



MINUTES OF THE MAY 14, 2020 NHCOC ZOOM MEETING

DATE: Thursday, May 14, 2020

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

ACCESS: Zoom Meeting Platform (Meeting ID: 830 6029 5468)

This virtual meeting did not entail screen sharing of documents. It featured a gallery view of attendees who mostly had video capabilities along with audio. A recording of the meeting is available.

Members in Attendance:

Don Stein, Chairman, Barkhamsted

Henry Todd, Canaan

Bob Valentine, Goshen

Jean Speck, Kent

Tom Weik, Morris

Charlie Perotti, North Canaan

Barbara Henry, Roxbury

Brent Colley, Sharon

Timothy Angevine, Warren

Bob Geiger, Winchester Town Manager

Ted Shafer, Burlington

Gordan Ridgway, Cornwall

Magi Winslow, Hartland

Denise Raap, Litchfield

Dan Jerram, New Hartford

Matt Riiska, Norfolk

Curtis Rand, Salisbury

Elinor Carbone, Torrington

Jim Brinton, Washington

Candy Perez, Winchester Mayor

Others in Attendance:

Sue Larsen, President of ROVAC

Aimee Marques, CTDOT

Alicia Gonzalez, CTDOT

Martin Connor, ESF-14 Chair

Priscilla Pavel

Rick Lynn, NHCOC Director

Janell Mullen, NHCOC

Lila Tuxbury, Regional Elections Monitor

John Field, DEMHS Regional Coordinator

Emily Olsen, Register Citizen

Sen. Kevin Witkos

Robert Rubbo

Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOC

Darlene Krukar, NHCOC

Opportunity for Public Comment. Don Stein, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM by asking for public comment. Hedy Ayers, Eversource, spoke about a scam alert during the pandemic. Eversource participated in PURA webinars regarding Public Utilities during the CoVid-19 pandemic. The industry has adopted flexible payment plans. There is currently a moratorium on electricity shut-off for payment delinquent citizens.

Town by Town Updates and Issues. Ted Shafer, Burlington, spoke of Phase 1 re-opening and working with local businesses. Town Hall remains closed, open for appointments. Henry Todd, of Canaan, spoke about waiting on guidance to open the town pool. Gordon Ridgway has been speaking with Rob Rubbo regarding the opening of the town beach. He mentioned the need for long-term recovery planning. Bob Valentine, Goshen, spoke about starting a local long-term recovery committee and encouraged other towns to do the same. He stressed the importance of working cooperatively with NHCOC as a facilitator of regional cooperation regarding re-opening guidance. Magi Winslow, Hartland, mentioned that the local restaurant opened in town and there have been questions about the annual meeting. Jean Speck, Kent, mentioned the overcrowding at local recreational areas and inquired about best managing that. Denise Raap, Litchfield, spoke about the re-opening of restaurants and no fees for outdoor permitting. She also mentioned

postponed public hearings regarding a solar project in town as well as a long-term recovery committee. Tom Weik, Morris, mentioned the annual budget meeting on May 28th. He also mentioned the re-opening guidelines of Mayor Carbone of Torrington and how helpful they are. Dan Jerram, New Hartford, mentioned the stringent guidelines for summer camps, etc. He also mentioned the CARES Act and inquired about additional data to account for how it was spent. The in-person meeting suspension will likely be extended. Matt Riiska, Norfolk, mentioned having public works on a rotating schedule. He mentioned hope that Region 7 BOE would reduce their budget. Charlie Perotti, No. Canaan, thanked John Field, DEMHS Region 5 Coordinator for his assistance. He also mentioned a busy spring for the building official. Restaurants in town are doing curb-side pick-up and one is opting to provide outdoor seating. Curtis Rand, Salisbury, mentioned the budget passed with no increase in the mill rate. Brent Colley, Sharon, mentioned the essential business and curb-side restaurants in town doing really well. The population in Sharon has been elevated due to part-timers now being here full-time. He mentioned tremendous donations to the food bank. Mayor Carbone, Torrington, mentioned developing a database and a recovery plan for business specific needs. The City is offering local guidance for businesses to make sure unmet needs (such as PPE) are identified. Barbara Henry, Roxbury, mentioned she was also curious about the CARES Act disbursement. Tim Angevine, Warren, requested guidance on configuring a recovery team. Jim Brinton, Washington, mentioned that the recovery team is not composed of the same individuals as the emergency response team. He also mentioned using public works to monitor and enforce capacity at recreational destinations. Bob Geiger, Winchester, mentioned facing the same thing everyone else is. Don Stein, Barkhamsted, mentioned coordinating a long-term recovery team locally and developing guidelines for opening town hall. The Riverton Inn plans to open, which is good news for the community.

