



Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2019

Meeting was called to order at 8:30 am by Rick Ives, NECCOG Chair

Member Towns represented: Brooklyn, Canterbury, Hampton, Killingly, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Thompson, Union, Voluntown, and Woodstock.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited

The Chair asked that the meeting order be changed to accommodate the people attending and wanting to comment on the recently completed Investigation Report. All members agreed, by common consent, to this change.

Mr. Ives explained that the report issued represented Phase I and that the specific allegations made regarding animal cruelty would be addressed separately by the Department of Agriculture. He noted that there is no time line for the conclusion of the CDA report. Comments were made by:

- Mr. Grandelski
 - Natalie Langlois
 - Melissa Frink
 - Eva Vinal (Longo)
 - Julie Crouch
 - Cindy Davies O'leary
 - Pam McWilliams
 - Pat Cunningham
 - Daniel Rovero
 - Ann Dauphinais
- Each of these individuals expressed significant frustration with the investigatory process in terms of the lack of transparency, cutting off public participation and intimidating witnesses. They also raised many of the questions (harassment, misuse of funds, mistreatment of animals that resulted in the investigation in the first place. There was no reference to the investigation document itself or its findings or its recommendations. Frustration and concern was raised by multiple speakers regarding NECCOG's decision to take down its Facebook page and replacing it with Instagram. The point was made that Instagram was not an effective means to communicate and that adoptions would suffer. Questions were also raised about the donation process and how NECCOG interacts with non-profits.
- Mr. Rovero thanked the Council for conducting a comprehensive investigation and cautioned that this issue should not have the effect of hurting all the good things that NECCOG does for northeastern Connecticut
- Representative Dauphinais expressed her support for the people that have come forward during the investigation and confirmed their reluctance and apprehension in coming forward.

Director's Report

The Director stated that due to the time constraints of the meeting that he would omit most of his report and then provide a detailed written report next week. He did note that the eight buses that NECTD had been seeking approval have now been ordered and should arrive in 12-18 months. Mr. Griffiths asked if the eight there were being replaced would be available to the members and specifically if some could be used for veteran transportation. The Director stated that the plan has been to use two or more for that purpose and that there were efforts (Thompson is assisting) to secure vehicles sooner. The 125 Putnam Pike purchase was discussed and it was stated that NECCOG has not received any communication from the Town since November 2018. The Director asked Killingly if they could provide a definitive answer by mid March as their intent to sell or not sell the property to NECCOG. The Director updated the members on the Crumbling Foundations issue - noting that our U.S. Senators had introduced legislation for financial relief federally, various state legislative bills to address issues such as condos, donations from private insurance companies to make up some of the spread from the \$175,000 cap on payments and the fact that applications are now being taken for financial relief through the captive insurance company established by the Legislature.

Selectman's Roundtable

Woodstock Academy's fee increase of \$1,000 per student (\$500 for capital and \$500 for operations) was discussed at length. Several members knew of the change and the reasons why - others had little or no information. It appears that the capital fee is related to a roof project and is not an uncommon fee for such expenditures. The operational fee appears to be most related to the decline in enrollment coupled with increasing costs. It was pointed out that overall the cost on a per student basis, even accounting for the \$1,000 increase) is still reasonable compared to other schools. The impacted towns discussed the possibility of meeting separately to get into the subject more in depth.

The Municipal Employees Retirement System was discussed. It appears that the system will ask for a 10 percent increase during the next five years - making it financially harmful to the towns covered by this system - who have no say in how it is administered or the resulting rate hikes.

Questions were raised about assessor software from Vision, the various iterations in use and the impact on towns and the regional reval program. The members asked the Director to reach out to Vision to have a representative meet with members and their respective assessors on these software issues.

Motion to Adjourn at 9:33 am by Mr. Griffiths and seconded by Mr. Seney - passed unanimously