

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF December 13, 2018

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Don Stein	Canaan, Dave Barger
Colebrook, Tom McKeon	Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway
Hartland, Wade Cole	Harwinton, Mike Criss
Kent, Bruce Adams	Morris, Tom Weik
Norfolk, Matt Riiska	North Canaan, Charles Perotti
Torrington, Elinor Carbone	Warren, Craig Nelson
Washington, Mark Lyon	Winchester, Bob Geiger

Others in Attendance:

Brian Mattiello and Pam Tyno, Charlotte Hungerford; Derek Howell, Power Options; Tom Zetterstrom, Community Forester; Gertrude O'Sullivan, Community Foundation; Kathryn Dube, COST; Steve Silver, Eversource; Priscilla Pavel, Cornwall; Cynthia Rabinowitz, Northwest Conservation District; State Rep. David Wilson; Chris Johnstone, Colebrook; Rick Lynn, 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 10:07 a.m.

Bruce Adams welcomed members and invited public comment. No public comment was offered.

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

Several members commented on town holiday events, contract negotiations, and the status of local bridge projects.

Charlie Perotti announced the hiring of a new Animal Control Officer and Resident State Trooper. The much-anticipated new brewery in town is now open.

Matt Riiska explained that an engineering inspection identified six bridges considered in poor condition and one needing immediate attention.

Tom Weik announced the purchase of a used yard loader with a plow and installation of new tanks to treat salt. They have their former loader available for sale. Eight town residents took the firefighter test recently.

Craig Nelson announced the receipt of an Agricultural Viability Grant by the town, Weantinog Land Trust, and the Litchfield Hills Greenprint. The town installed new fuel tanks at the town garage and received Heart Safe community recognition, thanks to Marsha Shultz. He also reported on the NHCOG's receipt of a regional planning award from the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association for the interactive Regional Trails Map.

Gordon Ridgway commented that the recent regional meeting in Torrington with Governor-elect Lamont went well. He also mentioned that the town recently started their POCD update with technical assistance from the COG through Jocelyn Ayer.

Bruce Adams stated that Kent hopes to start a major streetscape project with a town meeting in January.

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital Update. Brian Mattiello, Regional Vice President for Strategy and Community Development.

Brian Mattiello offered his thanks to the COG members for their service and Happy Holidays. In 2015, CHH decided to join a larger healthcare system in order to enhance service in the region. Before the transition, they had struggled with clinical quality, attracting quality providers, and collecting predictive analytics. They pre-selected 5 organizations to consider and ultimately joined Hartford Healthcare on January 1, 2018. The first year has been very successful and they look forward to the coming years. He reviewed the expansion plans including: a new medical walk-in model, the GoHealth center in Torrington, inclusion of the Connecticut GI Center to the group, co-locating existing services and installing a CT scanner in Winsted, and expanding primary care and specialty providers. They hope to open the new Winsted facility in April 2020. Additional services are expected in New Hartford, North Canaan and Litchfield.

Every three years, CHH has to perform a Community Health Assessment and then prepare a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The most recent plan will be going to the Hartford Healthcare Board in early 2019. He expanded on the CHIP components. To address the issues identified in the Health Assessment, there are two new programs to be implemented: FitTogether, fiduciary to Northwest CT YMCA, to improve healthy behaviors and lifestyles and the Building Healthier Communities fund. The latter includes a \$2.5 million donation to Community Foundation of Northwest CT to improve economic and community development in Greater Torrington and Winchester areas towards the social determinants of health such as income, housing, and transportation.

Rep. David Wilson asked about tobacco and alcohol and whether the survey looked at the recreational use of marijuana. Brian said it is not looking at public policy questions at this time. The group is focused on investments at the healthcare services development scale.

Gordon Ridgway asked about efforts to improve response to those in opioid crisis. Brian said that the hospital is expanding their response at the emergency stages and it was a part of the CHIP.

Energy Market Trends and Potential Impacts in the Northwest Hills.

