

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF May 9, 2019

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	Harwinton, Mike Criss
Kent, Bruce Adams	Litchfield, Leo Paul
Morris, Tom Weik	Norfolk, Matt Riiska
North Canaan, Charles Perotti	Roxbury, Barbara Henry
Sharon, Brent Colley	Torrington, Elinor Carbone
Warren, Craig Nelson	Washington, Mark Lyon
Winchester, Bob Geiger	

Others in Attendance:

April Chaplin, Kennedy Center; Kathy Hanley and Allison Fulton, HVCASA; Evan Dobos, CivicLift; Deb Aleksinas, LARC; Rufus de Rahm, NWCT Arts Council; Sara Radasci, CT DOT; Kathryn Dube, COST; John Field, DEMHS; Mike Muszynski, CCM; Ellen Graham, Sen. Richard Blumenthal's office; Priscilla Pavel, town of Cornwall; Steve Silver and Hedy Ayers, Eversource; Gertrude O'Sullivan, Foundation for Community Health; 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 was called to order by Chairman Bruce Adams at 10:04 a.m.

Bruce Adams invited members of the public to introduce themselves.

Rufus de Rahm from NW CT Arts Council offered Make Music Day posters.

Town by Town Updates.

Many towns delivered updates on their budget process. Towns are starting warm weather projects like chip sealing, paving, and bridge projects. North Canaan is looking forward to opening their hub. Cornwall will have an opening ceremony on Saturday, May 25 for a new parking lot at "the Bend" in West Cornwall. Barkhamsted has started a community garden and has a refurbished Little Free Library. Several towns had their annual community clean-ups. Torrington bond sale and rating went well; they also have a new community picnic and garden space and three Little Free libraries.

Gordon Ridgway expressed concern about the poor condition of roads in the region and its detriment to tourism. CT DOT should be made aware of the conditions. Barbara Henry suggested extending an invitation to the new CT DOT Commissioner. The town of Burlington will be cleaning the state road sides on the United Way Day of Caring.

Torrington is working with the state to get 50 acres back that had been previously donated.

Litchfield's 300<sup>th</sup> birthday is May 19, 2019.

Mark Lyon asked about C-Pace and other towns' participation. Mayor Carbone invited the Washington staff to call for more details.

The Role of the Western CT Coalition in Addressing Behavioral Health Issues in the Northwest Hills Region. Allison Fulton, Executive Director and Cathy Hanley, Prevention Coordinator.

Allison Fulton discussed the evolution of the Western CT Coalition, which assists with education, awareness, and advocacy to address mental health and substance abuse issues. They serve 43 towns. They're currently preparing an Epidemiological Profile for the state. They work with the 26 local Prevention Councils, which receive Block Grant funding per capita, to maximize impact and reduce costs. While they don't provide actual treatment, they help link people to providers. They've seen an increase in mental health and suicidal thoughts among young people in the region. They're preparing a toolkit for local action on suicide prevention and post event response. A program called QPR is a training tool for lay-people to help identify mental health cues. Cornwall emergency services is participating in Mental Health First-Aid training.

Allison Fulton explained that the state has been providing funding to combat opioid abuse and they are pursuing more effective federal action.

Eversource Priority Call Process. Steve Silver and Hedy Ayers, Eversource.

Steve Silver introduced himself and Hedy Ayers. Hedy Ayers presented on the Priority Call Process. There are separate phone numbers for general service issues and for emergency situations. Emergency response is divided into three priorities with Priority Level 1 being "Life Threatening – Imminent Danger" while non-emergency calls are for minor damage to electrical equipment that does not pose a threat. There will be training sessions for emergency personnel in September. Steve Silver said that the chief executive officers can inspect the scene and call the issue in. NHCOC members noted that, due to poor cell service, the call often originates from the regional dispatch center or from town staff.

Ways that Towns Can Participate in Regional Promotion of Events, Destinations, and Jobs. Jocelyn Ayer and Evan Dobos, CivicLift Founder.

Jocelyn Ayer noted that both the 5-year Economic Development Strategy and Plan of Conservation and Development include a goal of communicating the assets and events in the region to attract visitors and young families. One tool for doing this is the Discover Litchfield Hills website which was launched last July and has been picking up speed. Jocelyn noted that, like the other CEDS initiatives, DiscoverLitchfieldHills.com is a public-private partnership. Our municipalities which are the public side of this equation will need to support this if it is to be successful by linking their local events site(s) to this regional site. Six towns are already participating including Litchfield, Kent, Canaan, North Canaan, Torrington, and Cornwall. These local sites are linked from the DiscoverLitchfieldHills.com home page. She introduced Evan Dobos of CivicLift. He explained that 11 towns' municipal sites are hosted on the CivicPlus platform, previously known as "Virtual Town Hall". If each town on the CivicPlus platform contributed \$500, CivicLift could link the DiscoverLitchfield Hills calendar with the town events calendar so that relevant events happening in our towns could be automatically fed to the regional site. Interested towns could also consider moving from their CivicPlus platform to CivicLift for their municipal sites. Both Canaan and North Canaan have switched to a CivicLift platform for their municipal sites. Jocelyn will follow-up with the towns with more details.

Evan Dobos noted a steady increase of awareness and participation of the site. He explained that the automatic sharing of events between website calendars increases participation and reduces day to day obligations for the municipalities and local businesses. CivicLift is continuing to improve the website based on user interaction.

