

Western Connecticut Council of Governments

Special Meeting

Monday January 29th @ 12:00 p.m. at:
The Ridgefield Town Hall Annex
66 Prospect Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877

Agenda

- 1) COG Meeting call to order: Hon. Rudy Marconi, Chairman
- 2) **Public Participation:** *limited to topics on this agenda and to 2 minutes per speaker.*
- 3) ****Approval of the COG 12/14/2023 Meeting Minutes** Attachment 3, pp. 1-4
- 4) ****COG Action Items:**
 - a. Resolution for Farm Viability and Norwalk Route 1 Project Execution
Attachment 4a, p. 5
 - b. CTDEEEP Recreational Trails Grant Program
 - c. CRRC Overview Attachment 4c, pp. 6-13
- 10) COG Information Items:
- 11) Other Business
- 12) Next meeting: MPO/COG Thursday, February 15th 2024
- 13) Adjournment

**A quorum of 6 voting members for HV and 5 for SWR is required. Separate votes are required for each MPO.*

***A quorum of 10 elected officials is required.*

ENGLISH: 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. ESPAÑOL: 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. PORTUGUÊS: Para obter assistência língua ou outras acomodações, entre em contato com WestCOG pelo menos cinco dias úteis antes da reunião em help@westcog.org. FRANÇAIS: 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. POLSKI: W przypadku pomocy językowej lub innej pomocy, skontaktuj się z WestCOG co najmniej pięć dni roboczych przed wydarzeniem w help@westcog.org.

Western Connecticut

COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



Disclaimer: These interim minutes of the Western Connecticut Council of Governments ("WestCOG" or "COG") are released and "available for public inspection" and "posted" on WestCOG's website, in accordance with C.G.S. §1-225(a). Said interim minutes are subject to review and approval by the COG members, after which time the final approved minutes will be available and posted in accordance with laws. Accordingly, the interim minutes may contain inaccuracies and do not reflect the final action of the COG.

INTERIM MINUTES

Council/Housatonic Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization/South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization for the 12/14/2023 Meeting

The Ridgefield Town Hall Annex- 66 Prospect St. Ridgefield, CT 06877 and via Zoom

COG Chairman Rudolph Marconi / Vice Chair- Julia Pemberton

Treasurer -Vacant / Secretary Vacant

HVMPO Chairman Rudy Marconi / Vice Chairman Julia Pemberton

SWRMPO Chairman Vacant / Vice Chairman Vacant; WestCOG Executive Director presiding

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Bethel..... First Selectman Dan Carter- COG/HVMPO
 Bridgewater..... First Selectman Curtis Read- COG/HVMPO
 Brookfield First Selectman Steve Dunn- COG/HVMPO
 Danbury Mayor Roberto Alves-COG/HVMPO
 Darien First Selectman Jon Zagrodzky- COG/SWRMPO
 Greenwich..... Absent COG/SWRMPO
 New Canaan..... First Selectwoman Dionna Carlson- COG/SWRMPO
 New Fairfield First Selectwoman Melissa Lindsey- COG/HVMPO
 New Milford..... Mayor Pete Bass – COG/HVMPO
 Newtown..... First Selectman Jeff Capeci- COG/HVMPO
 Norwalk..... Absent COG/SWRMPO
 Redding..... First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton- COG/HVMPO
 Ridgefield..... First Selectman Rudy Marconi- COG/HVMPO
 Sherman First Selectman Don Lowe COG/HVMPO
 Stamford..... Mayor Caroline Simmons
 Weston..... First Selectwoman Samantha Nestor- COG/SWRMPO
 Westport..... First Selectwoman Jennifer Tooker COG/SWRMPO
 Wilton..... First Selectwoman Toni Boucher- COG/SWRMPO
 Transit Representative..... Rick Schreiner- HVMPO
 Transit Representative..... Absent-SWRMPO
 CTDOT Olivia Rizzuto (Non-voting MPO member)
 MPO Staff..... Francis Pickering (Non-voting MPO member)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Chair, Greenwich Planning & Zoning Commission **Margarita Alban**, Stamford Chief of Staff Bridget Fox, **Director of Advocacy for City and State Zach Van Luling**, **CTDOT Planner Olivia Rizzuto** John Truscinski from the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation, Meg Haffner from the Kennedy Collective, and Ellen Graham from Senator Blumenthal's office. WestCOG staff members in attendance were Mike Towle, Kristin Hadjstylianos, Mike Wilson, Victoria Ricks, Nicole Sullivan and Kevin Mahoney. Also in attendance were: Chris Rurren and James Root from the Sierra Club

