

APPROVED 3/17/2016 MINUTES

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

Ridgefield Library, 472 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877

Public access was also available at the WestCOG Stamford Office
888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford, CT 06901

Chairman Matthew Knickerbocker / Vice Chairman Jayme Stevenson
Secretary Susan Chapman / Treasurer Patricia Llodra

IN ATTENDANCE

- Bethel First Selectman Matthew Knickerbocker
- Bridgewater First Selectman Curtis Read
- Brookfield First Selectman Stephen Dunn
- Danbury Absent
- Darien First Selectman Jayme Stevenson
- Greenwich Alternate Deputy Comm. of Public Works James Michel (non-voting)

- New Canaan First Selectman Robert Mallozzi
- New Fairfield First Selectman Susan Chapman
- New Milford Mayor David Gronbach
- Newtown Absent
- Norwalk Development Director Elizabeth Stocker (non-voting)
- Redding First Selectman Julia Pemberton

- Ridgefield First Selectman Rudy Marconi
- Sherman Absent
- Stamford Mayor David Martin
- Weston First Selectman Nina Daniel
- Westport First Selectman James Marpe
- Wilton First Selectman Lynne Vanderslice

Also attending were State Representative Gail Lavielle, CTDOT Commissioner James Redeker and Planning Director Thomas Maziarz, Stamford Chief of Staff Michael Pollard, Stephanie Scavelli of the Norwalk Transit District, Richard Schreiner and Harrison Wenchell of HARtransit and Attorney Steven Mednick.

Additional attendees were Ridgefield Selectman's Assistant Charles Robbins, Weston resident Dr. Margaret Wirtenberg, David Fine of Danbury, Frances Ryan of the Ridgefield Health Department's BLAST Program, Tracy Alston of Eversource, WestCOG Director Francis Pickering and staff members David Hannon, Michael Towle, Patty Payne, Rob Sachnin, Sue Prosi and Jon Chew.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 PM by Chairman Matthew Knickerbocker. He introduced CTDOT Commissioner James Redeker and CTDOT Planning Director Thomas Maziarz who then addressed the Council.

GUEST SPEAKER JAMES REDEKER

Commissioner Redeker made a PowerPoint presentation of the Department's latest programs, data services and priorities. The Commissioner distributed a "Danbury Branch Report" and noted the 9% increase in Branch rail ridership during 2015.

He summarized upcoming improvements along the Danbury Branch as a dock yard upgrade in Norwalk, pedestrian and platform upgrades at Norwalk's Merritt 7 Station, and parking lot expansion at Bethel Station.

Responding to questions on I-95 widening, he stated that the widening proposal is not to be viewed as an old fashioned "stand alone" solution. Rather, that widening is just one component of an aggressive multi-modal strategy for I-95 linking congestion pricing, expanded passenger rail service and supplemental transit modes.

Responding to a question on tolls on interstates, no preliminary identification of locations has yet been made, he said. There were additional questions and discussion.

Commissioner Redeker advised that if frustration arises regarding any aspect of CTDOT's relationship with the municipality an email to him is welcomed and appropriate, that his staff is trained to respond fully to each such inquiry and to find solutions. The Commissioner was then thanked for his informative visit.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stephanie Scavelli noted her change of employment from HARTransit to the Norwalk Transit District.

State Representative Gail Lavielle updated members on proposals regarding state involvement in transit oriented development areas and the mandating of uniform school calendars.

David Fine of Danbury stated that May is National Bike Month and that there is a need to create municipal bike committees to facilitate safe bike use.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of 2/18/2016 Minutes: After brief discussion and on a motion made by Steve Dunn and seconded by Rudy Marconi, the minutes of the meeting of 2/18/2016 were unanimously approved.

Appointment of Pension Plan Trustees: Francis Pickering presented a draft resolution entitled "Certified Resolution - Pension Plan Trustees" that would authorize Matthew Knickerbocker, Elin P. Llodra and Francis Pickering to serve as trustees for the Council's 401(a) defined contribution pension plan and 457(b) elective deferral plan. After brief discussion and on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Curtis Read, the resolution was unanimously approved.

Amendment to WestCOG Budget: Director Pickering presented on this matter, referring to a draft resolution entitled "Certified Resolution of WestCOG to Execute FY15-16 Budget Amendment." He explained that the purposes of the adjustments shown are to revise the OPM Grant revenue source to reflect the final amount, a change to salaries to reflect two adjustments and one new employee, and corresponding employee related changes to tax, fringe, insurance costs, etc.

After brief discussion and on a motion made by Robert Mallozzi and seconded by Curtis Read, the resolution to amend the budget was unanimously approved. The representatives of Darien and Weston left the meeting at this point.

Authorization for FEMA Community Rating System Program: Francis Pickering reviewed the proposed new service to be authorized by the “Certified Resolution of WestCOG Authorizing the Execution of Agreements to Create the Regional CRS Program,” as detailed within an agenda attachment entitled “3/8/2016 Regional CRS Program.” The proposed agreement will be with the UConn Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation, he said.

