

**FINAL 9/15/2016 MINUTES**

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

Held at the Bethel Library, 189 Greenwood Avenue  
Bethel, Connecticut 06801

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

**MEMBERS ATTENDING**

- Bethel First Selectman Matthew Knickerbocker
- Bridgewater Absent
- Brookfield First Selectman Stephen Dunn
- Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton
- Darien First Selectman Jayme Stevenson
- Greenwich Absent
  
- New Canaan First Selectman Robert Mallozzi
- New Fairfield First Selectman Susan Chapman
- New Milford Mayor David Gronbach
- Newtown First Selectman Patricia Llodra
- Norwalk Absent
- Redding Absent
  
- Ridgefield First Selectman Rudy Marconi
- Sherman Absent
- Stamford Mayor David Martin
- Weston Alternate Selectman Chris Spaulding
- Westport First Selectman James Marpe
- Wilton First Selectman Lynne Vanderslice

**OTHERS ATTENDING**

CTDOT Supervising Planner Roxane Fromson, Weston resident Dr. Margaret Wirtenberg, Stamford Transportation Bureau Chief Joshua Benson, Westport Lyme Disease educator Orna Grand, Richard Schreiner of HARTransit, and WestCOG staff members Francis Pickering, Patricia Payne, David Hannon, Michael Towle, Carl Zimmerman, Thomas Wittig, Robert Brinton, Robert Sachnin and Jonathan Chew.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 12:35 PM by Chairman Matthew Knickerbocker. He provided an introduction to Bethel, then distributed to each member a copy of the town's history and a jar of locally made Billy's Barbecue Sauce.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public comment.

### **CCM TAX PROPOSALS**

Chairman of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) Mark Boughton spoke to this topic. A CCM Task Force is formulating a new report documenting that the municipal property tax system is unsustainable.

In the report state legislators will be urged to take several steps, including expanding the variety of taxes communities can collect and committing to sharing of state sales tax receipts. Education financing reform is another key area for action. And the dozens of municipal property tax exemptions mandated by state law force all communities to raise property tax rates, he said.

There was considerable discussion of the initiative and members' involvement. It was noted that the resulting report will be formally presented to WestCOG and Connecticut's other eight councils of governments.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

**Approval of 6/16/2016 Minutes:** After review and on a motion made by Susan Chapman and seconded by Robert Mallozzi, the minutes of the meeting of 6/16/2016 were unanimously approved, except for abstentions by Lynne Vanderslice and Chris Spaulding.

**DEMHS Region 5 Three COG MOU:** Rudy Marconi spoke to this topic, stating that the proposed MOU is between WestCOG, the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments and the Northwest Hills Council of Governments. The purpose is to facilitate administration with the Northwest Hills COG as distributor of DEMHS funding to the three COGs, he said.

Dave Hannon then reviewed some of the required activities and deliverables for each COG as included in the MOU, for the period 10/1/2016 thru 5/31/2019, with \$15,600 to be made available to WestCOG during that period. After brief discussion and on a motion made by Jayme Stevenson and seconded by Robert Mallozzi, Executive Director Francis Pickering was authorized to sign the MOU.

**Resolution for CT OPM Grant:** On a motion made by Matt Knickerbocker and second by Jim Marpe, it was voted unanimously to add this item to the agenda.

Francis Pickering explained that as an administrative matter, WestCOG must adopt a resolution accepting the annual CT OPM grant award of \$478,804.01 for FY2017. On a motion made by David Gronbach and seconded by Robert Mallozzi, the requested resolution was unanimously approved.

### **INFORMATION ITEMS**

**June 2016 Financial Report:** The Financial Report as an agenda attachment was reviewed by Pat Llodra. Upcoming draft policies are to be structured for creation of a funds balance policy and revision to the municipal dues formula. Financial reporting will also be restructured to be more representative of program areas, she said. Additional comments were made by Patty Payne.

**Agreement with Ridgefield for Tick Illness Prevention Services:** Rudy Marconi spoke to this topic, referencing the FY2017 service agreement for \$20,000 in the agenda attachment. He then introduced Ridgefield Health Department BLAST Program

Coordinator Jennifer Reid who gave a PowerPoint presentation on the BLAST program, that educational acronym standing for “**B**athe after coming indoors, **L**ook your body over, **A**pply repellants, **S**pray the yard and **T**reat pets.”

She noted that the BLAST Program was developed in 2008 to raise awareness of the most effective Lyme disease prevention practices for Fairfield County communities. A 10 town BLAST promotional effort was sponsored by HVCEO from 2008 to 2015.