CALL TO ORDER:

The HVMPO and COG meetings were called to order at 12:06 p.m. by Chairman Rudy Marconi. In accordance with the bylaws and in the absence of the SWRMPO Chair and Vice Chair, the SWRMPO meeting was called to order at 12:06 p.m. by WestCOG Executive Director Francis Pickering.

Public Participation: Ridgefield Selectman, Chris Murray, spoke to the COG members about setting up a Regional Fair Rent Commission to accommodate new legislation that goes into effect in 2024. Anthony Allen from Save the Sound requested a letter of support for a Connecticut Stormwater Collaborative. John Truscinski requested support from COG members for the establishment of Community Resilience Hubs. Ellen Graham from Senator Blumenthal's office introduced herself to the new COG board members and gave information on the support her office provides for the municipalities.

FEATURED PRESENTATION Jonathan Murphy Smalls, the Outreach Assistant from Senator Chris Murphy's office, gave a short presentation on the services that his office can provide the COG municipalities.

***Approval of the 11/16/2023 SWRMPO/HVMPO Meeting Minutes:** After review and on a motion made by Sherman First Selectman Don Lowe and seconded by Bridgewater First Selectman Curtis Read the minutes of the 11/16/2023 HVMPO meeting were unanimously approved, with abstentions made by Brookfield First Selectman Steve Dunn, Danbury Mayor Roberto Alves, New Fairfield First Selectwoman Melissa Lindsey and Newtown First Selectman Jeff Capeci. After review and on a motion made by Westport First Selectwoman Jen Tooker and seconded by Weston First Selectwoman Samantha Nestor the minutes of the 11/16/2023 SWRMPO meeting were unanimously approved, with abstentions made by Wilton First Selectwoman Toni Boucher, Darien First Selectman Jon Zagrodzky and New Canaan First Selectwoman Dionna Carlson.

****Approval of the COG 11/16/2023 Meeting Minutes:** After review and on a motion made by Sherman First Selectman Don Lowe and seconded by Redding First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, the minutes of the 11/16/2023 COG meeting were unanimously approved, with abstentions made by Brookfield First Selectman Steve Dunn, Danbury Mayor Roberto Alves, New Fairfield First Selectwoman Melissa Lindsey, Newtown First Selectman Jeff Capeci, Wilton First Selectwoman Toni Boucher, Darien First Selectman Jon Zagrodzky, and New Canaan First Selectwoman Dionna Carlson.

****COG Action Items:**

COG Election of Officers: WestCOG Vice-Chair Julia Pemberton provided the following slate of officers, Rudy Marconi for Chairman, Dan Carter for Vice-Chairman, Jon Zagrodzky for Treasurer, Julia Pemberton for Secretary, Steve Dunn as Member-at-Large, Toni Boucher as Member-at-Large, and Jeff Capeci as Member-at-Large. After review and on a motion made by New Canaan First Selectwoman Dionna Carlson and seconded by Weston First Selectwoman Samantha Nestor, the slate of officers listed above were unanimously approved.

2024 Proposed Meeting Dates: WestCOG Chairman Rudy Marconi provided the overview. After review and on a motion made by Brookfield First Selectman Steve Dunn and seconded by Sherman First Selectman Don Lowe, the 2024 meeting dates were unanimously approved.

WestCOG 2023 RAISE Grant: WestCOG Senior Planner Mike Wilson provided the overview. After review and on a motion made by Brookfield First Selectman Steve Dunn and seconded by Wilton First Selectwoman Toni Boucher, the State Recreational Trails Grant application was unanimously approved.

NOAA CRRC program (Climate Resilience Regional Challenge): WestCOG Executive Director Francis Pickering provided the overview. After review and on a motion made by Sherman First Selectman Don Lowe and seconded by Wilton First Selectwoman Toni Boucher it was decided to table these letters of support until the January meeting.

