

APPROVED 9/17/2015 MINUTES
WESTERN CONNECTICUT
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Meeting held at the Redding Community Center
137 Lonetown Road, Redding, CT 06896

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

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Bethel	First Selectman Matthew Knickerbocker
Bridgewater	Absent
Brookfield	First Selectman William Tinsley
Danbury	Mayor Mark Boughton
Darien	First Selectman Jayme Stevenson
Greenwich	First Selectman Peter Tesei
New Canaan	Absent
New Fairfield	First Selectman Susan Chapman
New Milford	Absent
Newtown	First Selectman Patricia Llodra
Norwalk	Absent
Redding	First Selectman Julia Pemberton
Ridgefield	First Selectman Rudy Marconi
Sherman	First Selectman Clay Cope
Stamford	Voting Rep. Finance Board Chair John Louizos
Weston	First Selectman Gayle Weinstein
Westport	First Selectman James Marpe
Wilton	First Selectman William Brennan

OTHERS ATTENDING

State Comptroller Kevin Lembo, Tyler Wilkinson of Controller Lembo's staff, Jennifer March-Wackers of CRCOG, State Senator Toni Boucher by telephone, Stamford Chief of Staff Michael Pollard, Assistant to Redding First Selectman Alice Smith, Redding Controller Steve Gniadek, Charles Burnham and Tracy Alston of Eversource, Margaret Wirtenberg of Weston, Richard Schreiner and Stephanie Scavelli of HARTransit, WestCOG Director Francis Pickering and WestCOG staff.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 12:35 P.M. by Chairman Matthew Knickerbocker and a quorum was determined to be present. Julia Pemberton welcomed the Council to Redding and presented each member with a copy of the Redding Trail Book, a product of the Redding Land Trust now in its 50th year.

**GUEST SPEAKER JENNIFER MARCH-WACKERS,
CRCOG MUNICIPAL SERVICES MANAGER**

Jennifer March-Wackers, CRCOG Municipal Services Manager, then addressed the Council, updating members on purchasing and other services for which the Council has contracted. Her update was followed by a discussion after which Ms. March-Wackers was thanked for her visit.

GUEST SPEAKER KEVIN LEMBO, STATE COMPTROLLER

Connecticut State Comptroller Kevin Lembo then addressed the Council. He updated members on state financial issues including tax policy and distributed an information packet. There was then a question and answer period, after which Chairman Knickerbocker thanked Comptroller Lembo for his informative visit.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Chuck Burnham of Eversource informed members of upcoming training sessions for emergency managers and responders.

ACTION ITEMS

Minutes from 8/20/2015 Meeting: After review and a correction to note the participation of Michael Pollard as a non-voting representative, and then on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Pat Llodra, the minutes of the meeting of 8/20/2015 were unanimously approved, with abstentions by Bill Brennan, John Louizos, Clay Cope and James Marpe.

Treasurer's Report: Gayle Weinstein reviewed financial reports attached to the agenda which included the July 2015 Operating Statement, Balance Sheet of Assets and Statement of Cash Flow.

Authorizing Agreements For Stamford Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan: It was noted by John Louizos that the Stamford bike-ped study will recommend ways to improve the safety, accessibility, and mobility of bicyclists and pedestrians in that City. The total cost of the study is \$250,000 composed of \$200,000 federal, \$25,000 state and \$25,000 local. No negative fiscal impact upon WestCOG is expected.

After brief discussion and then on a motion made by Pat Llodra and seconded by Jayme Stevenson, it was voted unanimously to approve the recommended authorizing resolution.

Authorizing Agreements for Darien Noroton Heights Access Study: It was noted by Jayme Stevenson that the Darien study will develop a plan and program for improved access, operations and safety of all transportation modes to and from Darien's Noroton Heights Train Station.

The planning work will be coordinated with some significant adjacent development proposals, she said. The total cost of the study is \$250,000 composed of \$200,000 federal, \$25,000 state and \$25,000 local. No negative fiscal impact upon WestCOG is expected.

After brief discussion and then on a motion made by Gail Weinstein and seconded by Pat Llodra, it was voted unanimously to approve the recommended authorizing resolution.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Proposed Heroin and Opiate Abuse Task Force: In response to direction received at the August Council meeting and follow up discussions with stakeholders, Associate Planner Elizabeth Esposito presented a first draft structure for a WestCOG Heroin and Opioid Abuse Task Force.

Included as an agenda attachment there was discussion of the draft with members discussion summarized as follows:

-- There are numerous groups in the region that could participate. A balance must be found such that overall size is limited in order to facilitate an efficient Task Force structure.

-- The charge to the group should focus on creating an actionable agenda. Staff will forward to members the June 2015 "Action Plan to Address the Opioid Epidemic in the Commonwealth" as a model in this regard.

-- This is a highly complex area of interagency governmental and non-profit activity. Some program "silos" are not easily bridged. The Task Force can focus on local geographies to bridge gaps in intermunicipal information and developing a united WestCOG effort.

-- Local officials should be interviewed by staff to obtain each municipality's perspective as to program gaps and weak interfaces and key players and resources.

Regional Services Survey: Elizabeth Esposito then presented the results of her 8/6 survey of interregional service ideas to members. An agenda attachment listed the top fifteen responses. The survey will serve as a starting point for discussions over the coming months as to structuring cost-saving services of value, she said.

There was then discussion of the survey results. Upcoming meetings can prioritize the items into those where work has already started, others considered most promising for staff to begin research and detailing, and those items to be deferred.

New Website: Francis Pickering updated members on the new Council web site, to replace the simple place holder site currently operating to meet FOI requirements. The new site will go live before the end of the month.

There was a discussion of web aspects including municipal - regional linkages. He will send out a request to members for additional municipal photos for potential use on the new site, and include a web link to the draft of the new web site for review and comment by COG members.

New GIS Team Member: Francis Pickering presented new GIS team member Michael Sullivan and summarized his credentials. Mr. Sullivan then introduced himself and thanked the Council for the opportunity.

Office Consolidation Status: Mr. Pickering gave a report, noting that over twenty office properties had been visited. While the short list is now four locations in the I-84 corridor, a new and promising entry also needs evaluation. There was then discussion, with a request that the analysis comprehensively compare all costs of the short list of potential offices.

STAFF PRESENTATION

Hazard Resiliency Funding Competition: Senior Planner Rob Sachnin presented on this topic, updating members on the HUD National Disaster Resilience Competition, the Council having formally positioned itself to compete for the \$1 billion nationally for disaster resiliency projects.

Some of the major storm vulnerabilities in the eighteen town WestCOG area were then displayed in a visual presentation entitled "Hazard Resiliency and WestCOG" prepared by Mr. Sachnin and Associate Planner Mike Towle, the maps newly created as a requirement for the grant competition.

Included were regional maps of economic profiles, transportation vulnerabilities, sea level rise inundation, extreme precipitation models and other environmental factors. There was then a discussion, followed by a request that that presentation be forwarded to members.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Knickerbocker reminded members that the next WestCOG meeting will be hosted by Stamford on Thursday, October 22, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business on a motion made by Susan Chapman and seconded by Pat Llodra the meeting was adjourned at 1:45 PM.