

**MINUTES OF THE FEBURARY 13, 2020 MEETING**

Members in attendance:

Don Stein, (Chairman) Barkhamsted Henry Todd, Canaan

Tom McKeon, Colebrook Gordon Ridgway, Cornwall

Bob Valentine, Goshen Wade Cole, Hartland

Denise Raap, Litchfield Tom Weik, Morris

Daniel Jerram, New Hartford Matt Riiska, Norfolk

Charlie Perotti, No. Canaan Barbara Henry, Roxbury

Elinor Carbone, Torrington Mayor Jim Brinton, Washington

Bob Geiger, Winchester Town Manager Timothy Angevine, Warren

Others in attendance:

Rick Lynn, Janell Mullen and Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOG Staff

Rufus DeRham, NWCT Arts Council

Hedy Ayer, Eversource

Kathryn Dube, CT Council of Small Towns

Amy Tobin & Bernie Harrington, Members of Goshen EDC

Mike Muszynsti, CCM

Media Representatives

Call to Order and Opportunity for Public Comment: NHCOG Chairman, Don Stein called the meeting to order at 10:04 am by asking for public comment.

Hedy Ayers of Eversource announced a rescheduling of the webinar on sustainability which will now take place on March 4th from 11:30-12:30 to present clean energy funding, Sustainable CT certification, and other sustainability initiatives. She also mentioned 2020 Tech Grants of which non-profits can take advantage.

Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members.

Chairman Stein suggested moving this item of the agenda to the end of the meeting if time permitted and then welcomed up the president of MIRA, Thomas Kirk.

Update on Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA) Including Status of Facility Redevelopment and Tip Fee Projections for Municipal Solid Waste and Recyclables. Thomas Kirk, MIRA President.

Thomas Kirk’s presentation was extracted from the January 8th presentation that was given at the Capitol—most attendees were aware of the fact that MIRA, the trash-to-energy plant in Hartford, needs major capital expenditures to continue operation and this could lead to large cost increases for member towns. MIRA’s tipping fees to towns could jump from about $90 per ton to $145.

As a quick overview, Kirk explained that one-third (1/3) of the disposal capacity in the state goes to the MIRA facility. At present, Towns need to commit to a non-binding 30 year agreement with MIRA or find an alternative for where to haul their solid waste.

Kirk mentioned that the state has a policy that only the capacity needed for our waste is created—so there is no easy alternative. The president of MIRA stated that even though Connecticut is exemplary when it comes to solid waste disposal, the state still exports 400,000 tons per year. If 1/3 of that waste can no longer be disposed at the MIRA facility, the demand for exporting waste will go up and its pricing will also go up.

The reason why we are facing this problem with this particular facility is that routine maintenance was deferred and now the reliability of the plant has drastically declined—not to mention the generator permit is set to expire and a costly emergency repair of turbines recently took place. Kirk understands that the towns’ interests include: reducing the risk to citizen tax payers, spreading costs equally amongst municipalities, and that any excess revenue should flow back to the Towns.

To address the problem of redeveloping the facility, which will cost $330M, DEEP circulated an RFP which ultimately resulted in a contract with Sacyr-Rooney. Another problem in the equation is that the contractor drastically underestimated the tipping fee when they bid on the project. If the renovation does not proceed MIRA is committed to honor contracts thru 2027.

To justify the high-costs of development, DEEP is looking for commitments from Towns to support the redevelopment of MIRA by signing off on a non-binding agreement with MIRA for 30 years by this May. Simultaneously, five (5) legislative initiatives are being reviewed to help alleviate the potential costs of the situation via state aid. They include:

1. Renewable Energy Credits (RECs)
2. Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)
3. DEEP selected PPA
4. General Obligation Bond
5. DEEP mandates redevelopment and disposal at the South Meadows site (this is a hard sell)

If the facility is not redeveloped, other problems will ensue as the cost to export solid waste will grow more expensive if it is turned over to the private sector. A new facility will be difficult to site and take several years to build.

Chairman Stein followed Thomas Kirk’s presentation with a few points as he serves as the Chairman of MIRA’s Board of Directors. He did state that the Board’s composition is made up of many elected leaders that are focused on the best interests of the municipalities. He mentioned that the cost of the tipping fee for the upcoming budget year should be resolved at the board meeting this coming Tuesday, February 18th. He estimates that it will likely costs towns about $90.00 per ton to dispose of solid waste this year.

Barbara Henry asked which towns have signed their agreements, few hands went up in the room. She mentioned that the Town of Roxbury will not yet sign as they are asking about the cost of alternatives. She also asked about the deferred long-term maintenance and why that happened. Kirk replied that when it comes to alternatives it is more or less up to geography (location).

Wade Cole mentioned that the Town of Hartland hauls their solid waste to the Bristol facility and mentioned that he doesn’t know how they would quote a municipality on a new price, but he thinks it would get expensive.

Chairman Stein brought up the point that within DEEP’s current request there is an option for MIRA to have to present another five (5) year strategic plan. He believes this to be ineffective as we already have assessed the situation and are aware of the needs of the facility.

