

**APPROVED 8/20/2015 MINUTES**  
**WESTERN CONNECTICUT**  
**COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**  
Meeting held at the New Canaan Town Hall  
77 Main Street, New Canaan, CT 06840

Matthew Knickerbocker Chairman; Jayme Stevenson Vice Chairman  
Susan Chapman Secretary; Gayle Weinstein Treasurer

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Bethel First Selectman Matthew Knickerbocker  
Bridgewater First Selectman Curtis Read  
Brookfield First Selectman William Tinsley  
Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton  
Darien First Selectman Jayme Stevenson  
Greenwich First Selectman Peter Tesei

New Canaan First Selectman Robert Mallozzi  
New Fairfield First Selectman Susan Chapman  
New Milford Mayor Patricia Murphy  
Newtown First Selectman Patricia Llodra  
Norwalk Mayor Harry Rilling  
Redding First Selectman Julia Pemberton

Ridgefield First Selectman Rudy Marconi  
Sherman Absent  
Stamford Chief of Staff Michael Pollard (Non-Voting)  
Weston First Selectman Gayle Weinstein  
Westport Voting Rep. Selectman Eileen Flug  
Wilton Absent

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Darien Selectman Susan Marks, David Fink and Katy Shafer from Partnership for Strong Communities, CT DOT Supervising Planner Roxane Fromson, City of Stamford Traffic Engineer Mani Poola, Norwalk Transit District CEO Kimberlee Morton, Tracy Alston of Eversource, Jo-Anne Horvath Norwalk Resident, WestCOG Director Francis Pickering and WestCOG staff members.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 12:35 P.M. by Chairman Matthew Knickerbocker and a quorum was determined to be present. New Canaan First Selectman Robert Mallozzi III welcomed everyone to the newly renovated Town Hall and called attention to a gift publication handed to everyone, "A Guide to God's Acre," published by the New Canaan Historical Society. Jayme Stevenson followed with the introduction of Darien Selectman Susan Marks to the Council.

**DISCUSSION ON WAYS TO ADDRESS THE INCREASING  
INCIDENCE OF OPIATE ADDICTION AND OVERDOSE**

Chairman Knickerbocker announced that one item for discussion, which was brought to the Council's attention by Mayor Boughton, was inadvertently omitted from the agenda. Mayor Boughton and Mayor Murphy suggested that WestCOG support the creation of a regional task force that would leverage various municipal resources in an effort to address the alarming incidence of opiate addiction

and overdoses, a problem affecting all areas of Connecticut. An enthusiastic and supportive discussion ensued. Director Pickering was tasked with coordinating this effort and reporting back to the Council regarding available resources, best management practices in place, and suggestions as to how the COG could add value to these efforts through regional coordination and education activities. A suggestion was also made that some aspects of this initiative could result in the development of priorities for legislative action that would lead to an enhancement of state efforts to help address this issue.

#### **FEATURED SPEAKERS: PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES**

Mr. David Fink and Ms. Katy Shafer, Policy Directors from the Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC) presented information on the changing characteristics of the demographics of Connecticut's population and how this was creating a need for municipalities to respond to the current and future needs for different housing choices that would enable their residents to continue to live in their communities.

A hand out illustrating the trends in housing in Connecticut and within the WestCOG area was distributed. Comments from Council members included interest in different approaches to address the housing needs of younger residents entering the workforce and older residents looking to downsize their housing, while remaining in their communities.

According to PSC, housing prices in Connecticut remain relatively depressed due to too much inventory of housing types that no longer meet housing demands. Council members expressed their thanks to the speakers for their contributions. PSC will provide an electronic version of their presentation to Director Pickering for distribution to Council members.

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ms. Tracy Austin, a representative from Eversource public outreach, announced several upcoming workshops: The first is scheduled for September 3<sup>rd</sup> in Wilton on clean, efficient energy; and the second is a series of 7 workshops on storm preparation, response and recovery for "first responders," the first of which is scheduled for September 8<sup>th</sup> in Norwalk. Eversource will provide additional information on the timing and location of these upcoming workshops.

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

##### Minutes from 7/16/2015 COG Meeting

After review and one change to reflect First Selectman Tesei's absence at the 7/16/15 meeting, and on a motion made by Jayme Stevenson and seconded by Peter Tesei, the minutes of the meeting of 7/16/2015 were unanimously approved, with abstentions by representatives from Norwalk, Redding, and Westport, who were not in attendance at that meeting.

##### CT DEMHS Region 5 REPT MOU for FFY-2015 Homeland Security Grant

WestCOG Director Francis Pickering provided background information on this topic. After discussion and on a motion made by Robert Mallozzi and seconded by Patricia Llodra, the resolution enabling WestCOG participation in the Memorandum of Understanding for the FFY-2015 Homeland Security Grant Program for the CT DEMHS Regional Emergency Planning Team was unanimously approved.

#### **INFORMATION ITEMS**

##### Treasurer's Report for Period Ending June 30, 2015:

WestCOG Treasurer Gayle Weinstein called attention to the financial report included in the agenda materials, with thanks expressed to WestCOG's Senior Financial Manager Patty Payne for the preparation of the report. According to the unaudited results, the first six months of the new COG ended with an estimated surplus of \$47,400. Following a discussion, on a motion made by Jayme Stevenson and seconded by Robert Mallozzi, the 6/30/2015 Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved.

