

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF November 8, 2018

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Don Stein	Canaan, Henry Todd
Colebrook, Tom McKeon	Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway
Goshen, Bob Valentine	Hartland, Wade Cole
Harwinton, Mike Criss	Kent, Bruce Adams
Morris, Tom Weik	New Hartford, Dan Jerram
Norfolk, Matt Riiska	North Canaan, Charles Perotti
Warren, Craig Nelson	Washington, Mark Lyon
Winchester, Bob Geiger	

Others in Attendance:

Betsy Gara, Council of Small Towns; Thomas D. Kirk, MIRA; Michael Muszynski, CCM; Steve Silver and Hedy Ayers, Eversource; Kristyn Gorton, CTRides; Priscilla Pavel, Cornwall; Rick Lynn 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 10:05 a.m. Bruce Adam proposed an agenda item, Item “d” under “Administrative Items” to approve an amendment to a STIP application for the town of Warren. On a motion by Craig Nelson, seconded by Bob Valentine, all voted in favor of this addition to the agenda.

Bruce Adams welcomed members and invited public comment.

Kristyn Gordon introduced herself as Western CT’s Program manager for CTRides. Hedy Ayers introduced herself as a new Eversource Community Relations member, working with Washington and Roxbury and assisting Steve Silver.

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

Tom Weik discussed several recent bids and the successful receipt of funds back from the previous fire company after communications with the Attorney General.

Gordon Ridgway commented on a recent tour of Norfolk affordable housing and how beneficial it is to see projects in neighboring towns.

Charlie Perotti announced the annual parade of lights and the town’s search for a new Resident Trooper.

Don Stein announced the Annual Christmas event in Riverton and commented on the town’s progress in creating a housing trust.

Bob Geiger noted the opening of the renovated Holabird Bridge, a major improvement project for the town long in the works.

Wade Cole provided an update on recent bridge projects as well.

Mark Lyon mentioned that his town email was recently hacked, and the town will be starting two new bridge projects.

Bruce Adams noted a successful Gilmore Girls festival and the use of an unoccupied unit on Main Street by a local political party during the election season.

Matt Riiska said the town chose WMC to do a bridge project and the town will be renovating the firehouse. He also joined the board of NWCTD to try and improve transit services to his residents.

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

Don Stein, MIRA Chairman, commented on the challenges the MIRA Board is facing at the facilities and during the transition of operators. He then introduced Tom Kirk, President of MIRA.

Tom Kirk presented a slide show on the current situation at MIRA. A recent mechanical failure has forced them to export trash to upstate New York and Pennsylvania because Connecticut facilities have reached capacity. They hope to return to full service by the end of the month while still meeting the needs of contract towns. The state has very limited capacity for waste management. If the Hartford facility fails, that is a loss of one third of the state's capacity.

The current tipping fee does not match the actual cost of the disposal. The facility has about two years remaining in their operating agreement with Republic Waste. Towns should prepare for price shock for future disposal of recyclables. He explained that there should be a state-wide policy review of handling waste streams. Statutory conflicts and uncertain costs for municipalities are two major stumbling blocks to significant renovations to the site. He presented three potential outcomes and alternatives with moving forward with Sacyr Rooney as the best option. He will keep towns updated and may need to discuss some of these challenges with the legislature.

Don Stein added that member towns should expect to see some costs associated with the repair of the machinery and resulting waste diversions. He also explained that the legislature has the option to privatize the facility. Tom Kirk explained that privatizing the facility would likely result in a transition of the plant into a transfer station putting the costs per ton subject to transportation fees. Currently, the state leads the country in sustainable waste management. The board of MIRA is composed of mostly municipal officials that understand the impacts to the towns. Approximately 75% of NHCOG towns participate in MIRA.

Michael Criss asked about tipping fee projections. Tom Kirk anticipated a range of \$80 - \$95 for the next five years.

Focus Areas for the Upcoming Legislative Session.

Betsy Gara, from the Council of Small Towns, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to talk with the NHCOG members about the upcoming session. . COST has a "town meeting event" scheduled for January 16 to approve their legislative priorities. A number of the items in the NHCOG draft legislative priorities are common across small towns and supported by COST.

The Senate Democrats new majority will likely lead to proposed policy changes for minimum wage and paid family leave. Governor-elect Lamont has proposed reduction in property tax but the only way for the executive branch to accomplish that is through property tax caps.

COST will be tracking a wide variety of issues of concern to small towns such as changes to the Resident Trooper program, MS4 permits, 'dead and decaying' trees, opioid abuse, and municipal gain on utility poles. They are preparing a survey for member towns about legislative priorities and will be developing active opportunities for towns to meet with state legislators.

