

APPROVED
3/19/2015 MINUTES
WESTERN CONNECTICUT
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Meeting at New Milford Town Hall, 10 Main Street, New Milford, CT

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Bethel..... Absent
Bridgewater..... Selectman Alan Brown
Brookfield..... First Selectman William Tinsley
Danbury.....Absent
Darien.....First Selectman Jayme Stevenson, Vice Chairman

Greenwich.....Absent
New Canaan.... Absent
New Fairfield.... First Selectman Susan Chapman, Secretary
New Milford.....Mayor Patricia Murphy
Newtown.....Public Works Director Fred Hurley (non-voting)

Norwalk.....Absent
Redding.....Selectman Leon Karvelis
Ridgefield.....First Selectman Rudy Marconi
Sherman.....First Selectman Clay Cope

Stamford.....Chief of Staff Michael Pollard (non-voting)
Weston.....First Selectman Gayle Weinstein, Treasurer
Westport.....Absent
Wilton.....First Selectman William Brennan

GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIALS

John Louizos of the Stamford Board of Finance, New Milford Economic Development Director Luigi Fulinello, Roxane Fromson of CT DOT, Stamford Traffic Engineer Mani Poola, Norwalk Transit District CEO Kimberlee Morton, Richard Schreiner and Stephanie Scavelli of HARTransit, and Westport Transit District Director Jennifer Johnson.

OTHER ATTENDEES

Susan Tuz of the News Times, Elaine LaBella of the Housatonic Valley Association, Margaret Wirtenberg of Weston, and Chuck Burnham and Tracey Alston of Eversource. From the WestCOG staff Francis Pickering, David Hannon, Sue Prosi, Patricia Payne, Alex Karman, Carl Zimmerman, Michael Towle, Robert Sachnin, Camille Acquanita and Jonathan Chew.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 PM by Vice Chairman Jayme Stevenson and a quorum was determined to be present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Pat Murphy welcomed the group to New Milford, described the Town, and distributed copies of the local history book "Voices from the Past."

MINUTES FROM 2/19/2015

After review and on a motion made by Clay Cope and seconded by Rudy Marconi, the minutes of the meeting of 2/19/2015 were unanimously approved.

APPOINTMENTS TO DEMHS REGION 1

It was noted that due to the transition from SWRPA to WestCOG representation from the eight southern municipalities to the DEMHS Region 1 Emergency Planning Team needed to be updated.

In keeping with the DEMHS Region 1 structure Francis Pickering is proposed as the staff representative with Sue Prosi continuing as the alternate and proxy. The chief elected official representative had been New Canaan First Selectman Robert Mallozzi who is willing to continue serving.

A request was then made to appoint the three persons above as WestCOG's representation to DEMHS 1. After brief discussion and on a motion made by Bill Brennan and seconded by Leon Karvelis, the appointments were unanimously approved.

DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDS

Rob Sachnin updated members on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) National Disaster Resilience Competition. He noted that HUD plans to award \$1 billion for unmet disaster recovery and that projects in our area may qualify for funding.

As letters of support are suggested for participation, it was advisable at this early point to issue a nonbinding Partner Letter, enabling continued participation in the funding competition. He noted that should funding be awarded to an area project, any more formal agreements required will be vetted through WestCOG.

Francis Pickering stated that as Partner Letters were due prior to today's meeting date, the Executive Committee authorized submission prior to the meeting. The March 4 Partner Letter was then reviewed, after which concurrence by the full WestCOG was requested. Then on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Bill Brennan, the Partner Letter was unanimously endorsed.

AGREEMENTS FOR GIS DEVELOPMENT

Alex Karman presented this topic, requesting approval of a resolution authorizing agreements with GIS consultants and vendors for amounts not to exceed the funds available within the OPM grant for the GIS Service project, noting only state funds are involved within the agreements.

There was a discussion of GIS issues. Then on a motion made by Bill Brennan and seconded by Rudy Marconi, the requested authorization was unanimously approved.

APPLICATIONS FOR TRANSIT FUNDS FOR ELDERS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Francis Pickering presented the request for a resolution authorizing submission of applications for the "CT DOT Demand Response Transportation Grant Program for Elders and Persons with Disabilities." He noted this transit subsidy program has been providing funds to the area annually since 2006.

As the statute requires municipalities requesting grants to apply to CT DOT through their regional planning organization, authorization is requested for WestCOG to submit its municipal applications via a resolution to that effect. After brief discussion and on a motion made by Leon Karvelis and seconded by Alan Brown, such authorization was unanimously approved.

TRANSPORTATION STUDY OF STAMFORD

It was noted that WestCOG has been awarded funds to conduct a Stamford Bus and Shuttle Study, a comprehensive assessment of Stamford transit services, also an

evaluation of the full multimodal network, and its related land use and development potentials.

The request is to authorize WestCOG to contract with transportation engineering consultants to conduct the study, in close cooperation with CT DOT and the City of Stamford, the effort entirely funded by the State of Connecticut.

Michael Pollard provided an overview of the effort. He noted that Stamford is projected to become the largest municipality in Connecticut within ten years, that this analysis will lead to recommendations important for maintaining the City's economic success, and that results will serve suburban commuters into Stamford as well as City residents.

Roxane Fromson conveyed the comments of CT DOT Commissioner James Redeker that he fully supports this WestCOG transportation planning effort.

