

MINUTES OF THE NHCOC MEETING OF APRIL 12, 2018

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Don Stein	Burlington, Ted Shafer
Canaan, Henry Todd	Colebrook, Tom McKeon
Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway	Goshen, Bob Valentine
Hartland, Wade Cole	Kent, Bruce Adams
Litchfield, Leo Paul	Tom Weik, Morris
Norfolk, Matthew Riiska	North Canaan, Charles Perotti
Roxbury, Barbara Henry	Salisbury, Curtis Rand
Torrington, Elinor Carbone	Warren, Craig Nelson
Washington, Mark Lyon	Winchester, Bob Geiger

Others in Attendance:

Amy Wynn, NW CT Arts Council; Sara Radasci, CT DOT; Johan Standson, USDA Rural Development; Felicia Jones, NWConneCT; Jim Dresser, Salisbury Affordable Housing Commission, Mike Muszynski CCM; Ellen Graham, Sen. Richard Blumenthal's office; Guy Rovezzi, NW CT Community Foundation; Priscilla Pavel, Selectmen of Cornwall; Leslie Hutchise; Lesley Higgins-Biddle, Local Initiative Support Corporation(LISC); Pat Sullivan; Tom Kirk, MIRA; Bert Hughes, EdAdvance; Gertrude O'Sullivan, Foundation for Community Health; Lyla Polison, John Krukar and Cynthia Barrett, Goshen RAT Committee; Steve Silver, Eversource; Brian Ohler and Jay Case, CT State Legislature; Jocelyn Ayer, 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 10:04 a.m.

Amy Wynn, Northwest CT Arts Council, announced that the April calendar is now available and she hopes that towns will participate in "Make Music Day" on June 21, which is an international event. Over 300 communities in the United States are participating with Connecticut participating for the first time. A website (<http://www.makemusicday.org/nwct/>) connects performers to locations.

Johan Standson, USDA Rural Development, introduced himself as filling Noreen Laurentis' position. He announced the availability of three types of grants available to communities: Community Facilities (road, schools, bridges, town halls for populations <20,000), Water & Wastewater (populations <10,000), and Business & Industry (populations <50,000). There are also guaranteed loans available to all towns in Litchfield County except Torrington. The loan terms were extended from 20 years to 40 years. Bruce Adams of Kent said they used USDA grants for sewer and sidewalk projects and he found the process and USDA staff helpful.

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

Most towns report that they were working through the budget approval process.

Bob Valentine said Goshen just purchased 53 acres at the end of North St, adjacent to existing preserved property, using a municipal Land Preservation Fund based on PA 490 penalties and conveyance fees.

Henry Todd said Canaan is working on a tax incentive plan for purchasers of blighted buildings. He thanked his state representatives for finding statutes to support that effort. The town is also working on a new website.

Matt Riiska announced a likely 5% increase in the Norfolk budget due to revaluation, loss of a municipal vehicle, and bridge work. He also said the new affordable housing complex is already at half capacity.

Tom McKeon stated there has been no recent movement on the wind power facility litigation.

Don Stein invited NHCOC members to attend Barkhamsted's April 29 Earth Day celebration at People's Forest. It usually has over 500 attendees for this family event.

Charlie Perotti said the town will celebrate the grand opening of the museum and brewery at the upcoming Rail Road Days.

Curtis Rand, due to a meeting conflict, asked to move his agenda item up. He requested the acceptance of the proposal from Care Environmental for the Household Hazardous Waste collection days in 2018 and 2019. He explained Care Environmental proposed a price of \$38.50 per household and the most recent vendor, Clean Harbors proposed \$86 per household. On a motion by Tom McKeon and seconded by Henry Todd, the proposal was unanimously accepted. Roxbury abstained.

Elinor Carbone explained that the Board of Education has decided to close one of the elementary schools and will conduct re-structuring. The city is investigating a trash program through Waste Zero to reduce cost and possibly create revenue. The Woodbridge Lake sewer project is progressing. Bob Valentine thanked the Torrington WPCA for navigating the very difficult decision-making and looks forward to working on the inter-municipal agreement.

Gordon Ridgway announced that the Cornwall Planning & Zoning Commission is revising the municipal agriculture regulations.

Bob Geiger said Winchester recently completed the sale of one of the town's mills. As in North Canaan, Winchester will also have a brewery joining the town's businesses.

Ted Shafer noted he recently joined the Sustainable CT Executive Board. There is an initial May 1st deadline for communities to earn points.

Leo Paul said Litchfield will have a town meeting about the use of the old courthouse.

Barbara Henry explained this is Roxbury's most challenging budget season in 20 years since the grand list is down, they won't be receiving state funds, and the school population has changed. She asked towns if they have used a state statute that allows a municipality to hire a local contractor and use the money they would otherwise pay to contribute to back taxes. Don Stein replied that they only have an ordinance that an applicant cannot be approved for a building permit if they owe taxes.