LOTICIP Adjustment: WestCOG Senior Project Manager Kevin Mahoney provided the overview. After review and on a motion made by Danbury Mayor Roberto Alves and seconded by Wilton First Selectwoman Toni Boucher the LOTICIP Adjustments were unanimously approved.

***MPO Action Items:**

MPO Election of Officers (HV and SWR): WestCOG Vice-Chair Julia Pemberton provided the following slate of officers for the HVMPO Board, Julia Pemberton for Chairman and Dan Carter for Vice-Chairman. On a motion made by Brookfield First Selectman Steve Dunn and seconded by New Fairfield First Selectwoman Melissa Lindsey, the slate of officers was unanimously approved as presented. WestCOG Executive Director Francis Pickering provided the following slate of officers for the SWRMPO Board, Toni Boucher for Chairman and Jon Zagrodzky for Vice-Chairman. On a motion made by New Canaan First Selectwoman Dionna Carlson and seconded by Weston First Selectwoman Samantha Nestor, the slate of officers was unanimously approved as presented.

2024 Proposed MPO Meeting Dates (HV and SWR): WestCOG Executive Director Francis Pickering provided the overview. On a motion made by Brookfield First Selectman Steve Dunn, and seconded by Newtown First Selectman Jeff Capeci the HVMPO meeting dates were

unanimously approved. On a motion made by New Canaan First Selectwoman Dionna Carlson, and seconded by Darien First Selectman Jon Zagrodzky, the SWRMPO meeting dates were unanimously approved.

MPO Information Items:

USDOT Advanced Transportation Technology & Innovation Program: WestCOG Transportation Director Kristin Hadjstylianos provided the overview.

USDOT 2024 RAISE Grant Solicitations: WestCOG Senior Planner Mike Wilson provided the overview.

2024 CTDOT Highway Safety Performance Targets: WestCOG Planner Nicole Sullivan provided the overview.

COG Information Items:

Draft Legislative Priorities: WestCOG Executive Director Francis Pickering provided the overview of the updated priorities.

Legislative Reception: WestCOG Executive Director Francis Pickering provided the overview. The Legislative Reception will be in January in Ridgefield

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service: WestCOG Transportation Director Kristin Hadjstylianos provided the overview.

EPA Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants: WestCOG Transportation Director Kristin Hadjstylianos provided the overview.

Other Business: There was no other business discussed.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be on Thursday, January 18th, 2024.

Adjournment: On a motion duly made the meeting was adjourned at 1:58 p.m.

**CERTIFIED RESOLUTION OF THE
WESTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AGREEMENTS TO PERFORM THE
FOLLOWING TWO PROJECTS:**

Ridgefield, Connecticut

I, Julia Pemberton, Secretary of the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (hereinafter “WestCOG”) certify that the following is a true copy of the resolution adopted by WestCOG at its meeting on January 29, 2024 in Ridgefield, Connecticut, a quorum being present:

- 1) Whereas, WestCOG applied for, was awarded, and accepted a Farm Viability Grant in the value of \$49,999 through the Connecticut Department of Agriculture; This grant was secured to engage a consultant to conduct a study of municipalities in the region to identify and evaluate impediments to and opportunities for growth of farming and identify strategies for private entities or municipalities to support, expand, and establish agricultural operations; The budget of \$83,332, including the involvement of \$33,333 in local funds was previously approved the WestCOG and committed to in the acceptance of the grant;
- 2) Whereas, WestCOG has received funding from FHWA and CTDOT to prepare a corridor study of a 2.9-mile section of Route 1 between Connecticut Avenue and Van Buren Avenue in the City of Norwalk; It will be conducted by a selected consultant(s) and managed by WestCOG staff in cooperation with the City of Norwalk; The study will have a total contracted value not to exceed \$300,000;

Resolved, that WestCOG Chairman Rudolph Marconi, Vice Chairman Dan Carter, or Executive Director Francis Pickering are hereby authorized to negotiate and execute all appropriate and necessary agreements to perform the two projects described above for the amounts not to exceed those specified above.

This resolution is in full force and effect as of January 29th, 2024.

