

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF October 11, 2018

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Burlington, Ted Shafer	Canaan, Henry Todd
Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway	Goshen, Bob Valentine
Hartland, Wade Cole	Harwinton, Mike Criss
Kent, Bruce Adams	Litchfield, Leo Paul
Morris, Tom Weik	New Hartford, Dan Jerram
Norfolk, Matt Riiska	North Canaan, Charles Perotti
Roxbury, Barbara Henry	Salisbury, Curtis Rand
Warren, Craig Nelson	Washington, Mark Lyon
Winchester, Laurie Bissette	

Others in Attendance:

Commissioner James Redeker, CT DOT; Rich Carmelich and Dr. Jeffrey Kitching, EdAdvance; JoAnn Ryan, NWC Chamber of Commerce; Carol Deane, Northwest CT Transit District; Kathryn Dube, COST; Sara Radasci, CT DOT; Steve Silver, Eversource; Clifford Cooper, Litchfield; Gertrude O'Sullivan, Foundation for Community Health; Priscilla Pavel, Cornwall; Jocelyn Ayer and Joanna Wozniak-Brown, NHCOG staff; Media Representatives

Call to Order and Opportunity for Public Comment. Bruce Adams, Chairman.

The meeting, held at the NHCOG office, was called to order by Chairman Bruce Adams at 10:08 a.m.

Bruce Adams welcomed members and invited public comment.

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

Craig Nelson reflected on a successful Warren Fall Festival.

Mark Lyon celebrated the completion of two bridge projects. Washington's fall festival will be this Saturday. The sculpture walk is being installed.

Bob Valentine said Goshen has been grading their dirt roads constantly this year due to the wet weather. They had a successful Americana music festival at the fairgrounds. The organizers hope to return next year.

Barbara Henry announced a successful 17th Annual Tractor Parade. She hopes to pursue a FEMA grant to repair the Botsford Road culvert. She was surprised that it hadn't qualified for a DOT grant. She also celebrated Roxbury's receipt of Sustainable CT Bronze certification.

Henry Todd said they chose new town legal counsel. They are working on a bear feeding ordinance. They are happy with the new municipal website and the abandoned market is now under renovation as a result of a new tax incentive ordinance. The fire department has a new water truck for their fire department.

Matt Riiska met with DOT on Tuesday about the retaining wall along Route 44 near Canaan and North Canaan. The repair project will take about two years. They are also working on their POCD update. The Norfolk Foundation offered grant funding for a charrette on the town center.

Charlie Perotti announced a new ZEO that the town has hired. The fall festival will take place on October 27.

Curtis Rand echoed the increased maintenance required for the town's dirt roads. The town has also hired an independent legal counsel to respond to sexual harassment allegations. They are in the process of re-doing the façade of the town hall. He asked if other members have bought their own LED street lights. No other members responded that they had done that. He also said he may need to leave early and gave his proxy to Bruce Adams should it be needed.

Dan Jerram said they are also working on their 10 miles of dirt roads. The Route 44 project in town center is complete. They have been selling equipment on "govdeals.com" with success. He said the MS4 program has been burdensome so far and they've been working with CDM Smith.

Tom Weik announced that the firehouse renovation project went out to bid and the fall festival will take place on the coming weekend.

Gordon Ridgway announced completion of the covered bridge renovations and a 5k run hosted by the Little Guild of St. Francis.

Wade Cole mentioned completion of the Peck Road bridge, and the start of a second bridge project.

Ted Shafer noted the popularity of mountain biking among millennials and the engaged Northwest Mountain Biking Association. He said that Brodie Park in New Hartford will be hosting cyclo-cross events which may be of interest to other towns. The Planning & Zoning commission is struggling with a new townhouse application in the business district.

Leo Paul mentioned the planning of a public hearing and referendum on the Bantam Annex and the potential new town hall location. Dan Jerram asked about Litchfield's new adaptive reuse of barns zoning regulation.

Michael Criss announced the annual Tips for Teens event in partnership with Ted Shafer. They are reviewing bids for a bridge renovation and looking to sell the Wilcox property. They are redesigning the town website through Virtual Town Hall and posting live financial statistics on the website.

Bruce Adams said Kent has the Gilmore Girls Fan Festival and Kent Pumpkin Run this month. The town was named as the best "leaf-peeping" venue in New England magazine. The town's only gas station will close its pumps for 5 weeks. He complimented Jocelyn Ayer and Felicia Jones on their presentations in town on the new CEDs plan and the Northwest ConneCT project.

Update on the State Budget as it Relates to Transportation Projects and Programs in the Northwest Hills Region.

Through a PowerPoint presentation, Commissioner James Redeker explained the challenges with the state bonding issues earlier in the year. He stated that ConnDOT does not control debt service, income, or personnel/benefit expenses, and the Department made the operating budget and capital program cuts required to address the state budget challenges. Although a major budget crisis was averted, the agency still struggles with limited staffing and limited revenue sources.