Guidance on Upcoming Primary and General Elections this Year. Sue Larsen, President of Registrars of Voters Associations of Connecticut and Lila Tuxbury, NHCOC Regional Elections Monitor. Sue Larsen mentioned HAVA Federal funding to upgrade systems in the State for improved cyber security. She mentioned that the Secretary of the State has been working with Town Registrars to upgrade the equipment statewide. Funds are also being used for PPE for volunteers, to attract poll workers via a public service announcement, absentee ballots, and other items that will inflate the budget for the primaries as a result of the pandemic. She mentioned that Towns should not make the assumption that what will happen in the primaries will also happen for the General Elections in November. Lila Tuxbury mentioned that she is available for help and guidance with the primary elections during this time. Barbara Henry, Roxbury, did mention the permanent drop boxes for ballots given that Roxbury's Town Hall is in a historic district. Tom Weik, Morris, asked about the drop box serving as a dual-purpose use for town government and the possibility of that.

Update on the Coronavirus Response in the Northwest Hills Region, John Field, DEMHS Region 5 Coordinator. John Field mentioned that DEMHS is trying to communicate to individual towns as frequently and fluidly as possible. He mentioned OPM announced a stimulus package available to the State of CT at 100% reimbursement. This information is constantly changing. He did encourage member-towns to sign up for FEMA emergency assistance funds. A site at the Goshen Fairgrounds is providing PPE to local area businesses. He encouraged local businesses to take advantage of these available supplies. Part of re-opening is the plan to increase testing. John Field mentioned that DEMHS tries to assist with the interpretation of the Executive Orders that are coming out from the Office of the Governor. He did mention that the guidelines are constantly changing. Information about local beaches should be released tomorrow.

There are also efforts to prioritize ESF (Emergency Support Function) 14 to capture unmet needs at the regional level. John Field emphasized the importance of having a long-term recovery committee at the local level.

He also mentioned the expiration dates of Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans and how it is a mechanism of funding. In preparation, he advised towns to make sure that they are eligible for the funds by updating their plans. All three COGS in the DEMHS Region 5 are working on the multijurisdictional plan updates at this time.

Regional Forum: Organization and Function of Local and Regional Recovery Committees, Martin Connor, ESF-14 Chair. Marty Connor mentioned that Region 5 includes 43 towns and 3 COGs, and ESF-14 was not anticipating a pandemic as widespread as CoVid19. He mentioned that from the regional standpoint, Rick Lynn and Janell Mullen are actively involved with the ESF-14 committee to help identify unmet needs in the region. Marty urged that local planners and land-use officials get involved in the effort. The Region 5 Steering Committee for Long Term Recovery is being finalized and their expertise will be used to identify and satisfy unmet needs. Rick Lynn mentioned the importance of identifying a local contact person to serve as the point person for communicating local needs.

Request for NHCOC and Municipal Letters of Support for Federal Funding to Address the Region's Failing Broadband Infrastructure. Kim Maxwell (President of Northwest ConneCT) and Ben Paletsky. Kim Maxwell talked about the importance of broadband especially given the surge of demand due to many of us working at home in the region. Kim described the request for \$110M in federal funding to wire our region with an updated fiber-to-the-home broadband network. A copy of the full details of this plan can be requested from Jocelyn. The request was for a motion to approve the letter of support which was provided as a draft in the NHCOC packet. Henry Todd moved the motion. There was a second by Charlie Perotti. The motion passed unanimously.

