

APPROVED 4/21/2016 MINUTES

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

Ridgefield Library, 472 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877

Public access was also available at the WestCOG Stamford Office

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 Mayor Mark Boughton
- Darien First Selectman Jayme Stevenson
- Greenwich First Selectman Peter Tesei

- New Canaan First Selectman Robert Mallozzi
- 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 Chief of Staff Michael Pollard (non-voting)
- Weston First Selectman Nina Daniel
- Westport First Selectman James Marpe
- Wilton First Selectman Lynne Vanderslice

Stamford Transportation Director Joshua Benson, Richard Schreiner of HARTransit, Supervising Planner Roxane Fromson of CTDOT, Andrea Rynn of the Western CT Health Network, Weston resident Dr. Margaret Wirtenberg, WestCOG Director Francis Pickering and staff members David Hannon, Carl Zimmerman, Patty Payne, Rob Sachnin, and Jon Chew.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:35 PM by Chairman Matthew Knickerbocker with a quorum determined to be present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Weston resident Dr. Margaret Wirtenberg spoke to the proposed state budget cuts affecting municipalities.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of 3/17/2016 Minutes: On a motion made by Steve Dunn and seconded by Mark Boughton, the minutes of the meeting of 3/17/2016 were unanimously approved.

Create Economic Advisory Group: Matt Knickerbocker addressed this topic, stating that a regional economic plan, or CEDS as defined by the federal Economic Development Administration, is required to qualify municipalities for certain federal grants. And that members have approved the development of such a plan for the region.

As the federal funding agency requires an advisory group of public and private stakeholders to guide the planning process, members have been solicited as follows:

- John Harmon, SCORE Advisor
- James Marpe, First Selectman of Westport
- Jayme Stevenson, First Selectman of Darien
- Lisa Scails, Director of the Cultural Alliance of Western CT

- Hal Kurfehs, Brookfield EDC and VP of Coldwell Banker Commercial
- Janice Chrzescijanek, Bethel Director of Economic Development
- Lisa Mercurio, Vice President of the Business Council of Fairfield County
- Jackie Lightfield, Stamford Partnership, Greater Norwalk Arts Council and Norwalk 2.0

- Valerie Bisceglia, Business Advisor to the CT Small Business Development Center
- Joe Ecolano, Associate Director of the CT Small Business Development Center
- Stephen Bull, President of the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce
- Paul Steinmetz, Director of Community Relations and Public Affairs for WCSU
- Thomas Madden, Director of Economic Development for the City of Stamford

Matt Knickerbocker reviewed the list and expressed the Council's appreciation for their willingness to assist. He then requested that the Council appoint these individuals to the new Economic Advisory Group. After brief discussion and on a motion made by Rob Mallozzi and seconded by Rudy Marconi, the appointments were unanimously approved.

Bylaw Amendment to Allow Unelected Alternates: Matt Knickerbocker reviewed the current status of this issue, noting that as approved on 3/17 the proposed amendment reads 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, who shall, in the absence of the Chief Elected Official, have the same rights and privileges as the Representative. Each Member shall notify the Council in writing of the appointment of an alternate."

He then referenced an agenda attachment noting that in hindsight, the amendment approved 3/17 would not retain the three limiting conditions upon alternates required by other bylaw provisions. There was then a discussion on how to proceed.

The dialogue reflected the two points of view as expressed at the March meeting. On one side that in some municipalities elected officials other than the chief elected official are not readily available to attend WestCOG meetings, so such an amendment is helpful. But on the other hand the intent of the WestCOG statutory authorization is for elected officials to represent their municipalities at Council meetings.

The agenda attachment included an example of unelected proxy representation as used by another regional council and this was discussed. Mark Boughton stated that while not elected, authorization of proxies may be a suitable compromise if use of the proxy option was limited. Further discussion led to the following proposal:

"A Member municipality may appoint, in the manner provided by ordinance of the legislative body of such municipality, an elected official as an alternate. If the Representative and the alternate are unable to attend a meeting, the former may appoint a meeting-specific proxy.

The appointing party shall notify the Council Chair of said appointment in writing in advance of the service of the alternate or, in the case of a proxy, in advance of each meeting at which the proxy will serve. Receipt of a properly executed appointment notification grants the alternate or proxy the same rights and privileges of a Representative, with the following conditions:

1. Neither an alternate nor a proxy may serve as an officer of the Council or of any committee established by the Council.
2. Neither an alternate nor a proxy may vote on amendments to these bylaws.
3. All actions taken by an alternate or a proxy with regard to Council matters, including testimony provided and votes cast, shall be considered to be the official position of the respective Representative.
4. A Representative may utilize the meeting-specific proxy option no more than three times during a calendar year."

There was additional discussion. Then on a motion made by Mark Boughton and a second by Steve Dunn the above language was approved, all aye. It was noted that in accordance with procedures for bylaw amendments the change will be presented at the May 19th meeting for its required second vote.

INFORMATION ITEMS

February 2016 Financial Reports: Financial Manager Patty Payne reviewed the agenda attachment entitled "WestCOG Operating Statement for the Eight Months Ending 2/29/2016" and also the "Balance Sheet for Assets, Liabilities and Capital as of February 29, 2016." She noted that the FY2017 WestCOG budget was now in preparation.