Julia Pemberton, Secretary
Western Connecticut Council of Governments
January 29th 2024

[Affix seal here]

Western Connecticut

COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



TO: WestCOG Council Representatives
 FROM: Francis R. Pickering, Executive Director
 DATE: January 23, 2024
 RE: **NOAA CRRC grant letters of support**

Purpose

Consideration for approval of letters of support for applications to the NOAA CRRC grant

Background

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Resilience Regional Challenge (CRRC) funds collaboration among coastal communities to build resilience to the impacts of climate change. Requests for letters of support for three separate applications under this program are before the COG for consideration. The proposals for each application are outlined below, followed by draft letters for each application.

UConn Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA)

CIRCA's proposal would create a network of 'resilience hubs' across the state. These hubs would help communities more effectively negotiate the overlapping planning jurisdictions involved in preparing for and responding to environmental hazards that transcend municipal boundaries. Requesting \$48,820,269 in federal funding.

UConn Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR)

CLEAR's proposal would design and implement Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) retrofits to existing stormwater systems. Teams would prepare GSI recommendations for communities across the tristate area, facilitated by UConn, Cornell, and Rutgers in their respective states. Participating communities may then select from these recommendations and be awarded up to \$350,000 in grant funds to construct the recommended retrofits. Requesting \$33,500,000 in federal funding.

Save the Sound

Save the Sound's proposal would establish a regional stormwater management collaborative to facilitate intra- and inter-governmental coordination on stormwater issues in CT. This body would be composed of coastal municipalities, COGs, and relevant NGOs working in tandem to:

1. Integrate existing stormwater work of collaborative participants.
2. Launch a public messaging and communications campaign on stormwater issues.
3. Develop a Stormwater Management Toolkit, including draft ordinances and land use policies, sample design plans, and other resources for stakeholders.

WestCOG would have a formal partner role as one of the initial partners in the Collaborative, which would convene monthly during its first year. Requesting \$1,999,605 in federal funding.

Next steps

The COG may approve letters of support for projects it supports.

Western Connecticut

COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



January 24, 2024

Grant Coordinator, Business Operations Division
ATTN: Climate Resilience Regional Challenge NOAA
Office for Coastal Management
2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, SC 29405-2413
resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov

Subject: Support for Implementing a Network of Resilience Hubs for a More Resilient Connecticut

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter to express the support of the Western Connecticut Council of Governments for the initiative to establish six resilience hubs in Connecticut, as outlined in the application “Implementing a Network of Resilience Hubs for a More Resilient Connecticut” submitted by the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA).

The resilience of our communities to climate impacts is critical to WestCOG and is supported by WestCOG’s planning activities. The regional focus of this project aligns with the role of WestCOG in promoting regional cooperation in planning and empowers the region’s communities to negotiate the overlapping planning jurisdictions involved in the mitigation of and response to environmental hazards that transcend municipal boundaries. WestCOG’s *Strategic Vision and Plan* for 2022-2027 calls for promotion of regional collaboration and partnerships, a goal towards which the proposed resilience hubs would constitute concrete progress.

The proposed project aligns with WestCOG’s plans and is an excellent opportunity to advance the goals expressed therein. WestCOG is committed to supporting CIRCA and other stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of the proposed activities; please contact us if we may provide any additional assistance for the consideration of this application.

Sincerely,

Francis Pickering
Executive Director
Western Connecticut Council of Governments

To: NOAA Office for Coastal Management
2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, SC 29405-2413

Date: 1 February 2024

Subject: Letter of Support for University of Connecticut's proposal for Funding Opportunity
Number NOAA-NOS-OCM-2023-2008068

To whom it may concern,

The undersigned Executive Directors of CT Councils of Governments (COGs) are pleased to provide this letter of support for the University of Connecticut's proposed project **"Strengthening Community Resilience in the Tri-State Region through Green Stormwater Infrastructure Implementation, Workforce Development, and Capacity Building"** in response to the NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge solicitation. We provide this letter to express our strong commitment to the program and our belief in its value to the communities we represent and the overall resilience of our region.

The COGs are nine voluntarily established regional planning regions guided by the head elected official of each of our municipalities. While not having the authority of traditional county governments, the COGs are recognized as county equivalents under state and federal law. The COGs serve to coordinate efforts between towns, share resources, and provide support for local land use planning efforts and other activities.

