

APPROVED

12/17/2015 MINUTES

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

MEETING AT WESTON TOWN HALL

56 NORFIELD ROAD, WESTON, CT 06883

Chairman Matthew Knickerbocker / Vice Chairman Jayme Stevenson

Secretary Susan Chapman / Treasurer Position Vacant

MEMBERS ATTENDING

- Bethel First Selectman Matthew Knickerbocker
- Bridgewater Absent
- Brookfield First Selectman Steven Dunn
- 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 Mayor David Gronbach
- Newtown First Selectman Patricia Llodra
- Norwalk Development Director Elizabeth Stocker (non-voting)
- Redding First Selectman Julia Pemberton

- Ridgefield First Selectman Rudy Marconi
- Sherman First Selectman Clay Cope
- Stamford Chief of Staff Michael Pollard (non-voting)
- Weston First Selectman Nina Daniel
- Westport First Selectman James Marpe
- Wilton First Selectman Lynne Vanderslice

OTHERS ATTENDING

State Representative Jonathan Steinberg, Gail Weinstein of Weston, William Brennan of Wilton, , Assistant to the CT Secretary of State for Elections Peggy Reeves, CT DPH Drinking Water Section Chief Lori Mathieu and CT DPH consultant David Murphy of Milone & MacBroom.

Also Weston resident Margaret Wirtenberg, Norwalk Transit District Director Kim Morton, Roxane Fromson of CT DOT, Richard Schreiner of HARTransit, Charles Burnham and Tracy Alston of Eversource, WestCOG Director Francis Pickering and staff.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:35 P.M. by Chairman Matthew Knickerbocker. He welcomed new members Nina Daniel, Steven Dunn and David Gronbach. Nina Daniel then welcomed the Council to Weston and presented each member with a copy of the town history.

ELECTION STAFF TRAINING

Matt Knickerbocker welcomed Peggy Reeves, Assistant to the CT Secretary of the State for Elections. Ms. Reeves reviewed requirements of the upcoming state grant of \$11,000 to WestCOG to provide assistance with training for municipal election staff.

Objectives of the grant are to enable a more efficient arrangement for training of election staff, facilitate training for technology enhancements and promote communications with registrars. Most hours expended by the contract employee will be before primaries and elections, she said. Also that staff accountability will be to both WestCOG and the state.

There was considerable discussion, several members questioning if this effort is needed. There was agreement with the concept of a committee of municipal registrars to interview and make a recommendation for staff selection.

WATER UTILITY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Matt Knickerbocker then welcomed CT Department of Public Health Drinking Water Section Chief Lori Mathieu, who was assisted in her presentation by CT DPH consultant David Murphy of Milone & MacBroom.

They made a presentation on the upcoming Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC) planning process, displaying maps of water supply features in the WestCOG area, and providing each member with an information packet.

Ms. Mathieu stated that WUCCs are convened by the CT DPH and comprised of representatives from public water systems and councils of government in each of three management areas. The Western WUCC area includes WestCOG as well as the areas of three nearby councils of governments.

It was indicated that once convened, the Western WUCC has two years to prepare a coordinated areawide water supply plan. These plans are built from individual plans of public water systems already required by state statute.

A key regional activity is to recommend exclusive service areas for water providers, a determination that is of vital concern to the water providers involved. In sum "it is a fifty year plan to make sure we don't run dry" Ms. Mathieu said.

A question and answer period followed the presentation. Mark Boughton pointed to the coordination needs of the many very small water systems. Rudy Marconi addressed the need to insure that affordable housing appeals are not used to override local zoning that protects water quality and supply watersheds.

Clay Cope spoke to problems with high sodium concentrations in the drinking water supplies of municipal buildings. Jayme Stevenson noted the need for sufficient supply for adequate fire suppression. After further discussion Chairman Knickerbocker thanked the guests from CT DPH for their informative visit.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

State Representative Jonathan Steinberg stated that the WUCC process is important to our area and urged WestCOG to participate vigorously. Regarding the election training grant, he will be interested in the Council's opinion as to the value of the new program once in operation. Margaret Wirtenberg commented on water supply and Weston issues.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of 11/19/2015 Minutes: After review and on a motion made by Jayme Stevenson and seconded by Rudy Marconi, the minutes of the meeting of 11/19/2015 were unanimously approved, with abstentions by David Gronbach, Steven Dunn, Julia Pemberton and Lynne Vanderslice.

