, Pat Mechare	Colebrook, Tom McKeon
Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway	Hartland, Wade Cole
Kent, Bruce Adams	Litchfield, Leo Paul
Morris, Tom Weik	New Hartford, Dan Jerram
Norfolk, Sue Dyer	Sharon, Brent Colley
Warren, Craig Nelson	Washington, Mark Lyon
Winchester, Candy Perez	

Others in Attendance:

Steve Silver, Eversource; Lori Matthieu, CT DPH; Betsy Wingfield, Corinne Fitting and Melissa Czarnowski, CT DEEP; Joel W. Jones, Falls Village; Ellen Graham, Senator Richard Blumenthal's office; Bridget Boucaud, Steve O'Neil, and Richard Gomez, VN Engineers, Inc.; Felicia Jones, Falls Village Wiley Wood, Norfolk; Katherine Dube, COST; 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 Lyons at 10:07 a.m.

Ellen Graham of Senator Richard Blumenthal's office said the US Congress is back in session with immediate priorities of hurricane relief and health insurance issues.

Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members.

Bruce Adams thanked Jocelyn Ayer for assisting with the signage project initiated by the Rural Planning Collaborative. In turn, Jocelyn thanked the town of Canaan for acting as lead town for the grant. Bruce also explained that they had recently completed a large bridge and road project and they are preparing for the Gilmore Girls festival. Mark Lyon commented that the attendees were incredibly accommodating and pleasant when the event was held in Washington last year. Bruce also explained that public hearings continued on "The Kent" a proposed 90-bed drug and alcohol facility. It could have a major impact on Kent and the surrounding towns.

Pat Mechare noted that the final Certificate of Occupancy was granted for new emergency services facility and Canaan celebrated with a grand opening. While the future of grant opportunities is uncertain, she expressed gratitude that Canaan has received over \$2 million in grants over the past 15 years. Candy Perez announced that NWCCC recently opened the new Joiner Center and the developer for Lambert Kay has three tentative tenants with a potential opening date in Summer 2018. Also, Old Winsted Furniture has been refurbished and already has some occupants. She also noted that Bob Geiger, Town Manager, has been working on blight issues. This upcoming weekend, Phil Donahue will moderate a conversation on constitutional law.

Wade Cole explained that Hartland's bridge project may not finish before winter since they are waiting on load approval from the state. In New Hartford, Dan Jerram said the town will be conducting road work in the upcoming weeks. New developments include a Dunkin Donuts and a new 9,000 sq. ft. facility. He also mentioned some challenges with an unresponsive contractor and water and sewer infrastructure costs. The town is working with CT DEEP to resolve the administrative issues. Ted Shafer relayed that Burlington's annual Tavern Day would be this weekend.

In Barkhamsted, Don Stein announced a tax sale in October for 10 properties with about \$800,000 in back taxes. Also, there will be some new commercial opportunities in town with the recent sale of Hitchcock Chair Factory and opening of Dollar General and O'Reillys. Barkhamsted will have a hearing on their new POCD on October 12 for completion in November. Tom Weik reported that Morris' town budget failed by a 2 to 1 margin. The town is considering a solar array next to the transfer station that may generate \$20,000 in revenue. He also relayed that the Fire Department is under investigation for forgery.

In Warren, Craig Nelson said the town has finished paving for the year and they look forward to several municipal events including the Historical Society and Land Trust Heritage Hike, the last outdoor concert for the season, and the annual Fall Festival. Mark Lyon noted progress on the streetscape project for Washington's downtown plaza. Similar to Hartland, the town is waiting on load approval from CT DOT for a bridge project. General discussion occurred on the state budget, especially the teacher pension proposal.

Overview of Draft "Connecticut State Water Plan". Lori Mathieu, Public Health Section Chief, CT Department of Public Health; Betsey Wingfield, Bureau Chief, CT DEEP

Lori Mathieu of CT DPH expressed appreciation for the opportunity to present the State Water Plan to the NHCOC. She recognized the many pressing concerns in front of towns but is grateful to relay the plan, which results from a coordinated effort between four state agencies. State law in 2015 instigated the plan along with 17 required components. The Plan under PA 14-163 had to balance science, engagement and policy with considerations of climate resiliency, infrastructure, public health, economic impacts, etc. Representatives from the agencies (Jack Betkowski of PURA, Lori Mathieu of DPH, Betsey Wingfield of DEEP, and Garrett Eucalitto of OPM) served as the Water Planning Council (WPC) to produce the draft State Water Plan. CDM and Milone & MacBroom served as consultants during the plan creation process. Designed to support long term planning decisions, it does not contain any mandates but does list responsibilities for state agencies. Lori stated that local planning and zoning efforts, especially in the NHCOC region, greatly impact the quantity and quality of water for consumers beyond the region.

