

APPROVED 1/22/2015 MINUTES
**WESTERN CONNECTICUT
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**
HELD AT THE SHERMAN VOLUNTEER FIRE
DEPARTMENT IN SHERMAN, CONNECTICUT

ATTENDANCE

Bethel..... First Selectman Matthew Knickerbocker, Chairman
Bridgewater..... First Selectman Curtis Read
Brookfield..... Absent
Danbury.....Chief of Staff Wayne Shepperd
Darien.....First Selectman Jayme Stevenson, Vice Chairman

Greenwich.....Selectman John Toner
New Canaan.... Absent
New Fairfield.... First Selectman Susan Chapman, Secretary
New Milford.....Mayor Patricia Murphy
Newtown.....First Selectman Patricia Llodra

Norwalk.....Absent
Redding.....First Selectman Julia Pemberton
Ridgefield.....First Selectman Rudy Marconi
Sherman.....First Selectman Clay Cope
Stamford.....Absent

Weston.....First Selectman Gayle Weinstein, Treasurer
Westport.....First Selectman James Marpe
Wilton.....Absent

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 PM by Chairman Matthew Knickerbocker, after which attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Clay Cope made opening remarks and welcomed the Council to Sherman.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were six sets of remarks made under this topic:

1) Candlewood Lake Authority: Phyllis Schaer of the Authority welcomed WCCOG to Sherman on behalf of the Candlewood Lake Authority, also based in Sherman.

3) Progress with Hazard Mitigation Plan: Staff member Robert Sachnin addressed this issue, updating the eight southern members on the upcoming public review process. The approval schedule is being designed such that current municipal grant eligibility can be maintained, he said.

3) Merger Activities Update: Concerning this topic Gayle Weinstein reviewed a memo from Office and Financial Manager Patricia Payne noting that:

IT Systems: IT and phone systems have been joined together into one account. Cloud file sharing and storage has been enabled.

Financial Activities: A new cloud based accounting system is now operational. New bank accounts have been opened, tax identification numbers obtained, CT CORE accounts established to enable state funding, all existing SWRPA and HVCEO grants have been reassigned to WCCOG, and leases on equipment are being reassigned.

Pension: Pension product documents completed and the new plan commenced January 1.

Liability Insurance: Existing policies have been terminated and replacement policies established.

Human Resources Policies: During December employees were briefed on the new WCCOG Employee Handbook and met for a question and answer session with the pension consultant.

Audits: Audits will soon commence for SWRPA and HVCEO finances for their final six months of operation from 7/1/2014 thru 12/31/2014. Then after July 1 a six month audit will be prepared for WCCOG for 1/1/2015 thru 6/30/2015.

Website: The url westernctcog.org has been secured. A rudimentary web site at that address has been made operational to post required FOI meeting notices and minutes. A fully comprehensive web site will be developed after the new executive director arrives.

Mrs. Weinstein stated that the investment policy for excess funds is still under review, this topic to be a future agenda item. Members discussed these and other administrative activities.

4) State Funding for Lyme Disease Prevention: Rudy Marconi addressed this issue and distributed draft legislation. Supplementary comments were made by BLAST Program Administrator Jennifer Reid of Ridgefield.

Mr. Marconi noted that Lyme Disease is a serious threat to the quality of life in Western Connecticut. That the BLAST Lyme Disease prevention program to be promoted by the legislation was created by the Ridgefield Health Department using state funds for use in serving all of Fairfield County.

Funding included within Raised Senate Bill #207 will enable community based BLAST to expand to reach all municipalities in Connecticut. Proposed program administration is integrated into existing state, regional and municipal authorities competent to provide the outreach and meet the challenge.

There was then discussion of the proposed legislation and its relationship to other Lyme Disease activities, the deer management study in Redding, and use of the DEMHS administrative structure.

Then on a motion made by Pat Murphy and seconded by Susan Chapman, the requested authorization for the chairman to sign a letter of support was unanimously approved.

5) Comment on Public Participation: Margaret Wirtenberg of Weston, a long time municipal appointee to SWRPA, congratulated members on their high rate of public participation.