Flooding is one of the greatest risks our state faces from climate change. July 2023 was the wettest July on record throughout Connecticut, easily overwhelming transport corridors, homes, and businesses. Billions of dollars in annualized damage claims have been filed throughout our state, many as repeat claims. The highest damage concentration continues to be reported in our most densely populated urban areas, many of these within our underserved communities. Our COGs and the municipalities we represent recognize that improved stormwater infrastructure solutions, along with public outreach and engagement, are critical to our ability to keep pace with unprecedented stormwater flooding. We acknowledge that there are inequities and disparities that disproportionately impact urban communities based on race/ethnicity, wealth, income, and other factors, and nowhere is this truer than in climate resilience. Our ongoing commitment to our municipalities includes a longer-term focus on sustainability, including environmental, economic, and equity, for all our constituents, recognizing that green infrastructure must become part of the solution.

In 2019, each regional government affirmed support for the Governor's Council on Climate Change, while also adopting Connecticut's Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update for 2019-2024. Both of these items elevate the priority of developing a long-term plan to significantly improve stormwater infrastructure across Connecticut, implementing nature-based solutions where appropriate. The proposed federal NOAA funding is an incredible opportunity for our state, and is synergistic with several funded projects throughout the nine COGs.

Our COGs are committed to the success of this program. We are particularly enthusiastic about inclusion of underserved and minority communities in the process, to both promote long-term stewardship and to publicize the benefits of green infrastructure solutions among our urban residents. Engagement with underserved communities within our urban areas will be key to the project's long-term success.

Our strategies to address the common goal of increased coastal resilience include promoting effective stormwater management strategies including green regulations and practices, to reduce runoff from impervious surfaces and minimize flooding, increase the capacity of drainage systems, and promote low-impact developments. UConn's support through their proposed project will be invaluable for our progress in meeting these goals. As such, we are prepared to support their efforts in the following ways:

- Idea: We will help our towns prepare competitive applications for federal and state funding for new, enhanced climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Idea: We will prepare statewide strategy for stormwater management to reduce flooding and mitigate other stormwater impacts utilizing grants from federal sources.

We look forward to supporting this important initiative.

Sincerely,
Connecticut Council of Governments

Name, Title, COG

Name, Title, COG

Name, Title, COG

Name, Title, COG

Name, Title, COG

Name, Title, COG

Name, Title, COG

Name, Title, COG

Western Connecticut COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



January 23, 2024

Grant Coordinator, Business Operations Division
ATTN: Climate Resilience Regional Challenge NOAA
Office for Coastal Management
2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, SC 29405-2413

resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov

To whom it may concern,

This letter conveys the support of the Western Connecticut Council of Governments for the stormwater management project proposed by Save the Sound for funding under NOAA's Community Resilience Regional Challenge grant. Stormwater management is critical to the resilience of our coastal communities and is a key component throughout WestCOG activities.

In recent years, WestCOG has published guidance documents titled *The Case for Riparian Corridors* and *Flooding in Connecticut: A Status Report on Municipal Flood Prevention Standards*. These documents emphasize the importance of land use policies for stormwater management and describe relevant zoning standards to address stormwater and flooding. Draft ordinances and policies such as those included in the proposed Stormwater Management Toolkit would facilitate the adoption of effective stormwater management policies by municipal land use authorities.

The role of land development patterns in addressing stormwater issues is also discussed in WestCOG's 2020-2030 *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development*, alongside the importance of stormwater management to the protection of water quality in Long Island Sound. WestCOG's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy calls for "Prepar[ing] the District for Resiliency" regarding climate change concerns - concerns inherently linked to stormwater management. Further, WestCOG's *Strategic Vision and Plan* for 2022-2027 declares that the COG should seek to promote regional collaboration and partnerships. This goal is consistent with Save the Sound's proposal to create a Stormwater Management Collaborative that involves coastal COGs and major municipalities.

The proposed project aligns with WestCOG's plans and is an opportunity to advance the goals expressed therein. WestCOG is committed to supporting Save the Sound and other partners and stakeholders to implement the proposed stormwater management collaborative. Please contact us should be to able to provide additional assistance for the consideration of this application.

Sincerely,

Francis Pickering
Executive Director
Western Connecticut Council of Governments