Bruce Adams echoed that this is also the most difficult budget season he has experienced. In lighter news, he recently met the Mayor of San Antonio during the NCAA basketball championship.

Wade Cole explained that the Peck Rd bridge project should be completed in July. They are looking for bids for the school.

Mark Lyon updated members on bridge progress with one done, one half-done, and two more coming.

Tom Weik reported a favorable budget season due to a significant increase in the Grand List because of

the re-valuation. Their contribution to Region 6 looks favorable and they are saving money on healthcare by switching programs.

Reps. Brian Ohler and Jay Case both serve on the Appropriations Committee and stated that they have been vocal in expressing concerns about potential state budget impacts on municipalities. For example, they support the restoration of town-aid road funding. Leo Paul asked how town leaders can help and Rep. Ohler responded that NHCOG members set the standard for the rest of state with the collective letters, testimony, and information provided.

Update on the Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA) and Project Redevelopment Status.

Tom Kirk, President of MIRA, explained the evolution of MIRA and the current changes to their operations. MIRA, formerly the CT Resource & Recovery Authority, formed about 40 years ago in response to national changes to environmental laws to resolve issues of municipal dumps and landfills.

The regional system consists of Harford WTE Plant and four transfer stations (three operating). The trash to energy plant will reach the end of its project life in June 2022. The loss of that revenue and the reduction of trash through successful recycling could result in a significant increase to the tipping fee.

To address the shortfall, the state legislature directed MIRA & DEEP to redevelop the Hartford Project. After an RFP process, DEEP has chosen a development partner, a partnership between SACYR (a waste company) and Rooney (a construction firm) and is in the preliminary review stages. Their proposal had 49% of waste diversion from burning, a 30-year term using existing infrastructure, \$230 million in investment, and a multi-faceted facility processing 1/3 of the state's waste. They will use mechanical recycling and recovery, anaerobic digestion, aerobic fermentation, and trash to energy strategies with an estimated tipping fee of \$65 - \$78/ton. They also noted a cost of up to \$23/ton for transporting recyclables.

He noted some concerns that will need to be addressed before proceeding with the contract such as a feasibility study and addressing municipal agreements that expire in 2027. The proposed transfer of operations in July 2018 is unlikely.

MIRA will soon be approaching towns for commitments to participate so as to provide financial certainty.

He also expressed gratitude to towns for participating. He said the MIRA board is comprised of town employees and/or decision-makers. Don Stein said the board is working to moderate costs.

NHCOG members asked some contractual and procedural questions. Bob Valentine suggested that Tom Kirk return to discuss updates with the MIRA participating towns. Rick Lynn will share the PowerPoint slides used in President Kirk's presentation today.

Summary of "Community Crossroads" Report and Update on the Services of the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation.

Guy Rovezzi, President of the Foundation, distributed hard copies of the Northwest CT Community Foundation Report. The Foundation is celebrating its 50th anniversary next year and crossing the \$110 million threshold.

The Foundation's recently completed report addresses population, socioeconomic factors, and population projections for the next several years. They hope the report will help direct grant-making decisions and also provide helpful benchmarks for their investments.

Notably, the school age population (ages 5-24) and ages 40-64 are predicted to decrease while the number of residents of 65+ will be going up. A low fertility rate and out-migration for job opportunities are some contributing factors to population decline.

Projected student enrollment shows a decrease by 12%. Racial composition is expected to be predominantly white at 90%, with some increases in black, Hispanic, and Asian populations.

Mr. Rovezzi noted that the most common denominator among pressing issues is poverty. The best route out of poverty is economic opportunity. The most in-demand jobs will not provide wages for a basic needs budget (between \$40,000 and \$50,000) consisting of housing, food, child care, transportation, etc. Many residents pay over 30% of their income on housing needs.

While Litchfield County has good education marks, it is 6 out of 8 among CT counties for primary care physician availability. It also has the lowest availability of mental health services.

He said the Foundation Board needs to assess where it can impact overall wellbeing with a focus on the need to create more jobs and more high-paying jobs, more affordable housing, and the need to align academic skills around 21st century jobs.

Gordon Ridgway thanked the Foundation for putting this information together and reporting on the substantial changes coming in the next 5 years.

Barbara Henry asked why Roxbury isn't included in the Foundation service area. Guy Rovezzi explained that Roxbury had been part of the Waterbury Community Foundation, which is now part of the CT Foundation. He mentioned that Burlington had also inquired about this so he will look into what it would take to include both towns.

Mark Lyon, due to an additional commitment, interrupted the agenda to appoint a nominating committee. He appointed Ted Shafer (Chairman), Tom McKeon, and Elinor Carbone to the nominating committee. He directed Vice Chairman Bruce Adams to chair the remainder of the meeting.

