

5/21/2015 APPROVED MINUTES

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

MEETING AT NEWTOWN, CT MUNICIPAL CENTER

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

- Bethel First Selectman Matthew Knickerbocker, Chairman
- Bridgewater Absent
- Brookfield First Selectman William Tinsley
- Danbury Absent
  
- Darien First Selectman Jayme Stevenson, Vice Chairman
- Greenwich First Selectman Peter Tesei
- New Canaan First Selectman Robert Mallozzi
- New Fairfield Absent
  
- New Milford Mayor Patricia Murphy
- Newtown First Selectman Patricia Llodra
- Norwalk Mayor Harry Rilling
- Redding Absent
  
- Ridgefield First Selectman Rudy Marconi
- Sherman First Selectman Clay Cope
- Stamford Mayor David Martin
- Weston First Selectman Gayle Weinstein, Treasurer
  
- Westport First Selectman James Marpe
- Wilton Selectman Richard Dubow

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Connecticut DOT Commissioner James Redeker, Stamford Chief of Staff Michael Pollard, Stamford Traffic Engineer Mani Poola, Norwalk Transit District CEO Kimberlee Morton, CT DOT Supervising Planner Roxane Fromson, Newtown Director of Planning George Benson, Newtown Deputy Director of Planning Rob Sibley, Newtown Director of Public Works Fred Hurley, and Chair of the Western CT Economic Development Alliance Hal Kurfehs.

Also Peggy Hetherington of Metropool, Norwalk resident Jo-Anne Horvath, Danbury resident Lynn Waller, HARtransit Service Development Director Richard Schreiner, Margaret Wirtenberg of Weston, Chuck Burnham of Eversource, and from the WestCOG staff Francis Pickering, David Hannon, Sue Prosi, Patricia Payne, 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 Chairman Matthew Knickerbocker and a quorum was determined to be present. Pat Llodra welcomed the Council to Newtown and distributed a booklet on the municipality.

**REMARKS BY CONNECTICUT DOT  
COMMISSIONER JAMES REDEKER**

Guest speaker Connecticut Department of Transportation Commissioner James Redeker was welcomed and addressed the Council. Commissioner Redeker made a presentation of the Governor's transportation infrastructure improvement plan, citing transportation problems in the WestCOG Region and elsewhere in the state that would be addressed.

A question and answer period followed, then a general discussion with the Commissioner on transportation issues. The Commissioner was then thanked for his informative visit.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Comments were made by Kimberly Morton and Margaret Wirtenberg.

**MINUTES FROM 4/16/2015**

After review and on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Jayme Stevenson, the minutes of the meeting of 4/16/2015 were unanimously approved, with abstentions by Gail Weinstein, David Martin and Richard Duboff.

**AUTHORIZING RESOLUTION FOR COG-CTDOT  
AGREEMENT FOR HVMPO AND SWRMPO**

It was explained that WestCOG as a hosting agency for HVMPO and SWRMPO is required to formally agree to serve as manager of funds received from CTDOT in order for the two MPOs to carry out their respective FY2016 and FY2017 Unified Planning Work Programs.

An authorizing resolution to this effect was presented and discussed. Then on a motion made by David Martin and seconded by Jayme Stevenson, the resolution was unanimously approved as amended.

**AUTHORIZING RESOLUTION FOR COG-CTDOT  
AGREEMENT FOR BRANCHVILLE TOD STUDY**

It was explained that the Branchville Rail Station Transit Oriented Development Study, in progress at HVMPO, requires the update of its contractual documents to remove the name "HVCEO" and replace it with "WestCOG."

An authorizing resolution to this effect was presented. Then on a motion made by David Martin and seconded by Jayme Stevenson, the resolution was unanimously approved as amended.

**AUTHORIZING RESOLUTION FOR  
COG-HARTRANSIT PLANNING SERVICES**

It was explained that the HVMPO Unified Planning Work Program subcontracts federal funds to HARTransit to undertake transit planning tasks for HVMPO.

An authorizing resolution to this effect was presented. Then on a motion made by Pat Llodra and seconded by Rudy Marconi, the resolution was unanimously approved as amended.

**CONTRACT APPROVAL FOR  
NORTHERN CEDS WEBSITE**

Francis Pickering presented this request, stating that \$25,000 within the current budget is reserved for northern economic development website development. He noted that this project is the priority from the recently completed Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process for the ten northern municipalities.

An agenda attachment summarized project details for a regional web "portal" for the web sites of the fifteen cooperating organizations. It was noted that a request for proposals for this project was widely advertised and 13 responses were received, with the top ranked proposal from Imagemark, LLC, of Wilton, CT, with a maximum fee of \$22,780.

Permission was then requested to execute a services contract with Imagemark for the maximum fee specified.

There was discussion. Then on a motion made by Pat Llodra and seconded by Rudy Marconi, authorization to proceed with the web development services contract was unanimously approved.