Bob Valentine next presented his points to Kirk. He said that trust was a big issue for him as the prices quoted to the municipalities have drastically changed over time. He wants more transparency about what to expect as well as an “opt-out” provisions much like what is written in the current contract.

Daniel Jerram mentioned the need for him to gain confidence in the overall process especially since it, at first, sounded like Sacyr-Rooney would be coming to the table with capital investment when, in the end, it doesn’t seem like that at all. The cost would fall on tax-payers.

Kirk mentioned that more would come out as the Comprehensive Development Agreement is written. Members moved on to the next topic at 11:20 am.

Northwestern CT Community College Update. Dr Michael Rooke, NWCCC President. Dr Rooke attended the meeting to present the UPass Program as well as discuss the Pledge to Advance Connecticut (PACT). UPass CT is a program that provides public transportation services to students in CT for $20 a semester. NWCCC has been requesting that CTDOT partner with Northwestern CT Transit District in order to provide transit between Torrington and Winsted that would be helpful for NWCCC students. Currently, 1/3 of NWCCC students do not own vehicles and the Northwestern CT Transit District currently only operates until 5 pm with a limited route. It was added by Dr. Rooke that most students take evening classes.

NHCOG Director, Rick Lynn, added that this initiative to expand public transit services around NWCC is consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan.

Dan Jerram moved to support the UPass Program. The motion was seconded by Henry Todd.

Dr. Rooke moved on to introduce the Pledge to Advance Connecticut (PACT) concept which is essentially free community college. There are some qualifications of this program, such as: the student must have graduated from high school in CT, be a first-time college student, and attend full time while achieving satisfactory academic progress.

Timothy Angevine of Warren asked about facilities for students such as a gym to use between classes. Dr. Rooke mentioned that most students come to campus for class and then quickly return to their jobs.

Community and Economic Development Update. Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOG Staff

Jocelyn Ayer gave an overview of new and updated regional resources. She opened by reviewing data resources that are available to our townsby referring to a [handout on updated demographic, housing, and economic statistics for the region](https://northwesthillscog.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Demographic_Data_Available_2020_NHCOG.pdf). She also mentioned the upcoming and recent legal trainings for land use commissioners. She mentioned that videos of these presentations are/will be available via the [Northwest Hills Council of Government YouTube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCY2NQVNTUHUZ2gzoGNUJIMw). Jocelyn also mentioned the 5th Thursday Forums and the Economic Development Summit which will be on April 29th this year and will be held at the Five Points Campus (formerly UConn, Torrington).

Jocelyn then brought our attention to the new [Northwest CT Regional Housing Council](https://www.nwcthousing.org/) website and how it can serve as a resource for residents with questions about this topic as well as our local housing organizations. It includes frequently asked questions, photos of affordable housing in the region, stories and links. As another regional resource, Jocelyn mentioned a [money management course](https://nhswaterbury.org/programs/financial/) that will be offered online by the Neighborhood Housing Services of Waterbury. They have received a grant that enables them to offer the course to 50 individuals in our region for free.

Jocelyn then moved on to the Request for Authorization to Contract with Consultants on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Implementation as Recommended by the Northwest Connecticut Economic Development Corporation (NWCT EDC). NHCOG received an award of $60,000.00 in Partnership Planning Assistance from US EDA for CEDS implementation. The NWCT Economic Development Corporation approved the following at its January meeting:

$10,000 Marketing & Branding—NWCT Arts Council

$16,500.00 Business Partnerships/Outreach & Visitor Marketing—Tim Good, The Good Portfolio

$20,000 Rural Broadband Outreach—Ben Paletsky, Cultivate Product Group

$20,000 MWCT Regional Food Hub Capacity Building: PSHC

Henry Todd moved and Dan Jerram seconded the motion to approve. The motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Items.

Chairman Stein packaged the following motions into one.

1. Approval of Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 9, 2020.
2. Approval of Financial Statement for 12/2019.
3. Adoption of Legislative Priorities for 2020.

Bob Valentine moved and Charlie Perotti seconded all three motions. Motions A, B, and C passed

unanimously.

1. Authorization to Issue Request for Proposals for Household Hazard Waste Vendor for

2020 & 2021.

Rick Lynn mentioned that the location for collection day in Torrington would be changed to the Torrington Middle School for logistical purposes. Chairman Stein moved to approve and Valentine seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

1. Appointment of the Representatives to Litchfield County Dispatch.

Chairman Stein mentioned that Jean Speck, Charlie Perotti, Bob Geiger, and Jim Brinton would serve. Denise Raap would be the alternate. Bob Valentine moved to approve the nominees and Don Stein seconded the motion.

1. Executive Committee Recommendation for COG local dues for FY 2020-2021.

It was noted by Executive Director, Rick Lynn, that the dues were remaining flat. Barbara Henry motioned to approve and Mayor Carbone seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment. There was no other business raised and the meeting was adjourned at 11:59 am.