Mayor Carbone introduced Derek Howell from PowerOptions. The City of Torrington, through CCM, entered a consortium for a five-year contract. She thought it might be beneficial for NHCOC members to hear about the opportunities offered by an organization such as PowerOptions. Mr. Howell stated that PowerOptions is a non-profit organization and only works with other non-profits. They offer a consortium with various protections that are not offered in individual supplier contracts. Their current supplier is Constellation. He referred to information provided in the hand-outs. In decreasing order, energy in New England is provided from natural gas, nuclear, and renewable energy. Despite its prominence in the region, there are less delivery options for natural gas. Due to the lack of storage last summer, prices will likely be higher this winter. He suggests when looking for new contracts, it's better to wait until spring when prices are generally reduced.

Don Stein said they currently work with CCM but the contract expires next year. He asked what the difference is. Mr. Howell said the difference is through the contract details that could impact participants such as volume changes for installing solar, or a supplier going out of business. PowerOptions has a continuing relationship with Constellation.

Introduction to Roadside Invasive Plant Mapping and Management (with focus on Japanese Knotweed) and

Overview of Project Underway in North Canaan. Charlie Perotti introduced Tom Zetterstrom and summarized the project underway in identifying and treating Japanese Knotweed along the Housatonic River. Tom brought in a sample of Japanese knotweed. He explained it is most visible after the first frost in

fall when the knotweed turns golden-brown and during mid-August to mid-September as bright white flowers appear. Working with the Housatonic Valley Association, he illustrated a map of the knotweed sites along the Housatonic River where treatment is being pursued. In the knotweed colonies, there is limited biodiversity that would otherwise occupy the riparian buffer. The project includes restoration and groundcover work after treatment cycles. He commented that in England, you cannot sell your property if it has knotweed on it. Roadside and river corridors are particularly susceptible. Besides spraying, injection of glyphosate or mechanical removal are other treatment options. Although mowing may reduce blooming, small fragments on mowers or farm equipment can be transferred to additional locations. Knotweed can send rhizomes 65 feet away from the host plant. He mentioned several helpful references for treatment.

Overview of Draft “Rural Resiliency Vision and Toolkit”. Joanna Wozniak-Brown introduced the draft Rural Resiliency Vision and Toolkit, a project funded by UConn Connecticut Institute for Resiliency and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA). Rural communities are particularly at risk of climate change due to a dependency on natural resources for economic, recreation, and cultural reasons. Draft copies of the toolkit were distributed to NHCOC members. She explained that the project is a little different than typical plans. It is a reference document that municipalities can use as a reference document as they conduct normal planning processes like revising Plans of Conservation and Development, revising zoning regulations, or participating in programs like Sustainable CT. She showed NHCOC members components of the website version that mirrors the printable toolkit and the interactive web-map.

She asked NHCOC members to distribute the toolkit to their local commissions, departments, and stakeholders and send in comments and suggestions by January 11.

Request for Endorsement of NHCOC’s Legislative Priorities for the 2019 Session and Reminder of Legislative Breakfast Meeting on December 17th. Michael Criss asked for endorsement of the legislative priorities previously distributed. On a motion by Mark Lyon, seconded by Don Stein, the priorities were unanimously endorsed.

Administrative Items

Bruce Adams requested the addition of an additional item to be called “adjustment of hours”. On a motion by Michael Criss, seconded by Craig Nelson, the amendment was unanimously accepted.

- a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting of November 8, 2018.
- b. Approval of Financial Statement for October 2018.
- c. Acceptance of Audit for FY 2017-2018.

On a motion by Craig Nelson, seconded by Don Stein, all three items (a, b, and c above) were unanimously approved.

- d. Adjustment of Hours.

Bruce explained that the Executive Committee requests an increase in Jocelyn’s hours from 32 to 35 hours per week. Rick Lynn stated that the funds are available in the COG’s budget to accommodate this increase in hours. On a motion by Don Stein, seconded by Craig Nelson, the increase in hours was unanimously approved.

Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment

Jocelyn Ayer announced the Economic Development Summit in January. Matt Dunne from the Center of Rural Innovation will be speaking.

Bruce Adams asked if any towns provided new residents with brochures to welcome them to town. Colebrook, North Canaan, and Goshen all offered to share what they provide to new residents.

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