

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF JANUARY 10, 2019

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

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

Others in Attendance:

Connie Manes and Katharine Lange, CT Land Conservation Council; Steve Silver, Eversource; Tim Waldron, CT General Assembly; Mike Muszynski, CCM; Rufus deRham, NWCT Arts Council; Bill Kelsey, Town of Sharon; Bernie Harrington, LWV of Litchfield County; Donna Shae and Tess Schwartz, UConn T2 Center; Joel Sekorski, Sullivan Senior Center; April Chaplin, NW Regional Mobility Manager; Rick Lynn and Jocelyn Ayer, 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 Adams welcomed members and introduced Rufus deRham, the new Executive Director of the NW Arts Council. He then invited public comment.

Bill Kelsey, a Sharon resident, expressed concern about the declining population of young persons in the regional area and encouraged area towns to take steps to address this worrisome trend.

Connie Manes and Katharine Lange distributed and reviewed a handout on proposed legislation enabling a local option for land conservation and stewardship funding. The proposed bill would provide a sustainable source of funding for local conservation and stewardship efforts that would not impact the municipal mill rate or require additional bonding. General discussion followed.

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

COG members updated one another on recent activities and issues in town including:

- Development of municipal budgets.
- Torrington bond funding for the Regional Animal Care Facility
- Local road improvement funding
- Municipal initiatives to create more affordable housing
- FEMA pre-disaster mitigation projects
- Local impact of the federal shutdown
- Town Center improvement projects
- Growing concern about vaping

Update on Regional Cable and Mobile Assessment Being Conducted for Northwest ConneCT. Following introductory comments by Jessica Fowler, NWConneCT Chairman, Rosemary O'Brien from Rose Consulting

summarized the findings from her study of the broadband and cell services that our towns' residents and businesses have access to. This work was part of the State funded Rural Broadband Study and all town-level data from the study is available to the towns. Her study concluded that 20% of homes in the region (15,000 homes) do not have access to broadband internet. An additional 8,000 homes have satellite service which is expensive and unreliable. She stated that the need for internet service speed will increase geometrically in the future, and it is important for the region to plan for this now because many of the homes that do have broadband speeds as currently defined by the FCC will need access to higher speed broadband in the future such as the speeds provided by a fiber-optic connection. Having broadband service is critical to nurturing a vital local and regional economy. She commented that the FCC overstates the availability of broadband service in the area and encouraged local officials to request that the FCC correct and improve their data so that the region could have access to funding to correct the problem. She mentioned that the internet is "the on-ramp" for encouraging youth to stay or move to the region and also encouraged municipalities to invest in GIS parcel mapping if they have not done so already. Investing in the enhancement of cellular service in the region is also important as about 24% of the homes (18,200 homes and 475 road miles) in the region lack any kind of cellular service. Mark Lyon inquired about First NET and Rosemary stated that this is an enhancement of service for emergency responders and that towns may be able to benefit by piggybacking on some of the facility enhancements that will accompany FirstNet. Additional discussion followed.

Update on UConn Technology Transfer Center Including New Traffic Signal Circuit Rider Program. Donna Shea, Program Director, distributed a handout and announced that all towns in the Northwest Hills Region have been selected to receive a free work zone safety package and work zone safety/flagger training for four municipal employees in each town. The goal of the program is to help towns make their work zones safer for roadway workers, motorists and pedestrians. Four training sessions will be offered in the region in the coming months. Tess Schwartz, Traffic Signal Circuit Rider, reviewed the traffic signal and speed limit posting technical assistance available to towns and also summarized the T2 Center's Loan Program, STEP program, and the Green Snow Pro Training Program.

Overview of Meals on Wheels Program, Cafe Program, and Other Regional Services Provided by the Sullivan Senior Center. Joel Sekorski, Executive Director of the Sullivan Senior Center, presented an overview of the various services provided by the Senior Center, and the fiscal challenges in maintaining service with declining revenues. He stated that the meals on wheels program, Chore Service, and transportation services are three critical programs that are needed to allow people to stay in their homes and age in place. He discussed two bills that will be promoted this year. One is to expand the state reimbursement rate for the elderly nutrition program and one is to maintain the smaller service centers with a focus on higher quality food.

Distribution of "Transportation Resource Guide for Northwestern CT" and Overview of Mobility Manager Program. April Chaplin, Northwest Regional Mobility Manager for the Kennedy Center, distributed copies of the recently released "Transportation Resource Guide for Northwestern CT". She stated that her office is located in Waterbury and she is available to assist towns within the Northwest Hills Region in addressing transit needs. The mobility manager position is to focus on the needs of the elderly, disabled and veterans, but is available to consult on other transit needs in the region. April stated that she has visited with the senior centers and social service agents in all 21 towns in the region and is available to continue to meet upon request.

Appointment of NHCOC Representatives to Northwest CT Economic Development Corporation and Proposed Work Program. Jocelyn Ayer briefly reviewed the proposed NWCT Economic Development Corporation membership list and "CEDS Implementation" proposal previously distributed to COG members. On a motion duly made and seconded, the NHCOC voted unanimously to endorse the proposed

COG representatives on the NWCT EDC, and the proposed CEDS Implementation work program including the allocation of \$10,000 from the COG's consultant contingency line item to support implementation of the work program. Don Stein stated that he has been elected to serve as Chairman of the NWCT EDC. Leo Paul thanked Jocelyn Ayer for all her work coordinating the NWCT EDC meetings and developing the proposed work program.

Resolution on Farm Viability Grant. Chairman Bruce Adams requested a motion to add the proposed resolution, previously distributed to COG members, to the agenda. The motion was moved, seconded and unanimously approved. Jocelyn Ayer reported that the CT Department of Agriculture has awarded \$20,000 from the Farm Viability Grant Program to the proposed "Northwest CT Farm-to-School Project" submitted by the COG. This project supports the NWCT Regional Food Hub. On a motion duly made and seconded, COG members unanimously endorsed the proposed resolution.

Request for Letters of Support for Funding under the CT DEEP's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program. On a motion duly made and seconded, COG members unanimously voted to endorse sending a letter of support for protection of the Pope Property in Salisbury and the D'Alton Property in Sharon.

Administrative Items

On a motion duly made and seconded, COG members unanimously approved the minutes for the meeting of November 8, 2018 with a correction on page one to clarify that a new, not a used, loader was purchased by the Town of Morris.

On a motion duly made a seconded, the Financial Statement for October 2018 was unanimously approved.

Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment

Don Stein encouraged COG members to participate in the teleconference call later today on MIRA.

Jocelyn Ayer reminded COG members of the upcoming the Economic Development Summit in January.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m.