

APPROVED Council Minutes

For the 12/15/2016 Regular Meeting
Held at the Ridgefield Visiting Nurse Association
27 Governor Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut 06877

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

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Bethel.....First Selectman Matthew Knickerbocker
Bridgewater.....First Selectman Curtis Read
Brookfield.....First Selectman Stephen Dunn
Danbury.....Alternate Planning Director Sharon Calitro
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.....Mayor Harry Rilling
Redding.....First Selectman Julia Pemberton
Ridgefield.....First Selectman Rudy Marconi
Sherman.....First Selectman Clay Cope
Stamford.....Mayor David Martin
Weston.....First Selectman Nina Daniel
Westport.....First Selectman James Marpe
Wilton.....First Selectman Lynne Vanderslice

OTHERS ATTENDING

Newtown First Selectman's Intern John Board, Tracy Alston and Garrett Sheehan of Eversource, Patrice Gillespie of the CT Sustainable Energy Network, CTDOT Supervising Planner Roxane Fromson, Weston resident Dr. Margaret Wirtenberg, HARTransit Development Director Richard Schreiner and Planner Harrison

Wenchell, Stamford Chief of Staff Michael Pollard, Norwalk Chief of Staff Laoise King, Stamford Traffic Engineer Robert Zaitooni, WestCOG staff members Francis Pickering, David Hannon, Robert Brinton, William Kenny, Nicole Sullivan, Patty Payne, Robert Sachnin, Carl Zimmerman and Jonathan Chew.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:35 PM by Chairman Matthew Knickerbocker.

REGIONALISM PROPOSED BY THE CT DEPT. OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Chairman Knickerbocker then introduced Ellen Blaschinski, CT DPH Chief of Staff. She distributed two documents entitled “Benefits of Local Health District and Department Integration” and “What Does Public Health Do for my Community?”

CT DPH is proposing to reduce the 72 local health departments in Connecticut to a lesser number in order to benefit residents, municipalities and overall public health outcomes, she said.

She noted that a regional consolidation could follow county boundaries. The suggested target for a new minimum funding mandate could be 1.5% of the municipal budget to be dedicated to public health. After additional presentation there was a discussion with members. The comments made by WestCOG members are summarized below.

Several members had estimated the cost increase for providing their public health services under the DPH consolidation mandate. In all examples, the new cost was hundreds of thousands of dollars higher than the current expenditure. Members noted that the consistent theme of the regionalization movement in Connecticut has been to lower municipal costs; it is therefore perplexing that the CT DPH regionalization proposal seeks to increase costs.

Further, as local public health department outcomes in the area are already good if not excellent, how can municipal leaders justify a dramatically increased local expenditure? Related to this was the view that taxpayers will not favor mandated increases being reallocated regionally to those municipalities with lower health outcomes.

It was stated that if economies of scale are part of the rationale for the consolidation effort, then the savings should be estimated in some detail for the proposal to be evaluated. Ms. Blaschinski confirmed that before and after cost comparisons had not been attempted. As for the proposed regional management structure, it was viewed as diluting local supervision the proximity of which promotes quality service.

A further concern of WestCOG members was that county boundaries in Connecticut are archaic and not suitable as the bounds for any new regional service.

Members also noted little evidence that state legislators were favoring the CT DPH proposal. After further discussion Ms. Blaschinski was thanked for her visit.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Weston resident Dr. Margaret Wirtenberg commented that legislators are considering a mandate for the introduction of temporary housing into each municipality and that this initiative should be monitored.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of 10/20/2016 Minutes: After review and on a motion made by Pat Llodra and seconded by Susan Chapman, the minutes of the meeting of 10/20/2016 were unanimously approved, except for abstentions by Curtis Read, Harry Rilling, Clay Cope, and Nina Daniel who were not present at that meeting.

Meeting Schedule for 2017: The draft 2017 Meeting Schedule as attached to the agenda was then reviewed. On a motion made by Stephen Dunn and seconded by Curtis Read, the schedule was unanimously approved.

Title VI Civil Rights and Public Participation Plan: It was agreed to omit a staff presentation on this matter as the document was discussed at the immediately preceding MPO meeting. On a motion made by Pat Llodra and seconded by Curtis Read the “Draft Public Participation Plan for WestCOG, HVMPO and SWRMPO” was unanimously approved. Harry Rilling left the meeting at this point.

Consultant Agreement for Norwalk Main Avenue Transportation Plan: Jon Chew presented an overview of the planning study, which will document this key corridor’s traffic congestion issues allowing grant applications for remediation to be formulated. He conveyed Harry Rilling’s support for the study.

Council approval was then requested of an agenda attachment entitled “Resolution Authorizing a Professional Services Agreement with Urban Engineers, Inc. to Prepare a Transportation Plan for Main Avenue in Norwalk, CT.” After brief discussion and on a motion made by Susan Chapman and seconded by Jayme Stevenson, the requested resolution was unanimously approved.

Proposal for Uniform Dues Formula: Pat Llodra, representing the Executive Committee and following up on her presentation at the last Council meeting, reviewed three draft dues formulas attached to the agenda.

The original proposal had shown municipal dues apportioned 50% by the municipal percent of the region’s population, the other 50% by the municipal percent of the region’s land area. She said that due to comments received this base option has been supplemented with two variations; population at 55% with land area at 45%, and population at 60% with land area at 40%.

There was discussion. The result was a request for an additional factor, a uniform, identical flat fee for Council membership, be considered in the formula. Pat Llodra agreed that tables with this factor will be prepared for review at the next meeting.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Nominating Committee for Officers: After discussion four members agreed to serve on the Nominating Committee for upcoming officers. These were Steve Dunn, Julia Pemberton, Peter Tesei, and Clay Cope. Matt Knickerbocker requested that they also consider an officer rotation policy, whereby the recommendation is for officers to move up one position with the Committee focused upon filling officer slots thereby vacated.

Legislative Committee and Breakfast: Francis Pickering stated that the annual Legislative Breakfast is scheduled for 8 AM on Monday, January 23, 2017 at the office of the Ridgefield Visiting Nurse Association, 27 Governor Street in Ridgefield. The Legislative Breakfast will be followed by MPO and WestCOG meetings. Members requested early receipt of the Legislative Agenda.

Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) Update: Rob Sachnin provided an update on this state funded program for improving transportation in municipalities. Due to changes in cost estimates and project schedules, staff will recommend some adjustments to the capital program at the January WestCOG meeting.

Geographic Information Systems Update: Carl Zimmerman provided a demonstration of the WestCOG GIS web portal now open for review and comment. Staff review of the accuracy of hundreds of thousands of building footprints is largely complete. The new topographic data, accurate to within one inch, is suitable for engineering applications, a great advantage for municipalities, he said. There was a discussion of municipal parcel map layers and how they may be integrated into the regional GIS system.

RETIREMENT OF DAVID HANNON

Chairman Knickerbocker then presented retiring Deputy Director David Hannon with a certificate of appreciation from the Council for his twenty-seven years of outstanding service. There were then individual comments of appreciation to Dave, followed by applause.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Knickerbocker stated that the next WestCOG meeting will be held on January 23, 2017 at the office of the Ridgefield Visiting Nurse Association. There being no further business, on a motion made by Pat Llodra and seconded by Jim Marpe and voted unanimously the meeting was adjourned at 1:50 PM.