6) Distribution of CL&P Brochures: Representatives of CL&P distributed brochures explaining company programs of interest to the public.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Minutes: After review and on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Clay Cope, the minutes of the meeting of 11/20/2014 were unanimously approved with an abstention by John Toner.

Executive Director Appointment: Members of the Search Committee presented their recommendation of Francis Pickering to be appointed as the WCCOG Executive Director.

Then on a motion made by Gayle Weinstein and seconded by Rudy Marconi, the recommendation was unanimously approved. Mr. Pickering then made introductory remarks which were followed by applause.

Resolution for Banking Authority: As noted by Matt Knickerbocker in accordance with the bylaws, this resolution authorizes the chair, vice chair, treasurer and executive director to sign checks, transfer funds, etc, with the Council's three banking institutions. On a motion made by Susan Chapman and seconded by Clay Cope, the resolution was unanimously approved.

Resolution for Credit Card: As noted by Matt Knickerbocker in accordance with the bylaws, the executive director is authorized to be a named card holder. On a motion made by Jayme Stevenson and seconded by Rudy Marconi, the resolution was unanimously approved.

Resolution for Contracts with State of CT: As noted by Matt Knickerbocker in accordance with the bylaws, the chair, vice chair and executive director are authorized to execute and sign the appropriate state agreements. On a motion made by Clay Cope and seconded by Gayle Weinstein, the resolution was unanimously approved.

Resolution Appointing Pension Trustees: As noted by Matt Knickerbocker the chair, vice chair and executive director are requested to be appointed to serve as trustees for the newly created defined contribution pension plan.

A question arose as to the advisability of the executive director serving as both a trustee and participant in the pension plan. After discussion and on a motion made by Pat Murphy and seconded by Susan Chapman, it was voted unanimously to table this item for further review by the Executive Committee.

WCCOG SUPPORT FOR SWRMPO AND HVMPO

Staff led the discussion of this item, outlining the upcoming administrative approvals that will be needed to amend the two FY2015 Unified Planning Work Programs mid-year for revised staffing titles, overhead grant charging rates, etc. Members made comments on the developing coordination process.

These included a request that administration be coordinated such that one staff person be assigned as the lead on a particular issue rather than two, and that flow charts be developed to identify streams of work.

APPOINTMENTS TO DEMHS REGION 5

This topic was addressed by Rudy Marconi, noting the need for WCCOG to appoint two representatives to the DEMHS Region 5 Regional Emergency Planning Team Steering Committee. Sue Prosi reviewed DEMHS Region 1 appointments for the eight southern municipalities.

Mr. Marconi noted that the current incumbents on DEMHS 5 are Richard Aarons of Ridgefield and David Hannon of the staff and that both were willing to be reappointed. After brief discussion and on a motion to reappoint them made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Pat Murphy, the motion was unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

Open Space Grant Application: Chris Jellen and Stephanie Warren of Sherman's Naromi Land Trust then spoke of their partnership with the Green Pond Ecological Society to purchase and preserve with CT DEEP funds sixty four acres located in New Milford near Candlewood Lake.

They noted the conformance of the application with the regional plan and the conservation priorities of the Candlewood Lake Authority and the Housatonic Valley Association. The endorsement of WCCOG is being sought to bolster the application.

The proposed endorsement was then discussed by the members and questions answered. At Pat Murphy's request it was agreed that the preferred protocol is for any WCCOG letter of support to be contingent upon prior endorsement of the application by the New Milford Conservation Commission. Then on a motion to this effect made by Clay Cope and seconded by Gayle Weinstein, the letter of support was authorized, contingent upon positive New Milford Conservation Commission action.

Prevailing Wage Laws: Matt Knickerbocker distributed an update from State Senator Tony Hwang concerning bills to modify the high costs prevailing wage laws place upon municipalities.

DOT Commissioner to Attend: Concerning the upcoming April 16 Council meeting in Darien, Jayme Stevenson noted that CT DOT Commissioner James Redeker had accepted an invitation to attend. She recommended that in order to maximize the value of the Commissioner's visit that the Council coordinate a list of talking points in advance of the meeting. It was agreed that these should be forwarded to Chair Matt Knickerbocker.

UPCOMING MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting is to be held in Greenwich on February 19, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on a motion duly made and seconded the meeting was adjourned at 1:50 PM.