It is now continuing by successor region WestCOG via the services agreement with Ridgefield. There was discussion. Members will provide Mrs. Reid with a contact person from each community for coordinating her educational efforts.

**DEMHS Region 1 Field Day:** Rob Mallozzi spoke to this topic, noting that the Field Day will be held Noon to 3 PM on September 26 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport. The program flyer was attached to the agenda.

The field day will showcase recent investments and mutual-aid and partner resources that can assist during significant emergency events where the focus is on municipal leadership. The best time for municipal leaders to attend will be 12:30 to 1:30 PM, he said.

**DEMHS Region 5 Crisis Leadership Training:** Rudy Marconi reviewed the material on this topic attached to the agenda. He noted that all eighteen WestCOG members are invited, not just those in the northern ten WestCOG towns that are part of the DEMHS 5 area.

A seminar format will present case studies that examine the dynamics of crisis leadership and decision-making from a senior official’s perspective. The date is November 3, 7:30 AM to Noon at the Litchfield Inn on Route 202 in Litchfield.

**Update on USDOT Proposed Regulations for MPOs:** Francis Pickering addressed this topic, a follow up from the initial presentation and discussion at the combined SWRMPO and HVMPO meetings on 8/12/2016.

He distributed the national summary of responses to the US DOT proposal as prepared by Thomas Wittig. The data show that eighty-six percent of comments submitted were opposed. And that this opposition was consistent both nationally and across all types of respondents. Further, that comments asking for withdrawal of the rule or cancellation outnumbered those supporting it by 25 to 1.

**Office Relocation Update:** Francis Pickering addressed this topic, informing members that the WestCOG offices in Stamford and Brookfield have been consolidated into one office at 1 Riverside Road in the Sandy Hook section of Newtown.

A ribbon cutting and open house will be forthcoming. He then introduced new WestCOG employees Thomas Wittig and Robert Brinton, each of whom provided a summary of their background.

**Army Corps of Engineers Flood Study:** Mike Towle addressed this topic, stating that the Army Corps of Engineers coastal flood management study is now moving ahead. The project area is both Fairfield and New Haven Counties and the study duration is three years.

As the goal is “shovel ready” priority remediation projects, development of study recommendations will be taken beyond the conceptual stage. Improvements endorsed by this federal study will be eligible for a two thirds federal cost share.

WestCOG staff will assist the Corps with data gathering and web site hosting. There was discussion, including the relationship of this process to FEMA required hazard mitigation plans.

**Update on Community Rating System:** Mike Towle addressed this issue, reviewing how the National Flood Insurance Program’s Community Rating System (CRS) includes a voluntary incentive for municipal floodplain management to exceed minimum standards. The result is that policy holder premiums are slightly reduced.

Stamford, Westport and Newtown are current participants in the CRS program, with Danbury, Norwalk, Darien and Greenwich to be assisted by WestCOG to join. The overall goal is to reduce the amount of time required by municipal staff to participate by providing as many technical materials as possible from WestCOG.

**MS4 and Stormwater Related Resources:** Mike Towle then reviewed the services that WestCOG is providing to municipalities to meet federal MS4 stormwater management plan requirements. These include development of municipal plan sectional templates, identification of missing legal authority, and sample methodologies to meet various federally required components of the municipal MS4 plan.

**Regional GIS Update:** GIS Manager Carl Zimmerman spoke to this topic. The new topography layer is now available for the entire region, also contemporary wetlands data. The planned web portal will soon be operational, after which unique municipal layers can be added as desired. He also reviewed the steps WestCOG is taking to provide the municipal maps required for inclusion in the eighteen municipal MS4 plans.

**New Traffic Counting Program:** Francis Pickering spoke to this topic, stating that the traffic counting program is now operational with Jamie Dawson in the lead. For a municipality seeking traffic counts, video cameras are placed temporarily to record all movements.

The resultant video is then processed by a company in the cloud to yield vehicular volume and turning movement information. Bicyclists and pedestrians can also be accounted for. The first two demonstration projects are in Danbury and New Milford, he said.

**Legislative Agenda:** Francis Pickering spoke to this topic, stating that the CCM tax reform initiative will likely be a centerpiece for the upcoming 2017 WestCOG legislative agenda. It is also timely to consider what other initiatives may be priorities, he said.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Knickerbocker stated that the next WestCOG meeting will be on October 20, 2016. There being no further business, on a motion made by Pat Llodra and seconded by Rudy Marconi and voted unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 2:25 PM.