It was then requested that WestCOG approve a resolution authorizing the consultant contract with a selected consultant firm. This was followed by discussion. Then on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Leon Karvelis, the requested authorizing resolution was unanimously approved.

PLANNING AGENCY FOR MPOS

Francis Pickering reviewed this item, noting that HVMPO and SWRMPO as federal administrative designations are not full corporate entities, thus requiring them to rely upon a more fully functional entity for their office space and staffing needs.

Further, that with the sunseting of SWRPA and HVCEO, the role of MPO transportation planning agency has migrated to WestCOG. A merger administrative item remaining is to formally designate WestCOG as the transportation planning agency for HVMPO and SWRMPO.

There was then a discussion, focusing upon the I-95 coastal corridor and how MPO designations as they may evolve can best meet the vital need to coordinate with transportation planning both east and west of WestCOG.

Then on a motion made by Bill Brennan and seconded by Rudy Marconi, the requested resolution was unanimously approved.

STATE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE AND TOD POLICY

Francis Pickering reviewed 2/2015 CT DOT documents which had been distributed to members earlier, the "CT Five Year Transportation Ramp Up Plan" and the "CT Bold Vision for A Transportation Future."

He stated that while each of the nine COG regions works with the state to shape its transportation future, of the nine regions WestCOG is the second largest by population, and of the nine has the most serious transportation problems. In addition WestCOG alone serves as the transportation hinge between New England and the remainder of the nation.

A discussion of transportation policies followed. This soon focused upon proposed House Bill 6851, which if passed would compromise municipal planning and zoning powers within the Region's several Transit Oriented Development planning areas.

Key concerns were that investors and land owners interested in participation will be thrown into a state of confusion if the bill becomes law. And that hopes for successfully blending new TOD development with surrounding community character will be significantly dimmed.

Discussion continued. Then on a motion made by Pat Murphy and seconded by Rudy Marconi, it was voted unanimously to authorize Director Pickering to prepare a letter to legislators conveying WestCOG opposition to House Bill 6851 and the reasoning therefore.

**COLLABORATION WITH
NORTHWEST HILLS COG**

Director Pickering referenced a letter in the agenda packet from the Northwest Hills Council of Governments. It stated that Council wishes to explore subcontracting with WestCOG to prepare its Northwest Hills Regional Transportation Plan.

There was then a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal and staffing issues. The Council will await more specifics.

**COLLABORATION WITH
NATURE CONSERVANCY**

Director Pickering reported that the Nature Conservancy has approached WestCOG staff regarding the potential for technical data collaboration. The Conservancy is extending its effort to identify nitrogen emissions reaching Long Island Sound. The research project will provide information that municipalities may use to improve water quality.

Their proposal is for WestCOG to provide data and local contacts for the study, and for their study process to return resulting data formatted by municipality and with usable information.

There was discussion. Concern was raised that the data generated may further empower recent state agency proposals to force high costs on municipalities for runoff remediation; the controversial MS4 state permit process.

It was agreed that a specific proposal from the study sponsors be requested, defining products to be prepared for municipalities, such that members can better understand intent and municipal budget impact prior to considering authorization for staff to collaborate.

**FY2015 TRANSPORTATION
WORK PROGRAM ADJUSTMENTS**

It was noted that due to the 12/31 merger at the half way point in the annual transportation grant cycle for SWRPA and HVCEO, adjustments to transportation work programs are required. Drafts of the changes have been submitted to CT DOT for its review and will then be presented to the COG for consideration.

**POTENTIAL COMMUNITY
RATING SYSTEM PROJECT**

Flood insurance ratings, and potential lower rates to property owners thru WestCOG GIS technical analysis, were discussed.

SNOW PLOW ROUTING EFFICIENCY

There was a discussion of how GIS technical analysis might assist the efficiency of municipal snow plow routing.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
PLANS AND DISTRICTS**

There was a discussion of the area's two federally structured regional economic development plans and the potential for funding of municipal economic development projects. Fact finding on this topic will continue.

COLLECTIVE PURCHASING

Director Pickering reviewed an agenda attachment on activities of the Capitol Region Purchasing Council (CRPC). He conveyed that municipalities outside of the Capitol Region COG area are eligible to join CRPC to utilize its group bidding process and resulting reduced per unit costs.

Of the 97 municipal members statewide six are from our area: Bridgewater, Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Newtown and Redding. The six individual municipal annual dues combined total to \$10,420.

But the CRPC group rate for an entire COG area is \$500 per municipality or \$9,000 for all eighteen. Members expressed interest in pursuing the broader and less costly membership option.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATES

Staff provided an update on the two draft plans. All materials regarding the two plans, their public informational meetings and ancillary documents, are posted on the WestCOG web site MPO page.

LOGOS AND WEB SITE

Director Pickering reviewed the status of logos and web design options.

STAFF VACANCY

Director Pickering discussed staffing needs in relation to the budget and work load.

OTHER BUSINESS

Under other business there was a discussion of potential state changes to motor vehicle taxes and the proposed regional tax sharing pool.

There was also a request for a letter of support for a Ridgefield STEAP grant application to expand parking for users of the Ridgefield to Katonah commuter bus shuttle operated by HARTtransit.

Then on a motion made by Pat Murphy and seconded by Susan Chapman, the letter of support was unanimously authorized.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is to be held in Darien on April 16, 2015 with CT DOT Commissioner James Redeker the guest speaker.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Clay Cope the meeting was adjourned at 1:50 PM.