Update on the NWCT Regional Housing Council (RHC) and How Your Town Can Partner with Your Local Housing Organization. Jocelyn Ayer provided introductory comments. The Northwest CT Regional Housing Council has 10 actively participating towns. It meets 4 times per year on the second Tuesdays of February, May, September, and November. It is an opportunity for the region's local housing organizations to share project updates, information, and resources. The RHC also keeps an updated inventory of affordable housing in the region. The meetings are open to the public.

A valuable resource for the RHC is the CT Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC). Lesley Higgins-Biddle from LISC stated that she assists local housing groups on a variety of issues. She asked if any towns are looking to create a local housing group to please reach out to her. She noted that it's very possible to create affordable housing situations that fit the town's character. She went on to describe how towns can provide town owned land to their local housing group to build housing, how towns can support the zoning changes that might be needed for a specific affordable housing project through a "friendly 8-30g" process, and how towns tax affordable housing. Lesley noted she'd be happy to provide more information on any of these topics, and towns can contact her directly. Don Stein and Bob Valentine said that they have utilized the services available from LISC in the past to support affordable housing, and both stated that their services have been invaluable. COG members asked Leslie to share the taxation information she had mentioned in her presentation.

Request for Endorsement of NWCT Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (previously distributed). Jocelyn Ayer.

Jocelyn Ayer asked for endorsement of the draft CEDS plan. On a motion by Don Stein, seconded by Craig Nelson, the plan was unanimously endorsed.

Summary and Request for Approval of NHCOC Title VI Documents (previously distributed). Joanna Wozniak-Brown.

In consultation with the CTDOT, Joanna Wozniak-Brown prepared the Title VI documents as required in order to receive federal FHWA and FTA funds through the state of Connecticut. The documents include a Public Participation Plan, a Limited English Proficiency Plan, and other documents designed to prevent and/or address incidences of discrimination based on race, color or national origin. On a motion by Bob Valentine, seconded by Barbara Henry, the documents were approved.

NHCOC Action on Applications Submitted for Funding under ConnDOT's 5310 Program. Rick Lynn reviewed the Section 5310 program and the applications received this year. Bruce Adams asked the difference between traditional and non-traditional applications. Rick explained that traditional funds are for capital purchases like buses while non-traditional are for operational expenses. On a motion by Henry Todd, seconded by Bob Valentine, the NHCOC approved the proposed letter in the agenda packet regarding the 5310 applications.

Follow-up on Municipal Interest in the Cooperative Purchase of "Your Speed Is..." signs.

Bruce Adams reported that he met with Raz Alexe, Public Works Director of Litchfield, who provided cost estimates from several vendors. It is approximately \$3,000 for a permanent sign with radar feedback and solar power and then \$12,500 for a portable sign. There are several options such as permanent with hardwire, solar power on mobile sign, or very portable with battery power. Don Stein expressed interest in acquiring one permanent and one mobile sign. Raz Alexe will be developing a bid request for the signs and towns should contact Bruce, Raz, or Rick Lynn if interested.

Administrative Items

- a. Approval of Minutes for Special Meeting of February 1, 2018 and Regular Meeting of February 8, 2018. On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved.
- b. Approval of Financial Statement for January and February 2018. On a motion duly made and seconded, the financial statements were unanimously approved.
- c. Appointment of Nominating Committee for NHCOC Officers and Executive Committee for FY 2018-2019. This item was accomplished earlier in the meeting.
- d. Acceptance of Proposal for HHW Contractor for 2018 and 2019. This agenda item was addressed earlier in the meeting.
- e. Endorsement of Hartford Transportation Management Area Agreement. Rick Lynn explained that four towns in the region have a small amount of land included the Hartford Transportation Management Area. As a result, these towns are eligible for limited transportation funding under this program. The federal authorities require COGs to sign an MOA to allow the towns to access the funding. Applicable towns are Barkhamsted, New Hartford, Litchfield, and Burlington. On a motion made by Leo Paul, seconded by Barbara Henry, the Agreement was unanimously endorsed.

Committee Updates

- a. Legislative Committee. This item was tabled since the state legislators provided an update earlier in the meeting.

b. DEMHS Region 5. Craig Nelson informed other members that the battery backup for municipal phone and cable communications are often only configured for four hours. He suggested towns should review that capacity and ask utilities to extend the battery backup if necessary.

c. Road Supervisor Association and Request for Authorization to Issue Cooperative NHCOC bid for Small Paving and Milling Projects. Wade Cole reviewed this RFP request as suggested by the Regional Road Supervisor Association. On a motion by Bob Valentine, seconded by Matt Riiska, the NHCOC granted authorization to issue a cooperative bid.

Craig Nelson shared with the NHCOC that he refused to sign the contract with the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board as it asked the town to accept liability for mishandling of funds. He plans to discuss this concern at the COG's May meeting where a representative from the Workforce Development Board is scheduled to speak..

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:11 p.m.