The Commissioner highlighted several success stories such as the Interstate 84 improvements in Waterbury, the Hartford rail line, and smart cards for fares.

Michael Criss asked the Commissioner about the delay in mowing along state roads. The Commissioner

responded that it was due to limited staffing and that he is concerned with responding to winter storms this coming winter.

Mark Lyon asked about updating and replacing traffic lights. The Commissioner noted a slow replacement cycle and current department research into “smart” intersections. They are starting some design work on smart intersections to start preparing for autonomous vehicles.

Members noted particular bridge projects that should be remedied soon. The Commissioner welcomed additional communication on those particular projects and that he hoped that the state could acquire the funds from the federal agencies to supplement local funding and reduce the multiple layers of administrative burdens.

Recent Activities at EdAdvance and the Chamber of Commerce and Regional Coordination Opportunities for the Upcoming Legislative Session. Dr. Jeffrey Kitching, Executive Director, EdAdvance and JoAnn Ryan, President, NWC Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. Kitching presented on recent work activities by EdAdvance. As the second largest employer in Litchfield County, he discussed the educational and operational services that are available through EdAdvance. He hopes that as the regional RESC that they can help develop regional-specific efficiencies. He highlighted the cooperative technology bid and transportation database for students. Partnerships will help avoid cookie-cutter legislatively required regional efficiencies.

JoAnn Ryan spoke highly of the collaborative efforts of EdAdvance and stated that when the largest manufacturer in Torrington expressed a need for skilled workers EdAdvance developed a special skills training session for workers at that company. She noted the need for improved transportation for workers in the regional area. She also noted the close cooperation between the Chamber and the NHCOG, and thanked Jocelyn Ayer for her work on the CEDS plan.

JoAnn Ryan then noted recent outreach to young professionals and a stronger peer network than in the past with technical schools, manufacturers, and other schools. NW Community College just won an NSF grant for a “Cradle and Classroom to College and Career” program. She highlighted a grant from the Workforce investment Board for dislocated workers, low-income, and at-risk youth to help them with gas, childcare, and job searching.

Request for Endorsement of Recreational Trail Grants.

On a motion duly made and seconded, the following applications were unanimously endorsed for funding under DEEP’s Recreational Grant Program: 1) New Hartford Downtown Multi-Use Trail, and 2) Litchfield Community Greenway.

Request for Authorization to Purchase New Catch Basin Cleaner for the Public Works Equipment Cooperative. Bob Carberry, Road Foreman, Town of Sharon.

Bob Carberry explained that the new cleaner, with a separate motor to run the vacuum, can be used in swales and catch basins. It is more versatile than the previous cleaner. It will probably be available in the spring. The former Sharon catch basin cleaner was sold on govdeals.com for \$11,500.

On a motion by Henry Todd, seconded by Michael Criss, the purchase was authorized.

Request for Motion to Endorse Proposed Grant Application to Implement a “Pop-up Community Hub”

Project to Further Implementation of the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development.

Jocelyn Ayer explained that the NHCOCG was invited to apply for funding from the Berkshire Taconic Foundation for a “Pop-Up Community Hub” in two town centers.

Similar to the community hub and garden in Washington, such a project would be tailored to fit each community. She hopes that a successful pilot project can inspire the ongoing support of a similar community space after the initial funding.

On a motion by Leo Paul, seconded by Michael Criss, the motion was endorsed.

Regarding community outreach, Barbara Henry and Leo Paul expressed interest in signs previously purchased by Cornwall, Kent, Goshen, etc. Bob Valentine commented that the hardest part of the sign project was putting them in the state right of way.

Administrative Items

- a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting of September 13, 2018.
- b. Approval of Financial Statement for August 2018.
- c. Request for Budget Amendment. Leo Paul explained the proposed budget amendment resulting from the finalized Regional Service Grant from OPM.

On a motion duly made and seconded, all members voted to approve the administrative items as presented.

Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment

Jocelyn Ayer announced a forum next Wednesday on alternative uses of farms and agri-tourism with speakers from the CT Farm Bureau, Angevine Farms, Freund’s Farm, and South Farms. The discoverlitchfieldhills.com website is now live and the towns should encourage local businesses to participate in the website. A 6 minute video on the use of the website is available for review.

Henry Todd said he has enjoyed working with CivicLift and is very appreciative of the ease of use of the website. Leo Paul asked Jocelyn Ayer if she was visiting the Litchfield business association. Mark Lyon asked if individual businesses can list events. Barbara Henry and Ted Shafer said they have received invoices from CivicLift.

Michael Criss said the COG’s Annual Legislative Breakfast is being planned for early December in cooperation with the Chamber and EdAdvance. The COG’s Legislative Committee will be meeting soon, and he invited members to contribute thoughts and ideas. The legislative session starts on January 9.

Katherine Dube said COST will be having a legislative event on October 23. There will be an update on labor employment laws in November, and the annual meeting is on January 16.

Bruce Adams asked how many people are attending the CCM conference. He said it was too far for him to attend.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.