

MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING

March 9, 2023

Members or Representatives in Attendance:

Barkhamsted, Donald Stein (remote) Burlington, Douglas Thompson

Canaan, Henry Todd Colebrook, Christopher Johnston (remote)

Cornwall, Gordon Ridgway (remote) Goshen, Todd Carusillo

Hartland, Magi Winslow (remote) Harwinton, Michael Criss (absent)

Kent, Jean Speck (remote) Litchfield, Denise Raap (remote)

Morris, Tom Weik New Hartford, Dan Jerram (absent)

Norfolk, Matt Riiska (remote) North Canaan, Charles Perotti

Roxbury, Patrick Roy (remote) Salisbury, Curtis Rand (remote)

Sharon, Brent Colley (absent) Torrington, Elinor Carbone (absent)

Warren, Greg LaCava (remote) Washington, Jim Brinton (remote)

Winchester, Josh Kelly (remote)

Others in Attendance: Leo Ghio, Rural Resource Coordinator, John Field, DEMHS Region 5 Coordinator (remote), and Grayson Wright, CTDOT (remote), Eversource Representatives, John Daniel Davis and Tim Waldron.

NHCOG Staff: Robert Phillips, Emily Hultquist, Kathryn Faraci, and Sarah Better

Call to Order - Chairman Todd called the meeting to order at 10:06 AM.

Public Comment – none

Report of the Executive Director – Robert Phillips shared information regarding NHCOG’s anticipated move to Ed Advance. Chairman Todd proposed a motion to authorize the NHCOG Executive Director to have the authority to establish a contract with Ed Advance and have the NHCOG Executive Team review and provide final approval as long as the office fit out is $50,000 or less. Selectman Weik approved the motion and was seconded by Selectman Perotti. Motion was passed unanimously. A motion was made to have NHCOG staff the opportunity to obtain 401(a) retirement plan with the option to enter into a 457 plan. The motion was approved by Selectman Perotti and seconded by Selectman Weik. Motion passed unanimously. Mr. Phillips reminded the six outstanding towns to submit their ADA compliance survey. He also mentioned that NHCOG can anticipate and increase in State Planning and Research Funds through the Unified Planning Work Program along with an increase in Regional Services Grant funding from OPM.

Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative Housatonic Valley Association Presentation – Connie Manes and Julia Rogers stated to move the presentation to the April NHCOG Policy Board Meeting.

30 x 30 Conservation in Northwest Connecticut Presentation – A PowerPoint presentation was shared by Amanda Branson, Director of Operations and Finance from the Northwest CT Land Conservancy along with Carrie Gotwals, Shayne Geiger, and Sarah Torresen from the Conway School of Design. The presentation was based on the analysis of equitable conservation and how partnerships will align conservation strategies accordingly.

Municipal Forum:

Canaan – Selectman Todd shared Frontier is supplying coverage for approximately 80% of the town. There are approximately 88 homes that will not be reached by Frontier. New businesses have developed in town which will aid in streetscaping and the overall town budget.

Morris – Selectman Weik shared information on the town’s budget status. The Town is entering into an agreement with Harwinton to manage an Animal Control Officer. Town passed an ordinance to not allow for any more cannabis establishments in town. Frontier will be coming in between March and May to cover the entire town.

Goshen – Selectman Carusillo shared that he spoke with the Secretary of State concerning early voting and how it would hurt the town’s recreational budget. Suggested using absentee ballots. Flag policy was passed for town own properties. They are looking into developing a part-time Human Services position. There are currently 42 new developments in town.

North Canaan – Selectman Perotti stated they are currently working on a budget presentation for March 22nd with Region 1. There will be a new restaurant opening in town next month due to the purchase of the Berkshire County Buffet. There will be a groundbreaking ceremony for the Community of Health and Wellness. Animal control issue with the chickens has been resolved due to the installation of a fence.

Burlington – Selectman Thompson inquired as to how other towns resolve the issue of coming up with funding to upfront the monies prior to State reimbursement. Suggestion was to investigate the option of obtaining progress payments or obtaining a bridge loan.

Norfolk – Selectman Riiska stated that they are still resolving the oil spill issue. Town is working with Frontier to obtain coverage in town. Bridge work continues with the CTDOT, one under the federal bridge program and the other under the local bridge program. The town is breaking ground on a solar project at the transfer station with anticipated construction completion at the end of the summer. They are currently working on a roadway STEEP grant. A new oil tank has been installed at the school. He suggested that we may want to look at an Assessors Program that would operate out of the COG to facilitate the sharing of resources.

Roxbury – Selectman Roy stated that there are waiting for funds under the local bridge funds however, the town can obtain pending credit which will help with the town’s capital plan. He suggested formulating one plan of behalf of the COG to utilize the second round of Opioid Settlement funds. Training for Police Officers was conducted at the Police Academy for POST-C certification.

