

Approved Council Minutes

For the 3/16/2017 Regular Meeting

Held at the Ridgefield Visiting Nurse Association
27 Governor Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut 06877

Chairman Jayme Stevenson – Vice Chairman Susan Chapman
Secretary David Gronbach – Treasurer Patricia Llodra

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Bethel..... First Selectman Matthew Knickerbocker
Bridgewater..... First Selectman Curtis Read
Brookfield First Selectman Stephen Dunn
Danbury..... Absent
Darien First Selectman Jayme Stevenson
Greenwich..... Absent

New Canaan..... Absent
New Fairfield First Selectman Susan Chapman
New Milford..... Mayor David Gronbach
Newtown..... Public Works Director Frederick Hurley
Norwalk..... Chief of Staff Laoise King
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..... Absent

OTHERS ATTENDING

Former Connecticut Congressman Robert Steele and former Weston First Selectman Woody Bliss representing the Coalition Against Casino Expansion in Connecticut, Roxane Fromson of CTDOT, Patricia Cimarosa and Martin Fox of the Westport Transit District, and Westport Town Meeting Transit Committee Member John Suggs, Kayleigh Lombardi and Sean Gbio of the CT Partnership for Strong Communities, Richard Schreiner and Harrison Wenchell of HARtransit, Weston Town Attorney Patricia Sullivan, Eversource representative Garrett Sheehan, Newtown Town Engineer Ronald Bolmer, WestCOG staff members Francis Pickering, Kristin Hadjstylianos, Michael Sullivan, William Kenny, Nicole Sullivan, Kristin Floberg, Robert Sachnin and Jonathan Chew.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 pm by Chairman Jayme Stevenson.

FEATURED GUEST

Partnership for Strong Communities: Chairman Stevenson introduced Kayleigh Lombardi of the CT Partnership for Strong Communities. Ms. Lombardi made a presentation regarding the affordable housing planning services available to municipalities from the Partnership, which is based in Hartford. Details on the services available are at pschousing.org, she said. A handout was distributed entitled “Housing in CT: Highlights and Key Facts.” Sean Gbio assisted with the presentation. A discussion followed.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public comment.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of 2/23/2017 Minutes: After review and on a motion made Rudy Marconi and seconded by Matt Knickerbocker, the minutes of the meeting of 2/23/2017 were unanimously approved.

Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) Adjustments: Rob Sachnin then provided background on proposed LOTICIP capital program changes. He noted that as municipal improvement projects progress, revisions to scopes, schedules and costs inevitably occur, thus a periodic need to adjust the LOTICIP capital program.

He reviewed a table in the agenda packet entitled “Draft WestCOG HVR LOTICIP Program 3/16/2017 Proposed Revisions.” Two revisions were proposed thereon: a) Newtown Toddy Hill Road Bridge Replacement cost increase from \$2,596,000 to \$3,200,000, and 2) Bethel Downtown TOD and Streetscape \$1,500,000 total moved from FY2016 to FY2017.

There was a discussion as to the issues necessitating the changes. Then on a motion made by Julia Pemberton and seconded by Matt Knickerbocker, the requested LOTICIP program adjustments were unanimously approved.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

Legislative Update: The Chairman invited former CT Congressman Robert Steele to address the Council. Mr. Steele reviewed legislative proposals before the General Assembly that would authorize additional casinos in Connecticut.

He then summarized studies documenting that the supposed economic benefits of casino gambling are nil. Further, that the negative social impacts, especially the propensity for gambling addiction facilitated by proximity, are extreme. Mr. Steel was assisted in his presentation by former Weston First Selectman Woody Bliss.

The effort to stop the development of additional casinos is coordinated thru the Coalition Against Casino Expansion in Connecticut, they said. WestCOG was invited to join. The presentation was followed by discussion. It was agreed that a survey of member’s views on this topic will be undertaken.

Francis Pickering gave an update on the effort by the CT Department of Health to regionalize all municipal health departments. The first proposal for utilizing county boundaries has been replaced by use of council of government boundaries, but the new entity is not to be housed in in the COG office.

He provided other details, noting that no cost savings or advantages of regional consolidation had been identified by the proponents. Other proposed legislation would prohibit such forced consolidation and these efforts are in a strong position, he said.

Federal Rail Administration (FRA) Northeast Corridor Planning: Francis Pickering addressed this issue, updating members on FRA's planning initiative. The FRA has received all comments, including those of WestCOG. We now await the release of the FRA's Record of Decision for the Tier 1 Final EIS. He will keep members informed.

Water Utility Coordinating Committee Update: Curtis Read, the Council's appointee to the WUCC, a CT Department of Public Health process, noted recent WUCC activities. Most of the work to date has focused on development of "Exclusive Service Areas" for larger water companies, these to be state recommended expansion areas in a regulated environment. A primary value of ESA's is to provide rapid backup service if small water companies fail, he said.

William Kenny then distributed an info sheet entitled "3/16/2017 Water Utility Coordinating Committee Update." He noted contact emails, a link to the draft ESA maps and other details. There was discussion.

American the Beautiful Grant: Francis Pickering distributed a memo entitled "3/9/2017 Greening the Air: Urban Tree Canopy Assessment" and then summarized its contents. A grant award from CT DEEP of \$12,000 is to be received, with an in-kind staff services match by WestCOG of the same amount.

The overall goals are to reduce air pollution and energy consumption, enhance wildlife habitat and increase property values. Mike Towle will manage the project.

The first product will be a regionwide tree analysis, followed by a municipal model plan to be entitled "The Norwalk Tree Plan." That more detailed plan will enable grant applications for types of trees in environmentally useful locations in Norwalk, he said.

OTHER BUSINESS / ADJOURNMENT

Clay Cope requested that representatives of Eversource be invited to the next Council meeting to discuss storm cleanup; he views the company's performance as significantly improved over past efforts.

Chairman Stevenson stated that the next WestCOG meeting will be held on April 20, 2017 at the office of the Ridgefield Visiting Nurse Association. There being no further business, on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Matt Knickerbocker the meeting was adjourned at 1:20 pm.