#### CEDS Grant, Preparation and Submission:

Mr. Pickering highlighted the excellent work of WestCOG Associate Planner Elizabeth Esposito. Ms. Esposito prepared and submitted an application to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for funding to support the preparation of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plan on behalf of the eight southern towns in the COG region.

This plan will replace a now outdated CEDS (“One Coast”) prepared by SWRPA and GBRPA. When completed, the new CEDS will be combined with the recently completed CEDS for the northern 10 COG municipalities and enable WestCOG to become one of Connecticut’s Economic Development Districts, thereby expanding eligibility for funding supporting economic development activities within the COG region.

The grant application requests \$80,000 of funding from EDA, with a \$20,000 WestCOG match. Should WestCOG be awarded the grant, Mr. Pickering will bring the matter back to the Council for consideration.

#### Community Rating System Grant Application

Mr. Pickering and WestCOG Associate Planner Michael Towle updated members on the National Flood Insurance Program’s (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS), which is a voluntary national incentive program encouraging municipal floodplain management activities that exceed minimum NFIP requirements.

WestCOG has applied for a \$60,000 grant that will aid municipal efforts to improve their standing within the CRS, thereby helping to lower flood insurance costs for the owners of property located in vulnerable areas. If awarded the grant, the Council will be briefed on the scope of work and any fiscal impact to the organization. Council members expressed their support for this effort, which will result in the provision of additional COG staff assistance to municipalities participating in the CRS program.

#### CT DOT Transportation Capital Plan

Mr. Pickering noted that late in June, CT DOT requested MPO staff review of the State’s Draft Transportation Capital Plan for the period 2016-2020. This was accomplished by the MPO staffs, with the results forwarded to CT DOT. CT DOT’s final draft of this plan will be available during the fall of 2015, for presentation to the COG.

#### WestCOG Participation in the Development of Regional Services

It was noted by Mr. Pickering that beginning in FY-2017 and going forward, OPM funding to WestCOG can only be used to support the development of additional regional services. Traditional COG activities, such as regional planning, environmental management, emergency preparedness, and economic development will no longer be supported by future OPM funding, unless those activities result in new or expanded regional services, as to be defined by the State. Mr. Pickering will provide members with information on projected OPM funding of COG activities and the restrictions placed on the use of those funds.

To facilitate the needed planning for this shift in the focus for future COG activities WestCOG Associate Planner Elizabeth Esposito has been tasked with surveying member municipalities to inquire about individual areas of interest with respect to cooperative regional services. It was pointed out that the previously mentioned task force on opiate addiction and overdose issues might fall into this category, as well as the current Tick Born Illness Prevention Task Force.

#### Update on WestCOG Office Relocation Process

Chairman Knickerbocker introduced this topic by stating that the Executive Committee was looking to members for direction on the quest to find an office that would accommodate WestCOG operations.

There was considerable discussion on this topic. Consensus was reached that a new office location for WestCOG is in the organization’s best interest. Members agreed that the new office did not need to contain a large meeting room to accommodate Council meetings. Council meetings could be accommodated in a location or locations independent of the COG office. Cost of office space remains

a key consideration, which needs to be balanced by goals to retain COG staff and enhance the delivery of services to member municipalities.

Mr. Pickering described the current search for suitable office space. To date, the most cost-effective locations visited have been in the Danbury, Bethel, and Newtown areas. The lease for the COG's Stamford office space expires on September 30, 2015 and the Brookfield COG office is on a month-to-month lease. Chairman Knickerbocker explained that the search for a COG office will continue and members should expect to hear more on this topic in a few weeks.

#### Partnership with UCONN Stamford

Mr. Pickering announced that WestCOG was approached by UConn Stamford to participate in two student projects of potential interest to the region: 1) The utilization and economic analysis of parking at commuter rail stations; and 2) A University Transportation Plan, which could benefit the COG's current Stamford Bus and Shuttle study. These studies would require minimal COG staff involvement, with the potential for significant benefits to the stakeholders. Members requested the opportunity to review and comment on the respective scopes of work for these projects to help maximize local benefits.

#### Update on WestCOG's Legislative Agenda

Council members were asked to indicate their willingness to participate in a Legislative Subcommittee to address this year's legislative priorities for WestCOG by contacting Chairman Knickerbocker. Mr. Pickering and members suggested it would be to the Region's benefit to be proactive in suggesting new legislative initiatives as well as the top legislative priorities to the COG's legislative delegation, prior to the start of the 2016 session.

#### Update on the Reauthorization of the Federal Transportation Program

Mr. Pickering provided information on the status of the reauthorization of the Federal Transportation Funding Program, and its importance as the primary source of revenue for regional transportation planning and construction activities within the Western CT Region.

### **STAFF PRESENTATIONS**

#### Regional GIS Services Update and Demonstration

An update on the status of WestCOG's evolving Regional GIS Service Program was then provided by WestCOG's Senior GIS Manager Carl Zimmerman. The discussion included a demonstration of the GIS resources that will be available to municipalities throughout the entire WestCOG region.

#### Opportunities for Hazard Resiliency Activities

In the interest of time, the scheduled staff presentation on this topic was postponed until the September COG meeting.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Chairman Knickerbocker reminded members that the next WestCOG meeting will be hosted by Redding on Thursday, September 17, 2015, with the featured guest to be CT State Comptroller Kevin Lembo.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, on a motion made by Harry Rilling and seconded by Julia Pemberton the meeting was adjourned at 2:22 PM.