October 2015 Financial Reports: Staff member Patricia Payne reviewed agenda attachments constituting the October 2015 financial report. There was discussion of these items.

Authorization for GIS Grant Extension: Francis Pickering reviewed use to date of the 2012 \$2.12 million OPM grant for production of GIS data and information technology applications.

OPM has requested WestCOG to execute an amended grant for extending the process, as it expands northward from the original South Western Region to the former Housatonic Valley Region.

A draft resolution to this effect was then presented. After brief discussion and on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Jayme Stevenson the resolution was unanimously approved.

Legislative Priorities for 2016: Mr. Pickering reviewed the progress of the committee meeting on this topic, in preparation for the Council's breakfast with the legislative delegation on January 14, 2016.

Bylaw Amendment on Status of Officers: Francis Pickering reviewed an agenda attachment identifying potential confusion in the bylaws on the status of an officer when such officer does not win re-election. He recommended two bylaw text revisions as the remedy.

There was discussion. It was noted that as a proposed bylaw amendment, if approved a second vote at the next meeting will also be required. Then on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and a second by Patricia Llodra the requested bylaw amendments were unanimously approved.

Office Consolidation: Francis Pickering discussed the office selection process, referring to documents in an agenda attachment. Properties were toured and reduced to a short list of four which were then visited by the Executive Committee, he said.

An offer for leasing of the top priority property was negotiated and was reviewed as an agenda attachment. There was considerable discussion.

Then on a motion made by Julia Pemberton and a second by Matt Knickerbocker the offer for 1 Riverside Road in the Sandy Hook section of Newtown was unanimously approved, with specific language of a draft lease to be presented to the Council for approval at a later date.

Membership Dues: Matt Knickerbocker reviewed the background on this issue, noting that the two former regions utilized widely varying dues formulas, the two systems continuing in use until this time.

The goal now is to identify a fair and common formula that will necessarily adjust current dues amounts and that can also moderate any resulting major increases, he said. Francis Pickering reviewed an agenda attachment identifying assessment formulas for consideration. There was discussion.

While it was suggested the reserve fund could be utilized to reduce the impact of the larger increases, it was thought that a policy for use of the reserve fund also needs to first be put in place. After further discussion it was agreed to table this topic for future consideration.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Annual Legislative Breakfast: Matt Knickerbocker noted that the breakfast this year will be on Thursday, January 14, 2016 from 8:30 to 10:30 AM, at the Cobbs Mill Inn, 12 Old Mill Road, in Weston, CT.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: Director Pickering noted that a federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) Comprehensive Economic

Development Strategy is required to qualify WestCOG municipalities for federal economic development and environmental clean-up funds. The goal is to merge and update the current two regional documents with their varying ages and formats.

He noted that in funding the \$100,000 cost the EDA has expressed willingness to participate at a 50% EDA share to 50% WestCOG share, less than the 80% EDA share to 20% WestCOG share anticipated by the WestCOG grant application. However that either option lessens staff dependence upon WestCOG funds.

There was a discussion of how the change in federal share could be addressed by revising the priority of staff work efforts. It was agreed that a fiscal impact statement of this development should be prepared. It was also agreed that action on this item will be scheduled after a formal funding proposal is received from EDA.

OPM Regional Performance Grant Applications: Francis Pickering reviewed the two applications to be submitted by the due date of 12/31.

The Regional Snow Plow Routing Study application will seek to adjust public works snow vehicle routes along municipal boundaries to make them more efficient. The municipalities included in the application are Bethel, New Fairfield, Newtown, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Stamford and Westport.

Then the Regional GIS Services and Data Acquisition Phase 2 application will build upon earlier grant phases by developing planimetric and contour data for the ten northern towns to match that being prepared for the southern towns.

Details on these proposed application were provided in the agenda packet. There was discussion. It was noted that grant application approvals are being sought from participating municipalities and not directly from WestCOG.

Regional Community Rating System Program: Francis Pickering explained that the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System includes a voluntary incentive for municipal floodplain management to exceed minimum standards. This is intended to obtain a five percent premium reduction for the Region's policy holders, potential rate payer savings within the 18 town area of \$810,000 annually.

He also noted that the CT Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation has awarded WestCOG a grant of \$23,152 to implement the flood insurance savings program for the region.

NEXT MEETING / ADJOURNMENT

Matt Knickerbocker noted that the next WestCOG meeting will be at the Ridgefield Library on Thursday, January 21, 2016.

There being no further business, on a motion made by Jayme Stevenson and seconded by Patricia Llodra the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM.