

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING OF April 8, 2021

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Don Stein	Burlington, Ted Shafer
Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway	Goshen, Bob Valentine
Hartland, Magi Winslow	Harwinton, Michael Criss
Kent, Jean Speck	Litchfield, Denise Raap
Morris, Tom Weik	New Hartford, Dan Jerram
Norfolk, Matt Riiska	North Canaan, Charlie Perotti
Roxbury, Barbara Henry	Salisbury, Curtis Rand
Sharon, Brent Colley	Washington, Jim Brinton
Warren, Tim Angevine	

Others in Attendance:

Hedy Ayers, Eversource; Ruth Epstein; Dawn Parker, UniteCT; John Simoncelli, Greenwoods Consulting; John Field, DEMHS Region 5; Mike Muszynski, CCM; Sara Radacsi, CTDOT; Brian Dooley, NE GEO, Priscilla Pavel, Michelle Gora, Julie Scharnberg, April Chaplin, Kennedy Center; Betsy Paynter, Donna Hayes, Maria Coutant-Skinner, Ellen Graham, Rick Lynn, Jocelyn Ayer, Janell Mullen, and Darlene Krukar, NHCOG staff; Media Representatives

Call to Order and Opportunity for Public Comment. Chairman Stein called the meeting to order at 10:01 am. Mike Muszynski of CCM began the public comment period by announcing that all towns in CT are receiving funds as a part of COVID relief. He stated that Congress developed a formula to disseminate funds to municipalities and there are still lots of questions about eligible projects. CT is scheduled to receive \$2.6 billion. Muszynski mentioned that towns should not anticipate funds until about mid-May. CCM is working with the state to make sure that funds are received in a timely fashion. The funds are to be disbursed in two installments and need to be spent by 2024. They cannot be used for pension funds or to off-set any tax cuts.

Chairman Stein asked if water, broadband infrastructure, and sewer are eligible uses for these funds. Mike Muszynski affirmed yes, but there still some questions around eligible capital projects. A webinar will be hosted in the future to provide direct information once more guidance is provided.

Bob Valentine asked if local governments would need to provide oversight regarding how these funds are managed. Muszynski answered that the normal course of oversight for municipal aid spending is expected to be acceptable.

Barbara Henry asked about where she can find the eligible use of funds list on the CCM website. Jocelyn Ayer provided [the link](#) via the chat to all attendees.

Betsy Paynter touched upon the marketing campaign in the Litchfield Hills region via the [Discover Litchfield Hills](#) website. She encouraged those in attendance to patronize local small businesses.

John Simoncelli, [Greenwoods Counseling & Referrals](#), mentioned that mental health issues have been increasing in the region. He hopes that as towns figure out their recovery funds spending, they would consider the importance of mental health in our communities.

Hedy Ayers, Eversource, added that training for First Responders will be virtual again this year and that reminder emails will be sent out this week.

Presentation on UniteCT Program, Dawn Parker. Dawn Parker, Director of UniteCT of CT Department of Housing, began her presentation by mentioning that the Department of Housing is sorting through how to spend emergency funds that are headed their way. [UniteCT](#) is an Emergency Rental Assistance program that was developed to alleviate housing cost burdens throughout the course of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Parker added the program's website is very comprehensive and that this program should be marketed locally. Funds are being used across the state for rent and electric bills with a focus on those who are the deepest in debt. She outlined the rental assistance program and noted that its goal is to get people back in the habit of paying rent, working, and being financially stable.

Parker added that a focus of DOH is to ensure proper and adequate documentation. Many of the applications for programs are now web-based. The UniteCT initiative recognizes that technology can be a barrier for some people so DOH has created a webpage to indicate where assistance can be found at convenient locations. These community resources can be useful for completing the UniteCT application online. It can be completed on a PC, tablet, or Smartphone via Yardi's online portal. She added that there is a call center (1-844-UniteCT) for those who have trouble getting online access.

Parker mentioned that UniteCT has developed a mobile technology bus that can be requested by municipalities for residents to access technological resources and other programs that the Connecticut Department of Housing offers.

Bob Valentine asked if this program is only available for renters. Dawn Parker affirmed that UniteCT is, but she added that the CT Housing Finance Authority might have assistance for homeowners during this time.

Having missed the public comment period, Chairman Stein then turned back to a raised hand of Joanne Wojtusiak who asked publicly about the search for the next NHCOC Executive Director. Rick Lynn, NHCOC Executive Director, added that the search has been advertised in local newspapers, the COG's website, online resources such as American Planning Association, and the CT Planners Listserv. Applications are due in mid-April.

Overview of the Critical Facilities and Asset Inventory GIS Map for Region 5. Rick Lynn stated that a priority of the DEMHS Region 5 Regional Emergency Planning Team was to develop a GIS map that showed critical facilities and regional assets of the 43-town area to enhance emergency response. New England Geo was hired to prepare this map so that it could be placed on the Region 5 website. He then introduced Brian Dooley, the President of NE GEO, to review the map which is available for review via a password protected web portal: DEMHS5.mapxpress.net.

Brian Dooley then shared his screen to show how this information is being displayed and provided an overview of how the information can be filtered based on the need of its user. He displayed the planimetric data of the critical facilities that have been mapped across the region. The first phase of this project was the digital parcel mapping for the DEMHS 5 Region. Dooley mentioned that there are 607 critical facilities within the DEMHS 5 region and there are more than 500 pieces of equipment associated with these critical facilities ranging from light-towers, to radios, to message boards. The interactive web map displays where the equipment is located and can be clicked through to the "back-end" so that the user can access the contact information of the person responsible for the equipment. This back-end site database contains all of the data germane to the EOCs, critical facilities, and equipment in the region. Dooley added that this tool can be adapted as it gets used. It should help facilitate future resource sharing across the region.

Jean Speck asked about security concerns around providing so much information. Rick Lynn responded that suitable long-term safeguards are now being considered by the Region 5 Steering Committee and that

access to the web map is now password protected for use by the CEOs and EMDs of the region.

Selection of Vendor for Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days in 2021 and 2022. In Curtis Rand's absence, Rick Lynn mentioned that three (3) proposals were received in response to the RFP issued for a vendor to conduct Household Hazard Waste Collection Days in 2021 and 2022. The COG's Recycling Advisory Committee reviewed the proposals and is recommending the selection of Clean Harbors. Magi Winslow moved and Jean Speck seconded approval of the RAC recommendation to select Clean Harbors as the preferred vendor for Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days in 2021 and 2022.

Mike Criss asked about provisions to make sure that Clean Harbors has sufficient equipment and personnel to conduct the Collection Days efficiently. Rick Lynn responded that a provision in the contact will call for a minimum of twelve (12) carts and twelve (12) people to unload cars for these collection days.

Bob Valentine asked how towns should anticipate budgeting for the events with a potential increase of 25% in pricing from previous events. Rick Lynn said that he will provide follow-up information on this topic.

Committee Updates

- a) Legislative Committee. Michael Criss, Chairman of the NHCOC Legislative Committee provided an update on the list of bills he is currently tracking on behalf of the NHCOC. He recently provided written testimony on HB 6655 which addresses a statewide property tax cap. He doesn't feel this bill will be particularly helpful for our small towns since we do not have the commercial tax base in our small communities.
Mike added that he is paying close attention to "unfunded mandates" that are being proposed as they are not in the best interest of our towns. He touched upon SB-1024 which was favorably voted on by the Planning and Development Committee. He mentioned the accessory dwelling unit provisions within this bill, which would allow them by right across Connecticut. He added that the "mansion tax" would not be beneficial for businesses in the region.
- b) DEMHS Region 5. John Field, DEMHS Region 5 Coordinator, talked about vaccine distribution in CT. He stated that there has been no messaging from the state regarding mobile clinics that have said they will be going out to specific locations for vaccination distribution. John added he will continue to provide information as it comes in. Testing is still happening, but at reduced rates across the state. He added that there are many economic recovery programs. The Governor's Executive Orders will be extended through April 20th. At this time all of the Governor's Executive Orders are being reviewed to see which ones get extended and remain in place or modified for continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bob Valentine asked how one can schedule an appointment at the mobile units. John Field said this is through the vendor and not through VAMS. DEMHS 5 has not received all of the information around scheduling at these clinics. Many mobile units are specifically walk-up and not based on appointments.

Bob Geiger added that the Winchester mobile unit is for Winchester residents only. He added that the logistics of the mobile clinics and the communication has not been clear.

Charlie Perotti added that he has received numerous calls regarding the mobile site that is headed to North Canaan. He doesn't have complete information about what will be happening in his town regarding vaccination registration.

Denise Raap added that Walgreens set up a mobile unit that targeted older populations in Litchfield.

She said it was a successful, well-organized endeavor.

Administrative Items.

a) Approval of Minutes for March 11, 2021.

b) Approval of Financial Statement for February 2021.

These two motions were bundled together and polled electronically. Bob Valentine moved and Charlie Perotti seconded the approval of both items. The motion passed unanimously.

c) ConnDOT Request for NHCOC Endorsement of Proposed Amendment to Statewide Transportation Improvement Program: 1) Rural Collector Project for Bulls Bridge Road in Kent and 2) Traffic Signal LED Re-lamping. Jean Speck moved and Charlie Perotti seconded the NHCOC endorsement. The motion passed unanimously.

d) Appointment of Nominating Committee for NHCOC Officers and Executive Committee for FY 2021-2022. Don Stein appointed Elinor Carbone (Chair), Denise Raap, and Gordon Ridgway to serve on the nominating committee which is to report at the May meeting of the COG.

Town by Town Update.

Bob Geiger mentioned that this will be his last NHCOC meeting as Winchester town manager as Josh Kelly has been selected to take over this position with Bob's retirement. The members thanked him for his active participation in the COG and wished him well in retirement.

Jean Speck brought up the assistance that she has been received from Rob Rubbo of the Torrington Area Health District regarding vaccination coordination. She mentioned a form that is available to facilitate getting the homebound vaccinated at home.

Chairman Stein moved to adjourn the meeting. Bob Valentine seconded. The motion to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell M. Mullen
NHCOC, Regional Planner