She explained the five most important messages from the State Water Plan. Essentially, the plan seeks to encourage consistent decision-making, maintain the highest quality drinking water, balance in-stream and out of stream needs, promote a water conservation ethic, and maintain scientific data. During workshops and public meetings over the year, the WPC learned that the state of Connecticut has ample water supply but not always where needed. As such, they need to increase efficiency especially as climate change stresses the system. Efficiency choices must balance human health, environmental health, and the economic cost and benefits. Lori Mathieu noted that the scenic and natural resources of NHCOC are a result of past planning and that future water planning is important to protect small businesses. The WPC would like to hear comments and feedback on the State Water Plan.

Betsey Wingfield, Bureau Chief of DEEP Water Protection and Land Reuse, introduced herself, noting that her department works on water quality planning, stream permits, remediation/waste water, brownfields, etc. She explained that the State Water Plan focuses on the regional basin levels. The water basin summaries have important information such as the size of the watershed, average conditions, and average July conditions. The summaries also note quantities required for biotic health and legally permitted diversions. She used the Quinnipiac Water Basin as an example of an over allocated basin. The Plan acknowledges the need for more discussion on water conservation requirements, regionalization/interconnections, registered water diversions, aging infrastructure, economic impacts, funding for implementation, future Class B water for non-potable uses, statewide drought planning, wastewater and water reuse, water use accounting, in-stream flow, technology utilization, and private well testing and inventory.

Betsey noted other water planning efforts including a statewide drought plan and DPH's new website on private wells. She noted that UConn is using wastewater for non-potable uses. The comment period is open until November 20, 2017. The plan and supporting information is available on ct.gov/water. The State Water Plan is due to the legislature on January 1, 2018.

Dan Jerram asked about the decision to allow releases or diversions during times of drought. Betsey Wingfield said that there will be some changes with the new stream-flow regulations. Lori Mathieu commented that the state needs a much more conservative and significant conservation approach. While there may be significant draws from potable water sources for irrigation in other region, NHCOC members said that was not a major usage in this region.

Discussion about public and private water usage followed. Candy Perez asked if the plan showed who has water rights. Betsey Wingfield noted that water supply plans must list the rights but there is a difference between right to serve and right to diversion. Dan Jerram noted New Hartford's recent zoning changes to increase setback from the lake to reduce run-off. He also asked about the diversion for UConn. Lori Mathieu said a pipe from Tolland offers sufficient water to meet UConn's needs for 20 years. The project did have an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Gordon Ridgway explained that the rapid loss of population in Litchfield County is a pressing issue. Changes to traditional infrastructure design may encourage targeted development. He mentioned alternative community septic systems as an option. He asked if the state will allow towns to install alternative systems. Betsey Wingfield responded that alternative systems are regulated and not prohibited by DEEP. Unfortunately, the permit process may be too onerous for individual homes. But it may be appropriate for larger developments. While hearing this information is important, Betsey cautioned that infrastructure designs have also been a tool to moderate undesired growth.

Regional Transportation Planning.

- a. Introducing ConnDOT's "Regional Transportation Safety Plan" project for the Northwest Hills. Bridget Boucaud, Steve O'Neill, and Project Manager Bob Gomez, PE, VN Engineers, Inc.

Bob Gomez introduced his VN Engineer colleagues and thanked the NHCOC for the invitation. The goal of the Regional Transportation Safety Plan is to reduce fatalities and accidents. While the state strategic plan focuses on state roads, this will include local roads. The consultants have assessed data from the Connecticut Crash Data Repository and are currently conducting stakeholder meetings with local officials in the region. Issues so far include up/down grades, "S" curves, and high speeds on local and state roads. The information and recommendations in the resulting Plan can be helpful in securing grant funds to address the priority needs. The DOT is sponsoring this project. The Plan will include mitigation measures and cost estimates.

A NHCOC Advisory Committee is being established to oversee the Plan preparation. VN Engineers plans to finish the project in about a year.

- b. Request for Approval of "Regional Trail Map and Connectivity Assessment" products (previously distributed). Craig Nelson, Chair, Regional Trail Committee.

Craig Nelson stated the work completed by HVA has been well received and he made a motion for the NHCOC to accept the final Regional Trail Map and Connectivity Assessment products. The motion was seconded by Don Stein and unanimously passed.

