

## MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF July 9, 2020

### Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Don Stein	Burlington, Ted Shafer
Canaan, Henry Todd	Colebrook, Tom McKeon
Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway	Hartland, Magi Winslow
Kent, Jean Speck	Litchfield, Denise Raap
Morris, Tom Weik	New Hartford, Dan Jerram
Norfolk, Matt Riiska	North Canaan, Charles Perotti
Roxbury, Barbara Henry	Salisbury, Curtis Rand
Sharon, Brent Colley	Torrington, Elinor Carbone
Washington, Jim Brinton	Warren, Tim Angevine
Winchester, Bob Geiger	

### Others in Attendance:

Steve Silver and Hedy Ayers, Eversource; Priscilla Pavel, Cornwall; April Chaplin, Kennedy Center; John Capobianco and Brian Mattiello, Charlotte Hungerford Hospital; Eric Oubre, American Red Cross, John Field, DEMHS, Marty Connor, City of Torrington, Kim Maxwell, NWConneCT, Janet Carlson, OneEleven Group, Kevin Shippy, US Census Bureau, Rick Lynn, Jocelyn Ayer, Janell Mullen, and Darlene Krukar, NHCOG staff; Media Representatives

Call to Order and Opportunity for Public Comment. The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Don Stein at 10:06 am. John Capobianco and Brian Mattiello of Charlotte Hungerford Hospital began the public comment period by thanking the Northwest Corner communities for their support and response to the pandemic. Brian mentioned that in addition to testing availability at the Hospital, mobile testing is available and will be set up in No. Canaan on July 15<sup>th</sup>. This mobile testing targets the population of Norfolk and No. Canaan. They wanted to let the member towns know in case there are growing needs for testing. The application to expand paramedic services has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Winsted Health Center building project is continuing. They hope to occupy the building by November of 2020. They are also building an infusion center at their main campus.

Hedy Ayers of Eversource mentioned that virtual options exist for energy efficiency services. They are also resuming in-person visits as needed with safety measures in place. Eversource is currently offering a range of incentives for energy efficiency in residential and commercial settings.

Town by Town Issues and Updates by COG Members. Topics focused on municipal response to the Coronavirus pandemic:

- Senior Centers remain closed in the NHCOG area.
- Town Halls are mostly closed to the public with appointments required for in-person meetings. Buildings have been equipped with doorbells, plexiglass sneeze guards, and extra safety measures. Tax collection seems to be going well in the region. Many towns have added drop boxes for specific forms and payments.
- Summer day camps, in towns such as Burlington, Goshen, New Hartford, have been modified to adhere to the Office of Early Childhood Services guidelines.
- Many town libraries have implemented curb-side pick-up for borrowers.
- The public is very anxious to use recreational resources in the area. Some areas have witnessed misuse such as the Great Falls in Falls Village and the Bulls Bridge Area in Kent.
- Several towns have hosted outdoor concerts and plan to do so throughout the summer. Adherence to social distancing measures have varied across towns at these events.

Overview of Sheltering Resources in the Northwest Hills and Opportunities to be Better Prepared. Eric Oubre, Sr. Director of Disaster Cycle Services of the American Red Cross, began by mentioning that we are entering a busy hurricane and tropical storm season. The only regional shelter in the Northwest Hills is in Torrington which now has limited capacity due to social distancing requirements because of CoVid. The Red Cross is looking to identify another regional shelter, in case it is needed. The Northwest Hills are not in a hurricane evacuation territory, but we have learned that it is better to be prepared. Warming and cooling stations across the state have also limited their capacity due to the social distancing guidelines. The Red Cross is putting out the message that people need to shelter in place and have basic supplies on hand (“a disaster preparedness kit”). Eric finished by mentioning that as businesses re-open they should create a business continuity plan. Guidance can be found at [readyrating.org](https://www.readyrating.org).

DEMHS Update and Status of Region 5 Long Term Recovery Committee. John Field, DEMHS 5 Coordinator, began by drawing attention to the guidelines that the Governor has been issuing. The most recent guidelines pertain to schools re-opening. Currently, DEMHS is not providing PPE to the schools for their re-openings. The enhancement of contact tracing and testing continues to be a state-wide effort. The money that was made available for unemployment will be coming to an end July 25<sup>th</sup>. DEMHS is also collecting information on food distribution programs. Marty Connor, ESF-14 Chair, followed by stating that the Long-Term Recovery Regional Steering Committee has 18 members. The steering committee will be forming sub-committees around their areas of expertise. John Field closed by mentioning how important it is that each town identifies a local recovery coordinator for long-term recovery needs.

Northwest ConneCT Update on Funding Broadband Needs. Kim Maxwell, President of Northwest ConneCT, has been developing a business plan that can be easily adapted for various towns. The changes brought by CoVid19 include working from home and educating at home. He mentioned the opportunity if we had a superior network in the Northwest Hills. Northwest ConneCT has been working with local legislators to support an infrastructure bill to support broadband in rural areas. Ben Paletsky followed by mentioning that the Deployment Guide has been released. He encouraged each town to establish a Local Broadband Taskforce with representation from each community to funnel communication.

NW Connecticut School Districts Marketing Campaign Update. Janet Carlson, OneEleven Group, began by touching upon the increase in population in the Northwest Corner of CT as an influx of New Yorkers come into the area. The current marketing campaign is underway to encourage families to send their children to the public schools and to find a local school to fit their personality. The next steps are working on social media presence and the landing site for the marketing campaign. Barbara Henry emphasized the importance of including Region 12 in this outreach. She asked why this outreach hasn’t happened sooner. Janet Carlson mentioned the timing associated with working with school boards. She also mentioned that she would be happy to discuss the results at an upcoming COG meeting.

Importance of Maximizing the Response to the U.S. Census in the Northwest Hills Region. Kevin Shippy, US Census Bureau- CT Office announced that the Census deadline has been extended until October 31, 2020. The rate of response nationally is 62%, the rate of response in CT is 64.5%, Litchfield County has a 63.5% response rate to the 2020 Census. There is a disparate rate of return within the towns in the region. Kevin Shippy mentioned that you need to respond at your secondary home by submitting “0” for your residence at your part-time location. Don Stein asked if the response rate within the towns could be sent to the chief-elected officials for their information. Barbara Henry asked when Census workers will be knocking on doors. Kevin Shippy mentioned that it would begin the second week in August.

#### Administrative Items

a) Approval of Minutes June 11, 2020.

b) Approval of Financial Statement for May 2020.

Chairman Stein bundled the first two items into one action item. Barbara Henry moved. Henry Todd seconded. All voted in favor of the motion with the exception of Dan Jerram who abstained from the vote.

c) Request for NHCOC Letter of Support for Open Space (OSWA) Applications.

Brent Colley spoke about the one request from the Town of Sharon. This land includes a ridgeline close to Indian Lake. The Sharon Land Trust is interested in using this land for hiking and preservation. Henry Todd moved, Curtis Rand seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

There was a motion made by Curtis Rand to add the discussion of Household Hazard Waste (HHW) Days to the agenda. Barbara Henry seconded the motion. The motion to add the item to the agenda passed. The cancellation of the HHW Day re-scheduled for August 22<sup>nd</sup> was moved by Henry Todd and seconded by Matt Riiska due to concerns about the coronavirus. The motion passed unanimously. The HHW Day scheduled in Torrington for October will be discussed at the next meeting.

Other Business as Raised by Members and Adjournment. Chairman Stein mentioned that no meeting is to be held in August. Barbara Henry moved to adjourn the meeting; Magi Winslow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 11:58 am.