



APPROVED Minutes

August 13th, 2020 at 1:00 pm | Web Conference

Action Items in Red.

Members Attending

Rudy Marconi	Town of Ridgefield
Jim Marpe	Town of Westport
PJ Prunty	Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce
Brian Griffin	Greater Norwalk Chamber of Commerce - Absent
Robert E. Mallozzi	Bankwell Financial Group, Inc
Jackie Lightfield	Norwalk 2.0 - Absent
Tracey Alston	Eversource - Absent
Sean Loughran	Western CT University - Absent
Terrence Cheng	UConn- Stamford - Absent
Andrea Rynn	Western CT Health Network
Tom Long	The WorkPlace - Absent
Hal Kurfehs	Coldwell Banker Commercial
Lisa Scails	Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut
Betsy Paynter	CityCenter Danbury - Absent
Mendi Blue-Paca	Fairfield County Community Foundation - Absent
Lisa Mercurio	Business Council of Fairfield County - Absent

Francis Pickering, Mike Towle, Todd Fontanella, and Tucker Beckett were also in attendance with WestCOG.

Meeting Call to Order

1:03 PM

Public Participation

No Public Participation

Approve 4/9/2020 Meeting Minutes

Postponed for next WCEDD Meeting.

For language assistance or other accommodations, contact Western Connecticut Council of Governments at least five business days prior to the meeting at help@westcog.org. Para asistencia con el idioma y otras adaptaciones, por favor póngase en contacto con WestCOG por lo menos cinco días hábiles antes de la reunión al help@westcog.org. Para obter assistência língua ou outras acomodações, entre em contato com WestCOG pelo menos cinco dias úteis antes da reunião em help@westcog.org. Pour obtenir de l'aide linguistique ou d'autres mesures d'adaptation, contactez WestCOG au moins cinq jours ouvrables avant la réunion à help@westcog.org.

1. WestCOG will provide both 4/9/2020 and 8/13/3030 Minutes for the next meeting.

EDD Federal Designation

Mike Towle and Francis Pickering provided the significance of the economic development district designation as it pertains to WestCOG and WCEDD. The direct benefits from EDD Federal designation include access to new funding streams for WCEDD and WestCOG. WestCOG, in partnership with the other COGs of CT has sent an application for competitive [EDA Cares Act Recovery Assistance](#). This funding can amount up to \$200k for the WCEDD and \$200k for WestCOG. This funding can be used for economic recovery efforts pertaining to COVID-19. Next steps regarding how the funding will be utilized are postponed until confirmation of a funding award. It was noted this funding would not be usable for business relief.

WestCOG has also started the grant application process for the [EDA Planning Program](#). This grant program would allow annual financial support in the range of \$40k -70k. The funding would be utilized to fund dedicated staff time toward the maintenance, and implementation of WestCOG and WCEDD's [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\)](#). Existing COG resources have allowed for limited staff time towards WCEDD efforts, such as hosting WCEDD meetings, and CEDS data updates.

2. WestCOG will provide a link to EDD grant opportunities. [EDA Grants Page](#).
3. WCEDD members are encouraged to review these grant opportunities for guidance on what grants for WestCOG to apply to.
4. WestCOG will be applying for the EDA Planning Program by the next WCEDD meeting.

CEDS Updates

Mike Towle and Francis Pickering reported on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update process. The EDA requires that the CEDS is to be updated every 5 years. The CEDS document recommends that WestCOG provides annual data updates. A data update includes updating tables and figures and report on economic indicators. Last data update was performed in 2019.

Additionally, following the rapidly changing economic environment within the region (and globally) due to COVID-19 there may be a need to perform a substantial review of the CEDS strategy to better align with current economic needs. This may occur in the addition of new goals and strategies, new economic indicators, or modifications to existing items within the CEDS. The initial step will include the development of a google collaborative document to capture recommendations. These recommendations and next steps on an update process will be discussed during the October WCEDD Meeting.

Lisa Scails recommended an item for consideration as a new CEDS item for the update (a pre-pandemic topic); to push towards the State, recommendations regarding designation of cultural districts. Current designations are restrictive and make the designation of districts challenging. Regional designations, and the creation of a regional web map of cultural institutions within the WCEDD region.

5. WestCOG will complete the 2020 data update by the October WCEDD meeting.

6. WestCOG will develop a collaborative google document to capture CEDS update recommendations and summarize responses by the October WCEDD meeting.
7. WCEDD members will provide recommendations for an updated CEDS within the WCEDD CEDS Update Google Document.

Long Term Recovery Update

Mike Towle and Francis Pickering provide an update on the Long-Term Recovery (LTR) Committees organized under the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DEMHS). Each of the five DEMHS regions across the state have created LTR steering committees which are set up to identify unmet needs within all sectors and represent all people within the region. Currently the state plans to inventory these unmet needs and there are no dedicated funds currently to address them. WestCOG covers two [DEMHS region districts](#) and Francis Pickering, Executive Director of WestCOG, serves on the steering committee for both DEMHS Regions 1 and 5.

The steering committees, to capture representation from various sectors and stakeholders, have created subcommittees to report back to the steering committees. WestCOG has dedicated staff members Tucker Beckett and Todd Fontanella as resources to coordinate the subcommittees. The subcommittees include:

- Health and Human Services
- Jobs and Businesses
- Philanthropy and Finance
- Education and Technology
- Arts, Culture, Tourism, and Recreation
- Municipal (Only for DEMHS Region 1)

WCEDD members represent key stakeholder in various economic sectors in the region, they may be able to provide important insights into unmet needs within the region. WCEDD members are encouraged to participate in this process and if interested can apply by contacting Tucker Beckett at tbeckett@westcog.org with their interested subcommittee(s).

8. WestCOG will provide a list of each DEMHS Region's Steering Committee, Subcommittees, and membership lists.
9. Interested WCEDD members will contact Tucker Beckett at tbeckett@westcog.org to be considered for participation within the LTR committees.

Member Updates

WCEDD members provided updates regarding economic activity within their sector.

Hal Kurfehs shared that Commercial Real Estate is impacted due to COVID-19. retail store shrinkage has taken place before Covid-19, and to a lesser extent so has office. Within the retail category enclosed malls have taken a hit with the loss of large anchor tenants. Class A malls will survive but some Class B malls will be partially or totally re-purposed. While there will be an acceleration of trends due to surge of E-Commerce during the pandemic, both retail and office are

here to stay and have been taking positive steps to adapt to the changing conditions. Two strong performers have been Industrial (largely due to distribution and last-mile warehousing), and Multi-Family Housing (particularly apartments).

Andrea Rynn shared that Western CT Health Network is able to assist WCEDD where needed. Also, that the region is showing its resilience during the pandemic, and being able to accomplish tasks that seem daunting even in fair weather conditions.

Robert Malozzi shared regarding the community banking side is operating with an abundance of caution as it pertains to new business and with a keen understanding of present customers business conditions and needs over the next 6 months to a year. It is suspected, due to their conservative nature, that small banks will be able to manage the economic impact from COVID-19.

Upcoming Meetings

Oct 8 2020, Jan 14 2021

Adjournment

2:01 PM