Mike Muszynski explained CCM is also working on their legislative agenda. In addition to issues mentioned by Betsy Gara, they are working on programs like PTSD and mental health support for first responders. They will be introducing themselves to the 42 new legislative members. Governor-elect Lamont announced that he will be identifying his chief of staff and transition team by the end of the week. CCM hopes that there will be a municipal representative in the transition team. New agency commissioners may result in special elections for legislative seats. The Drug Abuse Prevention work group will meet next week on November 14 in the new CCM office in New Haven.

Don Stein asked what commissioners may be leaving. Betsy Gara explained that the commissioners typically resign, allowing the new governor to choose whether or not to reappoint the commissioner. Several commissioners have already resigned. Bob Valentine commented that it's extremely important for town representatives to become engaged in the transition and legislative process.

Review of Draft List of NHCOC Legislative Priorities for the 2019 Session and Proposed Legislative Breakfast Meeting on December 17th.

Michael Criss, Legislative Committee Chair, said that a meeting of the COG Legislative Committee was held and resulted in the preparation of the draft priorities included in the agenda packet. He encouraged members of the Legislative Committee to be active and committed to representing the region's towns. If anyone on the Committee is no longer interested in serving, please let him know.

Discussion about the testimony process followed with members generally agreeing that their physical presence makes a difference and the assistance provided by COST and CCM improves their delivery. Don Stein explained that CCM and COST help tremendously with drafting testimony. Betsy Gara noted that the testimony follows the bill so those comments go with its movement through each committee.

The COG's legislative priorities are proposed to be finalized at the December NHCOC meeting, so any suggested changes should be provided to Michael or Rick by the end of November.

The Annual Legislative Breakfast meeting will take place on December 17 at EdAdvance in Litchfield

Summary of Draft Recommendations for Enhancing Rural Resiliency in the Northwest Hills.

Joanna Wozniak-Brown reviewed the components of the "Rural Resiliency Vision & Toolkit" project, funded by UConn CIRCA. She distributed copies of the draft tasks that towns could do to increase their resiliency on the five major topic areas of agriculture, cultural resources, infrastructure, natural resources, and public health. She also distributed a draft "Rural Resiliency Vision". She asked members to review the items and share with their commissions and local officials and send comments or suggestions by November 21.

Administrative Items

On a motion by Craig Nelson, seconded by Henry Todd, the minutes for the NHCOC meeting of October 11, 2018 and the financial statement for September 2018 were unanimously approved.

On a motion by Don Stein, seconded by Craig Nelson, the proposed NHCOC meeting schedule for 2019 was unanimously approved.

Craig Nelson explained that a ConnDOT STIP amendment was needed for a slope stabilization project along Rte 45 and Lake Waramaug in the Town of Warren. The Town supports the project and requests COG endorsement of the STIP amendment. On a motion by Michael Criss, seconded by Henry Todd, COG members unanimously voted to approve the STIP amendment.

Committee Reports and Updates

- a. **Public Works Equipment Cooperative.** Wade Cole stated that the Road Supervisor Association is in the process of reviewing a draft pavement management guide prepared by Lenard Engineering. At the demonstration of the new Sharon catch-basin cleaner, attendees requested adding a hose reel assembly and hopper drain making the final price \$261,678. Rick Lynn noted considerable interest in cooperative purchases by the road supervisors, especially for public works supplies. A sub committee was formed to discuss crack sealing, small scale milling/paving work, and other opportunities.
- b. **Regional Animal Facility.** Rick Lynn said Torrington's recent referendum authorized bonding up to \$1 million for the new facility. Goshen, Litchfield, and Torrington are participating in the project. Participation is still open to other towns if they'd like to join and the design specifications will include options for expansion. The design for the project is now being finalized and was made possible by a Regional Performance Incentive Grant.

Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment

Henry Todd asked about municipally-owned EV charging stations. Mark Lyon said that the EV charging station in Washington gets used more than they thought it would. Bruce Adams said one was installed at Kent town hall but they've been looking at retrofitting it for charge even though it hasn't been a huge cost for the town. Norfolk is considering installing systems at the town hall for Bed and Breakfast visitors and local residents. Matt Riiska explained that the machine can charge the vehicle for parking to disincentivize leaving the car connected beyond the length of time needed for charging. Michael Criss stated that Harwinton uses Chargepoint so users pay for electricity and the parking. It hasn't affected the town's cost.

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