Office Consolidation: Francis Pickering updated members on the pending consolidation of the Stamford and Brookfield offices into one WestCOG office at 1 Riverside Road in the Sandy Hook section of Newtown. The tough position taken by members at the last meeting had broken the negotiating impasse, he said, with the relocation to proceed and the move planned for the summer.

Drug Task Force Update: Director Pickering described how the Task Force has sought to define itself and its goals relating to the opioid abuse crisis and how to best use its resources and expertise to help combat the heroin and opiate abuse problem in each municipality.

The group found that while many aspects of this issue are addressed by local and state agencies and non-profits, these entities do not communicate enough with each other. This is true even within one community, where the town departments with vital roles may not share information, he said. Accordingly, the Task Force will assist municipal response thru implementation of the following Coordination Plan:

TASK FORCE GOAL

Assist the 18 mayors and first selectmen to improve municipal response to the opioid abuse crisis.

TASK FORCE OBJECTIVES

1. Meet at least quarterly to network and share information.
2. Periodic presentations by Task Force members at WestCOG meetings.
3. Structure "Opioid Crisis Update" to be forwarded to mayors and first selectmen.
Updates consist of at least:
 - Baseline Statistics, updated as needed
 - Recommendations to improve municipal response

- Reminder to meet with department heads and key staff to discuss recommendations
- Reminder to communicate with respective Local Prevention Councils and Regional Action Councils

GOALS FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERS

Reduce barriers within municipality to enable a more coordinated response between town departments, with an emphasis on data sharing and communication. More presence at anti-drug abuse events. Legislative advocacy at the State level.

ACTION BY MUNICIPAL LEADERS

1. Facilitate discussions with department heads and key staff after Updates are published.
2. Directly support and empower the activities of your local prevention council and regional action council.
3. Legislative advocacy at the state for bills identified by the Drug Task Force.
4. Include drugs issues within the annual State of the Town address.

ACTION BY WESTCOG

1. Continue to enable staff to facilitate meetings and communications.
2. Schedule Task Force representatives as speakers at WestCOG meetings.
3. Use recommendations from Task Force to update the legislative agenda.

There was then a considerable discussion of aspects of the drug crisis. Andrea Rynn of the Western CT Health Network participated in the discussion.

Regional GIS Update: Senior GIS Manager Carl Zimmerman presented on this topic. Long awaited planimetric data, photo imagery and topography for the eight southern municipalities have now been fully received from vendors.

A milestone for the Council, these communities now have a complete set of high resolution imagery, one-foot contour topography, and extremely precise planimetric features including roads, buildings, tree lines, sidewalks, etc., he said.

As for the ten northern WestCOG municipalities, the GIS staff is conducting quality control and assessment reviews of draft imagery and topography. The thirty photo tiles that did not conform to specifications were recently re-flown by the vendor. Curtis Reed expressed his enthusiasm for GIS products being developed as they pertain to Bridgewater.

On other GIS services Mr. Zimmerman reported that Stamford is being assisted with MS4 stormwater analysis. And that a preliminary version of Web GIS service will be operational within a few months. Francis Pickering added that GIS capabilities are being organized to assist the success of municipal applications submitted thru the CTDOT Local Road Accident Reduction Program.

Regional Internet Technology Coordination: Director Pickering cited his recent one on one meetings with members regarding their regional service ideas, and that regional leadership for municipal IT development was rated favorably.

Michael Pollard stated that students in the internet security specialty at WCSU could be an asset to the region. There was other discussion with members favoring development of this service concept.

Summer Intern: Director Pickering stated that volunteer intern Soumya Sudhakar will be joining the staff for the summer. She is a sophomore in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at Princeton University, with minors in Environmental Policy and Urban Studies. Ms. Sudhakar was valedictorian at her high school in Warren, NJ and has won numerous awards.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Legislative Session and Budget Impacts: There were a variety of issues discussed. Director Pickering will summarize them as a draft to legislators, copies to be circulated to members beforehand.

Northwest CT Food Hub Feasibility Study: Francis Pickering reviewed the plans of the adjacent Northwest COG to develop a “food hub,” over 350 of which are now operating in the United States. The goal of such a Hub is to support local farmers by providing new sales channels, marketing and combined access to wholesalers. The initiative is particularly relevant to northern portions of the WestCOG area, he said.

He requested that WestCOG provide a letter of support for the Northwest COG’s Food Hub Feasibility Study grant application, information from which could be included in the upcoming WestCOG regional economic development plan. After brief discussion a motion was made to that effect by Pat Llodra, seconded by Susan Chapman, all aye.

Regional Election Monitor: Director Pickering reported on the hiring process. Three applications have been received, with registrars from Brookfield and Darien included on the selection panel, ranking of candidates completed and an offer made.

ADJOURNMENT

Matt Knickerbocker stated that the next WestCOG meeting will be held at the Ridgefield Library on Thursday, May 19, 2016.

There being no further business, on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Rob Mallozzi, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45 PM.