FTA Section 5310 FFY Funding Announcement and New Solicitations. Alicia Gonzalez and Aimee Marques, CTDOT. Alicia Gonzalez spoke about the 5310 grant program and submission requirements. CTDOT administers the 5310 funding program for projects that enhances access for transportation for seniors and those with disabilities. The application process is competitive, and grants are funded 80% with a local match of 20%. \$3.2 M is available statewide for this funding. Due to CoVid19, the deadline has been extended to June 26, 2020.

There was a motion to add two items to the agenda, the first being the Grant Application to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for supplemental funding from the CARES Act to respond to economic injury related to COVID-19. The second item to add to the agenda as an Administrative Item included a request of a letter of support for an Open Space grant application by the Town of Salisbury. Ted Shafer moved, Dan Jerram seconded. The motion passed unanimously to add both items to the agenda.

EDA Grant. Jocelyn Ayer. Jocelyn mention that because our region is an officially designated Economic Development District with a current Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), we were invited to apply for up to \$400,000 in non-competitive funding to respond to the economic injury related to the pandemic. Our current CEDS Strategies that could benefit from additional investment include, broadband, supporting farmers through the Food Hub, the Discover Litchfield Hills website platform, and the visitor guide initiative. Jocelyn mentioned that they would also like to utilize this funding to provide direct technical assistance to our region's small businesses as they try to recover from this. Jocelyn said that the Northwest Connecticut Economic Development Corporation Board would approve the proposed budget before it is submitted to EDA the first week of June. Jocelyn asked that any member-town that has ideas about how to utilize this funding in order to assist in economic recovery efforts to please contact her. Jocelyn also mentioned that \$60,000 will likely be available this fiscal year under the current Partnership Planning EDA grant to fund CEDS initiatives as well as the supplemental funding. A motion to endorse the application was moved by Bob Valentine. Henry Todd seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Items

- a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting of March 12, 2020 (see Attachment E).
- b. Approval of Financial Statement for February 2019 (see Attachment F). The first two administrative items were bundled together. They were moved by Bob Geiger. Seconded by Matt Riiska. Passed unanimously.
- c) Recommendation of Nominating Committee for NHCOC Officers and Executive Committee for FY 2020-2021. Bob Geiger, on behalf of the other members of the nominating committee which included Curtis Rand

and Gordon Ridgway, recommended the following slate: Don Stein as the Chair, Bob Valentine as Vice-chair, Charlie Perotti as Secretary and Michael Criss as Treasures. Members Henry Todd and Matt Riiska were nominated to serve as at-large members of the Executive Committee. No other nominations were made and the nominations were closed with elections planned at the June COG meeting.

d) Adoption of NHCOC Budget for FY 2020-2021. The Executive Committee met back in February to develop a recommended budget. Don Stein mentioned a reasonably healthy reserve for the COG budget if needed. The motion to adopt the proposed budget was moved by Don Jerram and seconded by Curtis Rand. The motion passed unanimously.

e) Authorization to Purchase New Sweeper for the Public Works Equipment Cooperative. Rick Lynn stated the the capital replacement plan for the Public Works Equipment Cooperative calls for the replacement of a sweeper this year. Since the Town of Hartland is no longer in a position to maintain the sweeper, the Town of Litchfield is willing to take over hosting the proposed new sweeper. Rick Lynn asked for a motion to approve acquisition of the new sweeper. Matt Riiska moved and Henry Todd seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

f) Request for NHCOC Letter of Support for the Salisbury Association. Curtis Rand mentioned that this was a request for a Letter of Support for the Salisbury Association to acquire 114 acres of open space.

g) Request for NHCOC Letter of Support for Norfolk OSWA Application. Matt Riiska mentioned the Norfolk Land Trust's opportunity to acquire 235 acres in So. Norfolk. Henry Todd moved both motions at once. Charlie Perotti seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

A representative from Jahana Hayes Office mentioned the importance of responding to the Census. There were some towns under-reporting at this time.

Dan Jerram asked about getting a cost estimate for a NHCOC-wide update to the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans. He supports getting all twenty-one plan updates completed at the same time. The current timeline for the nine (9) town update is ten (10) months.

There was a motion to adjourn by Bob Valentine. Seconded by Matt Riiska. The meeting adjourned at 12:13.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell M Mullen, NHCOC, Regional Planner