Update on DEMHS Region 5 Spending Plan for 2017 Homeland Security Grant and Request for Approval of Memorandum of Understanding for Partner COG Participation.

Mark Lyon, seconded by Craig Nelson, made a motion for the NHCOC to approve the MOU with other COGs for DEMHS Region 5 coordination. The motion was unanimously approved. Mark then briefly summarized the Spending Plan recently endorsed by the Region 5 REPT. Don Stein asked if the spending plan included the \$30,000 for license plate readers. Mark Lyon replied that the Region 5 law enforcement ESF receives a set-aside each year and this is how they propose to spend their allocation. The expenditure for license plate readers is included in the REPT-approved Spending Plan.

Authorization to Apply for Funding for Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (former NWCCOG towns) and Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Activities Reminder. Joanna Wozniak-Brown.

Joanna Wozniak-Brown provided towns with copies of their planning natural hazard mitigation actions as of their most recent plans. The towns within NHCOC are currently served by three different sets of plans. Grant applications, as noted in preceding emails, for mitigation activities were due September 15. The NHCOC staff considered applying for funds to complete an update of the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan for the former NWCCOG towns. The funding stream requires a 25% match and does not allow the applicants to include overhead costs in the application. Despite extensive consideration of in-kind matches, and in light of the current uncertain fiscal climate, it does not seem prudent to pursue funding at this time. Mark Lyon asked if it is possible to create a single plan for the region. She explained that there is still the possibility of applying for funds to update the plan next year as the plans do not expire until 2019. She will also review a potential extension to create a plan that would include all communities of the NHCOC within one plan as well as additional funding opportunities to accommodate the 25% match.

Community and Economic Development Update. Jocelyn Ayer

- a. Timeframe, Scope of Work, and Budget for Update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Jocelyn Ayer referred to the handout describing the timeline, scope of work and budget for the region's CEDS plan update. This update will focus on creating jobs and workforce development. As the region is now an officially designated economic development district, we now qualify for "Partnership Planning" funds. Through this funding source, NHCOC has received a \$20,000 grant to complete the plan over the next nine months. The NWCT Economic Development Corporation board will serve as the CEDS strategy committee. A number of NHCOC board members serve on this committee. The NHCOC board will be asked for input on the draft plan. Targeted cluster industries in our region include healthcare, tourism, and advanced manufacturing. The CEDS update process will start on Monday at the NWCT EDC meeting.
- b. Coordinating State and Regional Land Use Plan Mapping. Jocelyn Ayer reminded members about the upcoming public hearing on the draft regional POCD. She asked for feedback on the map products since the base elements came from the state's POCD which is also currently out for public review and feedback. She specifically asked members to review the village or priority funding areas to make sure they are accurate. Since towns have some discretion over village priority funding areas and/or they may qualify for additional priority funding areas, it is important that the information is correct. There is an online map viewing tool which greatly assists in reviewing the map. If COG members have questions about this, they should call Jocelyn.
- c. Addressing Airbnb in the Northwest Hills. Jocelyn Ayer introduced the white paper available in the agenda pack that discussed the opportunities and challenges of short-term rentals. Local planning and zoning commissions have been interested in how to best deal with short-term rentals. Based on her research, she found that zoning regulations are not a good tool for managing the impacts of short-term rentals and suggested that a town ordinance may be a better alternative for towns that wish to address this issue. Noting interest from local commissions for NHCOC to develop an example ordinance, she asked if the NHCOC members would support the devotion of some staff time to drafting the language. Don Stein expressed support. Mark Lyon asked if passing a town ordinance would impact local B&B regulations. Jocelyn Ayer responded that, no, the ordinance could state that if a property is regulated under the town's B&B regulations, the ordinance would not apply. Towns could decide, for example, to only regulate short term rentals that are not owner occupied.

Committee Updates

- a. Legislative Committee. Michael Criss was unable to attend the meeting; however, Katherine Dube from COST distributed their recent press release. She noted COST's support of the 25 mandate relief items in the Republican's budget. Gordon Ridgway questioned the utility of the state legislature voting on a proposed budget consisting of 800+ pages with less than one day to review the document.

- b. Regional Self Insurance Collaborative. Brent Colley and Don Stein are waiting to hear from EdAdvance on the next steps.
- c. Recycling Advisory Committee. Sue Dyer announced the next household hazardous waste collection day is on Saturday October 14.

Administrative Items

- a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting of July 13, 2017. On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved.
- b. Approval of Financial Statement for 6/2017 and 7/2017. On a motion duly made and seconded, the financial statements were unanimously approved.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

DRAFT