It was explained that the Community Rating System feature of the National Flood Insurance Program is a voluntary incentive for municipal floodplain management to exceed minimum standards; premiums to the public are reduced if best practices are utilized. After brief discussion and on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Curtis Read, the CRS authorizing resolution was unanimously approved.

Matching Grant for Elderly and Disabled Transportation: A motion was made by Matt Knickerbocker and seconded by David Martin to add this item to the agenda, voted all aye. It was explained by Francis Pickering that in cooperation with CTDOT WestCOG solicits municipal applications for this state funded program.

Towards that end a draft resolution entitled “Certified Resolution of WestCOG Authorizing the Submission of Applications for the State Matching Grant Program for Elderly and Disabled Demand Responsive Transportation (CGS 13b-38bb)” is required.

After brief discussion and on a motion made by Robert Mallozzi and seconded by Lynne Vanderslice, the resolution was unanimously approved.

Bylaw Amendment to Authorize Unelected Proxies: Francis Pickering reviewed his memo on this issue entitled “3/10/2016 Proposed Bylaw Amendment Regarding Unelected Voting Proxies.” Within it he notes earlier Council discussions on the issue and also a recent survey of the approaches used by Connecticut’s eight other regional councils.

Citing the current bylaw requirement that all municipal representatives and alternates shall be municipal elected officials, he reviewed the key text proposed to be added: “If the Representative and the Alternate are unavailable, the chief elected official may appoint a meeting specific voting proxy by the submission of a notification addressed to the Council chairperson in advance of the meeting,” that text enabling an unelected voting proxy.

There was discussion of how this process would operate. David Martin reviewed the Stamford situation in which all elected officials other than the mayor are volunteers and thus not readily available to attend. Therefore it would be more advantageous to Stamford, and to WestCOG operations, for non-elected professional staff from the Mayor’s Office to be eligible for full alternate status, not the more cumbersome unelected proxy status proposed, he said.

There was discussion. Rudy Marconi commented that the intent of the merger and state mandated council of governments format was to have municipal elected officials interacting at meetings.

David Martin referred to that section of the agenda attachment which included the current definition of “Alternate Representation.” He stated that the best way forward was to remove text from this definition, enabling the alternate to be unelected, rather than add the meeting-specific unelected proxy text proposed.

He then made a motion that the bylaws be amended by the removed of the words “an elected official as” within the current definition of alternate, as follows: “A member

municipality may appoint, in the manner provided by ordinance of the legislative body of such municipality, ~~an elected official~~ as an alternate.” The motion was seconded by Steve Dunn. There was additional discussion.

As three members were not in attendance, two had left the meeting, and two were non-voting representatives, there were eleven members voting on this amendment. In favor were Bethel, Brookfield, New Canaan, New Milford, Redding, Stamford, Westport and Wilton. Opposed were Bridgewater, New Fairfield and Ridgefield. The motion carried.

Negotiation of Lease for New Office: Francis Pickering introduced Attorney Steven Mednick who has been negotiating a draft lease for WestCOG office space with the owners of 1 Riverside Road in the Sandy Hook section of Newtown. Attorney Mednick reviewed the lengthy negotiations thus far and the current difficulties. Basically, the owner is attempting to place in the lease liabilities on WestCOG that are excessive, he said.

There was considerable discussion, members citing their own experiences with lease documents. The consensus was that the latest lease proposal by Attorney Mednick is fair. Further, that if the latest offer is not accepted as is then negotiations are terminated. A motion to this effect was then made by Robert Mallozzi, seconded by Rudy Marconi, all aye.

Regional Tick Illness Prevention Program: Remarks on this topic were made by Rudy Marconi, supplemented by his letter to the Council dated 3/7/2016 and its accompanying “BLAST Prevention Program Accomplishments.”

Mr. Marconi noted that in 2008 CT DPH had funded a consultant \$50,000 to prepare a tick illness prevention “BLAST” education program, recently recognized as a model by the US Center for Disease Control.

By mutual agreement with CT DPH the BLAST educational effort has been housed at the Ridgefield Health Department. The program was intended by the state for Fairfield County use, and that geographic service area was agreed to by the Town of Ridgefield.

He stated that Ridgefield is requesting that WestCOG budget for \$20,000 annually to maintain and grow the BLAST program to serve the WestCOG area, continuing to operate out of the Ridgefield Health Department.

Members had a discussion of this proposal. There was then a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Robert Mallozzi to place \$20,000 for BLAST within the draft FY2017 WestCOG budget for consideration when that budget is voted upon. The motion was approved unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS / ADJOURNMENT

Matt Knickerbocker stated that the next WestCOG meeting will be held at the Ridgefield Library on Thursday, April 21, 2016. There being no further business, on a motion made by Robert Mallozzi and seconded by Rudy Marconi the meeting was adjourned at 2:10 PM.