#### **APPLICATION TO EDA FOR SOUTHERN CEDS UPDATE**

Francis Pickering presented this topic, noting that a federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) defined Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) establishes an economic development data base, economic goals and regional strategies to meet those goals.

He stated that with an active CEDS process, WestCOG can pursue new grant opportunities related to economic development. Also that a CEDS is a requirement for the next step, applying for a regional Economic Development District (EDD) designation from the EDA.

As for current status, Mr. Pickering stated that the ten northern WestCOG towns had completed their CEDS which is under review for approval by the EDA office in Philadelphia. And that the eight southern WestCOG towns were part of an earlier CEDS and EDD, but that both expired in 2014.

An EDA spokesperson has confirmed that updating the CEDS for the southern WestCOG towns and appending it to the existing CEDS for the northern towns is allowed. This is the recommended strategy for WestCOG, Mr. Pickering said.

He also advised that a unified CEDS/EDD for our 18 municipalities will meet State EDD boundary requirements, and strengthen CT DECD brown fields and other grant applications, all while the region pursues newly focused economic development goals.

The Director's recommendation then was for WestCOG to apply for EDA's Planning Program Grant for \$100,000 at 80% federal share and 20% share as WestCOG match.

There was then discussion, especially of staffing and budgeting considerations. Then on a motion made by Jayme Stevenson and seconded by David Martin, authorization for staff to proceed with the application for a southern CEDS update was unanimously approved.

#### **CONTRACT FOR NORTHWEST HILLS COG TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

Francis Pickering continued the discussion of this agenda item from earlier meetings, when it was explained that the adjacent Northwest Hills Council of Governments wished to explore subcontracting with WestCOG to prepare its Regional Transportation Plan. Details were presented as to a draft contract and work program.

There was then considerable discussion. A motion was made by Peter Tesei and seconded by Pat Llodra to approve the contract and work program.

Considerable discussion continued. Then in the interest of time, on a motion made by Gail Weinstein and seconded by David Martin and voted unanimously, it was agreed to postpone action on this item.

#### **COMMUNITY RATING SYSTEM FEASIBILITY**

Francis Pickering reviewed the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS). This is a voluntary national incentive program encouraging community floodplain management activities that exceed minimum NFIP requirements. As a reward for exceeding the mandatory minimums, flood insurance rates are adjusted to reflect reduced flood risk to insurable property, he said.

Current participants are Stamford, Westport and Newtown. He noted that WestCOG can assist these and additional communities to achieve additional savings. An agenda attachment estimated available annual CRS savings within the region at \$1.0 to \$1.3 million.

The proposal as detailed in an agenda attachment is for WestCOG staff to share the work load with municipal staff, making use of WestCOG technical resources and GIS. There was discussion, with regional staff to present options to interested municipal staff.

#### **DRAFT BUDGET FOR FY2016**

The draft budget was presented by Gayle Weinstein as assisted by Patty Payne. A variety of questions were responded to, and Pat Murphy requested information on job titles and salaries.

It was noted that a draft FY2016 budget would be presented at the June 18 meeting.

#### **ENGAGEMENT OF NEW EMPLOYEES**

Francis Pickering then presented basic biographical information on the two new employees that will be arriving at WestCOG shortly, as follows:

- Matt Weinstein, a resident of Stratford, with a B.A. in Geography from the University of California Berkeley and has submitted his thesis for an M.A. in City Planning from MIT. He noted Matt's experience working for a variety of federal and state agencies, and that Matt will assume Alex Karman's duties during Alex's three month leave of absence.

- Elizabeth Esposito, a native of Killingworth, with a B.A. from Smith College in Environmental Science and Policy. He noted Liz has worked in regional planning as well as in several municipal planning and economic development positions. She will assist with transportation and the development of regional services.

#### **UPDATE ON STATE LEGISLATION**

Francis Pickering provided a legislative update.

#### **HUD NATIONAL DISASTER RESILIENCE COMPETITION**

Rob Sachnin reviewed progress as the state asks regional partners to submit letters of interest regarding participation in the HUD National Disaster Resilience Competition. Submitting the WestCOG letter may lead to selection of areas within the Region for funding of disaster resilience projects related to Superstorm Sandy.

He noted that should funding be considered for an area project, any more formal agreements required will be submitted to WestCOG for approval.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

David Martin asked that consideration be given to the revision of bylaws to allow non-elected municipal officials to serve as alternates and represent him on occasion at WestCOG, as elected officials are not readily available for such daytime meetings.

Also that a comparative municipal salary survey is needed for use in municipal human resource management.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

Chairman Knickerbocker stated that the next WestCOG meeting is scheduled to be held in Westport Town Hall on June 18, 2015. Jim Marpe noted that date may need to be shifted one week to 6/25 due to competing activities in Westport.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Pat Llodra, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 PM.