Jocelyn Ayer also explained that the on-going sustainability of the website is dependent on our region's businesses benefiting from DiscoverLitchfieldHills.com paying \$250/yr for a premium listing. She shared a handout about premium listings and asked members to consider spreading the word to businesses in their town.

Next Steps in Regional Planning for Resiliency and Sustainability and Request for Authorization to Oversee a Sustainable CT Intern this Summer. Joanna Wozniak-Brown.

Joanna Wozniak-Brown explained the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan process. The former Northwestern CT Council towns will likely soon receive funding to update the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans for those communities. The former LHCEO towns are scheduled for an update starting next year. Discussion about the grant-making process ensued.

She requested a motion for the NHCOG to enter into an Agreement with Sustainable CT Inc. to have NHCOC staff supervise a summer intern in 2019 that will be paid for by Sustainable CT Inc. On a motion by Ted Shafer, seconded by Don Stein, the motion carried by unanimous vote.

Regional Transportation Planning. Rick Lynn

- a. Overview and Request for Endorsement of Previously Distributed Regional Transportation Planning Work Program for FY 2020 and 2021. On a motion by Henry Todd, seconded by Craig Nelson, the proposed Planning Work Program was unanimously endorsed.
- b. Status of Transit Center Connectivity Plan.  
Torrington is pursuing the redevelopment of the Stone Container property for a new Transit Center and Transit-Oriented Development. A "Transit Center Connectivity Study, coordinated by the COG, is underway with the help of a consultant.
- c. Authorization to Release Request for Proposal for Torrington East Main Street Corridor Management Plan.  
The City of Torrington was awarded a grant for an East Main Street Corridor Management Study to improve safety and lessen congestion. It is proposed by CTDOT that NHCOC staff administer the grant, which will about 18-months to prepare. On a motion by Bob Valentine, seconded by Charlie Perotti, the authorization was unanimously approved.
- d. Request for Endorsement of Applications Submitted for Funding under ConnDOT's 5310 program for Enhanced Elderly and Disabled Transportation. The draft letter of endorsement included in the agenda packet was unanimously endorsed

Administrative Items

- a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting of April 11, 2019.  
On a motion by Craig Nelson, seconded by Leo Paul, the amended minutes were unanimously approved.
- b. Approval of Financial Statement for March 2019.  
On a motion by Leo Paul, seconded by Craig Nelson, the statement was unanimously approved.
- c. Approval of ConnDOT Requested "Delegation of Authority" Form. On a motion by Craig Nelson, seconded by Don Stein, the proposed statement was unanimously approved.
- d. ConnDOT Request for Endorsement of Amendment to Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Pertaining to Sign Inventory. On a motion by Leo Paul, seconded by Bob Valentine, the endorsement unanimously carried.
- e. Authorizing Resolution to Apply for FFY 2018 Emergency Management Performance Grant for Regional HazMat Team. On a motion by Barbara Henry, seconded by Mark Lyon, the resolution was unanimously authorized.

- f. Approval of Authorizing Agreement between NHCOG and Geer for State Matching Grant Program. On a motion by Don Stein, seconded by Michael Criss, the approval was unanimously granted.
- g. Nominating Committee Recommendations for NHCOG Officers and Executive Committee for FY 2019-2020. Craig Nelson, Nominating Committee Chairman. Craig Nelson moved the nomination as proposed, which was seconded by Barbara Henry. There were no nominations from the floor and the motion unanimously carried.

#### Committee & Program Updates

On a motion by Leo Paul, seconded by Craig Nelson, the agenda was modified to switch the Committee & Program update items.

- a. DEMHS Region 5. John Field. The recent CCM symposium discussed the May 15 storm responses and lessons learned. DEMHS is filling three new positions, including Region 2 coordinator, Regional Cyber Security trainer, and a Planning Specialist. There are department readjustments with the Critical Infrastructure and Intelligence Center now back under DEHMS, allowing more collaboration with local communities regarding security. There have been discussions about Eversource restoration response time and about telecommunications. There is a push at the REPT level to require PURA to enforce telecommunications obligations of communication providers. The REPT will be reviewing the after-action report of the May 15 storms and catalyze action such as improving communication (ESF-2) and a public works response (ESF-3). DEMHS Region 5 is continuing to collect local emergency operations plans. Some Hazard Mitigation grants and school security grants are coming out.

Bruce Adams invited Joanna Wozniak-Brown to speak about the Municipal Matching Grant program. She explained DOT's fund-matching program and requested that municipalities submit their paperwork to her within the next week.

- b. Legislative Committee. Michael Criss stated that the teachers' pension proposal remains a critical issue for municipalities. COST recently prepared a legislative update. The legislature is currently under debate about the proposed \$15 minimum wage. The current proposal has a phased implementation program with a minimum wage of \$11 starting in October. CCM and COST are actively discussing the teachers' pension proposal with the Governor's office. Bob Valentine queried if the region needs to be more proactive about supporting affordable housing bonding. Conversation about the debt diet ensued. Next Tuesday May 14 at 9am, at Kent Town Hall, the CT Department of Housing Commissioner will be seeing a photo tour of pending housing projects in the region and the critical need to move these projects forward.

#### Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment.

No other business was raised and the meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.