Cornwall – Selectman Ridgway stated there is more pressure on local budgets than in the past, during these inflationary times and greater need for social services. Town applied for a compost grant for the Town’s transfer station.

Litchfield – Selectman Raap stated that the town did receive a STEEP grant for Campville Road. They are waiting for the Hotel to close at the courthouse which will add 20 rooms to the center of town. The town is currently consolidating their Park and Recreation and Social Services into a Park and Rec Human Services Department week of March 20th. The EDC launched its first restaurant week March 24th – 31st. Passed ordinance moving tipping fees over to the businesses (non-residential entities of which some do not pay taxes) starting July 1, 2023. Town is doing well with food diversion.

Salisbury – Selectman Rand stated there are three new proposed employees, land use assistant, an individual for the park and rec and senior program and clerical assistant to the Treasurer. There will be over 80 proposed new units of proposed affordable housing that are now allowable under the new zoning regulations. The town plans to submit a TRIP project for a sidewalk linking Salisbury and Lakeville villages.

Washington – Selectman Brinton stated moving seven town region for Medic Intercept to a six-town region. Town recently purchased a 6,500 square foot office building for a new ambulance headquarters.

Winchester – Town Manager Kelly stated that there is currently an RFP out for Medic Intercept services. Full time grant funded social service employee looking and the City is looking to have the position rolled into a full-time municipal position. The town is currently researching a shared service agreement for assessor or building services. There is 120 acres of property that will be going on the market soon for town development. Town is looking to conduct a full salary and benefit survey.

Kent – Selectman Speck stated there is a new playground being installed at Kent Commons. The part-time social services director has moved from part-time to full-time. The town is part of HHRA and is pursuing a unit-based pricing organic scraps grant program.

Hartland – Selectman Winslow stated that the town’s dead tree removal budget has expended $80,000. The town plans to submit a TRIP for roadway drainage.

Warren – Selectman LaCava stated that the town continues to make headway on affordable housing. Bridge project is moving along.

Community and Economic Development Update – Emily Hultquist shared that the EDC Executive Committee has voted to allocate $5,000 to each of three efforts to finish out the first fiscal year of the Partnership Planning Grant: the hiring of a facilitator for a CEDS Stakeholder meeting to be held this spring, a data collection an analysis consultant to help with updating the CEDS and the refresh and continuation of the website and social media for the Discover Litchfield Hills brand and marketing strategy. NHCOG staff attended the Small Business development conference held by Winchester and Torrington Economic Development teams. NHCOG staff is happy to come meet with any local Economic Development Commissions that are interested in meeting with the COG to discuss potential support and partnership. The federal Energy Efficiency Block Grants are now available and letters of intent are requested by April 28th. Municipalities in partnership with a Council of Governments would be eligible to apply. Wendy Murphy of the Kent Energy Committee reached out to the COG to offer a conceptual idea for a regional energy expert to be housed at the COG – something which might be covered by these grant funds. NHCOG staff wrote support letters for four communities for DEEP Recreational Trails Grants – Torrington, New Hartford, Harwinton and Litchfield. The COG is still working to determine next steps on the Broadband initiatives that it has worked on with its communities.

Transportation Planning Update – Kathryn Faraci shared information on the 2023 equipment list and rental rates for the public works equipment collaborative. A request was made to approve a resolution stating that the Northwest Hills Council of Government Policy Board has reaffirmed the approval for the City of Torrington’s Susan Grossman Greenway Extension increased cost estimate, confirms the City of Torrington has secured the additional local matching funds and the project remains as the priority project for CT Department of Transportation TA program. Also, a request was made to approve the 2025-2028 STIP amendments for the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) and for the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program also known as CT Rides. Motioned made to approve the STIP amendments as presented made by Selectman Carusillo and second by Selectman Perotti Motion passed unanimously. There are currently five TRIPS applications submitted to date for a total of $8.3 million with four pending.

DEHMS Update – John Field stated that Public Health is conducting an ANTHRAX tabletop will be conducted on March 21st. Regional training is being held to develop a regional plan on March 22nd and 23rd. DEHMS is in the process of conducting several school safety and security assessments. The new local emergency operations plan is due January 1, 2024. Emergency Management Performance Grant Program (EMPG) funding is supporting this initiative. DHEMS is in the process of updating their grant management system. Currently working on a Region 5 Strategic Plan and training. DHEMS is looking to participate in the meetings that Eversource is having with municipalities.

Administrative Items

1. **ACTION** - Approval of Meeting Minutes for February 9, 2022. Selectman Carusillo made the motion to approve and seconded by Selectman Perotti. Motion passed unanimously.
2. **ACTION** - Approval of Financial Statement for January, Selectman Carusillo made the motion to approve and seconded by Selectman Perotti. Motion passed unanimously.

Other Business – Eversource representatives Daniel Davis and Tim Waldron shared May 3rd at 10am and May 4th at 4pm formal invite will be sent soon.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,

NHCOG staff