



# WCEDD Meeting Minutes

November 10 at 1:00 pm | Web Conference

## Members in attendance

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| - Rudy Marconi, Chair          | Town of Ridgefield                       |
| - Lynn Vanderslice, Vice Chair | Town of Wilton                           |
| - Hal Kurfehs                  | Scalzo Commercial & New Development      |
| - Lisa Scails                  | Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut |
| - Andrea Rynn                  | Western CT Health Network                |
| - Jennifer Orlikoff            | Stamford UConn                           |
| - Jessica Vonashek             | City of Norwalk                          |
| - PJ Prunty                    | Danbury Chamber of Commerce              |
| - Janice Chrzescijanek         | Town of Bethel                           |
| - Lisa Mercurio                | AdvanceCT                                |
| - Mike Kaltchnee               | Danbury Makerspace                       |

Franics Pickering, Mike Towle, and Betsy Paynter were in attendance with WestCOG

## Meeting Call to Order

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 1:09pm

## Public Participation

There was no public participation

## Approval of September 2022 Meeting Minutes

**Motion:** Hal Kurfehs made a motion to approved the September 2022 meeting minutes, Lynne Vanderslice second, all in favor.

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs)

- Final draft emailed to WCEDD members & CEOs
- Public comments were collected and incorporated into the draft.
- Hal had additional comments on regarding the change in Real Estate. Since COVID 19, function of the office is being taken by Zoom, however, offices will stay there for 10-year lease. Things cooled down; hybrid solutions came into space. Office is not dead, it has changed.
- Pre COVID, assumed office space 160 ft per employee now approx. 205 sqft per employee. Showcasing increase size for work spaces. Medical is part of the office seen and is strong, getting stronger
- Life science and lab space is growing.

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- Jessica Vonashek agreed re: Real Estate, thought they would see leases negotiated out, but they held, going from collaborative space and back to private larger spaces again.
- Hal discussed residential housing, 2021 had a short supply of housing - 2-3 months of inventory, now there's about 6–9-month inventory of housing stock laying around and not moving. Is this due to COVID cooling and or high interest rates for purchasing properties.

**Motion:** Janice Chrzescijanek made a motion to recommend the COG approve the 2023 – 2028 WestCOG CEDS with updates, Lynne Vanderslice second, all in favor. Motion carries.

## Grants

- EDA grant interest:
  - Michael Kaltschnee, Danbury Hackerspace, EDA Economic Assistance grant
- Mike presented info about Danbury Makerspace new opportunity for expansion. The Danbury Crown Plaza hotel to be a regional center for artists and entrepreneurs. Looking to convert into 150 micro student apartments, run an incubator program to assist underserved communities and create “Start Danbury” program for new business startups. It's a prototype of artist studios, makerspace for entrepreneurs, there are 9 in CT but also would be one of the biggest in New England.
- This is aligned to our CEDS goal to share business resources, business support, develop new businesses, attract young professionals and grow start ups
- This is the only makerspace in Western CT. there are others located in Meriden (150 members), New Haven (500 members), Hartford (150 members) and Watertown.
- EDA application would include operation costs for 2 years of this program.
- Hal supports Mike's work impressed with how he runs Makerspace, PJ says this project is fantastic and supports program development

**Motion:** PJ Prunty made the motion for the WCEDD to provide Danbury Makerspace with a Letter of Support to accompany his EDA application, Lynne Vanderslice second, all in favor.

- Mike provided an update on the Danbury Makerspace recent work regarding face shields during the pandemic for hospitals, he'd like to coordinate with DEMHS for future needs.
- Mike referenced that Western CT State University does not have an engineering program, recognizing the need for this for industry knowledge, workforce development in western CT. Summer camps for makers, robotics camps, should be expanded upon.
- Mike has an open invitation to visit his new Danbury Makerspace location and tour the building

## Broadband Study

- Mike Towle provided an update on the broadband study in western CT. WestCOG is now hosting municipal focused Broadband Feasibility studies for municipalities. The studies are designed to provide a community the pros and cons of various broadband deployment options, a cost benefit analysis of deploying a system, and payment structures to fund such a program. The impetus for this effort is a desire from communities to provide high quality reliable internet service for their communities and to prepare their cities for future technologies that rely on high speed reliable information services (smart city or , internet of things). Having the plan in place will position communities in an advantageous position when federal IJA dollars become available for broadband construction projects.

## Informational

- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is currently being developed

## Upcoming Meetings

- Quarterly 2023 WCEDD meeting schedule:
  - January 12, 2023 @ 1pm via WestCOG Zoom
  - April 13, 2023 @ 1pm via WestCOG Zoom
  - July 13, 2023 @ 1pm via WestCOG Zoom
  - October 12, 2023 @ 1pm via WestCOG Zoom

## Adjournment

**Motion:** Hal Kurfehs made a motion to adjourn, Lynne Vanderslice second, all in favor.