



neccog



Northeastern Connecticut  
Transit District

## Special Meeting

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September 29, 2017

Mr. Ives, NECCOG Chair, opened the meeting at 8:35am with the pledge of allegiance.

The following towns were represented: Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly (Including the Town Manager), Pomfret, (Putnam-Mary Calorio), Scotland, Sterling, Thompson, Union, Voluntown.

Public Participation: none.

Mr. Ives asked for a motion to take action on the previous meeting minutes Mr. Piper moved they be accepted as presented and Mr. Beausoleil seconded the motion - passed unanimously

Director's Report:

- **Crumbling Foundations** - the Director reported that the Budget, which contained relief for the crumbling foundations has been vetoed and the prospect for an override is remote. Monies, through the CDBG process, have been made available and the Town of Coventry has offered to act as the host for a multi-town application. Ashford and Union are participating in this application.
- **COG Funding** - The current funding for COGs is \$5 million. Each of the budgets proposed speaks to the need to more efficiently address a range of issues. The state's regional councils of governments are featured in each proposal as a vehicle to more efficiently deliver services. The Democrats Budget reduced the COG funding to \$2.75 million for FY17 and then \$5 million for FY18. The Budget passed by both chambers has no funding for COGs. The Governor's pending executive order has no funding for COGs. Working with two other COGs we developed an alternative to maintain a base level of funding for the COGs. The proposal modifies the funding for COGs to one with a base amount of \$125,000 for COGs with populations under 250,000 persons and \$250,000 for COGs with populations over 250,000 persons plus an amount to be determined by the Secretary of OPM based on a work plan submitted by a regional council of governments consistent with the priority focus areas set by ACIR. With nine COGs (6 with populations over 250,000 persons and 3 with under 250,000) in place this means that the base funding would be \$1,875,000. This base funding will allow COGs to perform basic technical assistance to towns, statutory obligations (POCDs, Regional Referrals) and leveraging federal funds. Other monies, based on each COGs work plan will be discretionary on the part of OPM in terms of individual work plans and the overall budget situation of the state. Limits the Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) to COG initiated programs and simplifies the endorsement of such initiatives to a majority vote of a COG and adds the ACIR as a receiver of a COGs report on the results of RPIP initiatives

Mr. Sirpenski stated that under the executive order his municipal budget will be cut significantly - resulting in larger class sizes and fewer teachers. Art stated that their teacher negotiations were just completed and there's a lack of equity on the teacher

side in contracts. The impact of larger districts on rural smaller districts is significant and not well understood by policy makers in Hartford. Mr. Ives noted that once the media starts in on the teacher cuts, everyone will be getting very concerned about the impact of the executive order. Mr. Sirpenski noted that the longer the budget goes unresolved, the more difficult it will be to enact cuts. Mr. Ives stated his concern that the budget debate could roll into 2018 and the next legislative session. Mr. Baldwin added that there is not a lot of discussion of what process should be followed to be in good shape and it seems to be the focus on the right now and not what solves the problems for the long haul. Mr. Ives noted that he senses it's more important to many to just pass the budget than to fix it.

- **Transit District** - The District is completing an extensive survey of our ridership and several public hearings. We do this periodically to gain a better understanding of customer needs and to determine if we need to adjust our routes. The results of more than 200 responses has been interesting. More than 80 percent of our ridership does not have access to a vehicle, fifty percent of our riders have not had the money to pay the \$1.00 fare, 87 percent of the riders are satisfied or very satisfied with our service and reliability, more than 84 percent agree that our routes cover the area that needs to be covered and that the schedules are easy to understand and nearly 80 percent of the respondents view our service as reliable. We are exploring a monthly pass and some customer service improvements as a result of the survey.
- Contract negotiations are nearly complete and we expect to have a new contract for endorsement in October.
- The camera system for the buses has been delayed due to additional information requested by the DOT.
- Bus tour for elected officials is scheduled for November - details to follow.
- **DEMHS Region IV Activities** - The annual CEO meeting was held and budget adopted. Economic Development
- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** - The CEDS is in its final edit stage and will be ready for public hearing in October. The goal is the submission to the state for review in November or early December
- **Annual Connecticut Economic Resource Center Awards** - Awards this year are going to the Heirloom Restaurant in Killingly and for town projects the Town of Thompson - Town Branding Strategy.
- **Property Tax Working Group** - To date, we have held meetings with Chris Mattei, Dan Drew, David Walker, Prasad Srinivasin, and Jonathan Harris to share perspectives on property tax reform and relief and related issues. Although he had just declared himself out of the running, Kevin Lembo kept an appointment with us as well. All-in-all, it was a fascinating series of meetings. There are still a few more candidates to meet with.
- **Meeting with Franklin County Council of Governments** - Held meeting with the Executive Director of the Franklin County COG. They are a rural region with 26 towns and about the same population as NECCOG. They have three programs of immediate interest: Housing, Back-Office Business Functions and Inspections. They have an interest in several of our programs. A few years ago I gave a presentation for them at a state-wide municipal meeting on our Reval and Animal Services Program. Since that time FCCOG has established a regional animal control program. We

discussed the possibility of getting representative from their group and our together to discuss the delivery of services. I believe this would be a useful endeavor and that we should set it up for the near future.

#### Discussion and Action Items

1. Regional Referrals - none offered
2. Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program Application Project Endorsement
  - a. Town of Putnam - Woodstock Avenue/Church Street Improvements, motion by Mr. Syme and second by Mr. Gray to approve as presented - **approved unanimously**
2. STIP Actions/Amendments - none offered
3. NECCOG/NECTD Budgets and Work Plan - motion by Mr. Piper and Second by Mr. Griffiths to approve as presented - **approved unanimously**
4. State Budget Discussion - Discussion took place earlier during the Director's Report
5. Chief-Elected Officials Roundtable
  - Mr. Syme asked about picture taking option for the Reval Program Director will provide the information requested
  - Mr. Griffiths expressed the need for a wash bay and stated other entities may like to join. He stated that being able to wash the fleet helps keep it in good shape and in turn lessens maintenance needs and prolongs the life of the fleet. several members expressed interest in the project which could cost \$250,000 not including site work and on-going maintenance and disposal costs.
  - General discussion regarding the concern that the State's lack of a budget will impact each towns bond rating and ability to secure loans.
  - Mr. Brodeur expressed concern that Eastford signed up for improved street signs and now his town is inundated with bright yellow arrows at every curve and have been receiving numerous complaints regarding it.
  - The Director stated tourism site has been populated with each town but event listings are scarce for each town so please see Katie to become involved.
  - Mr. Hendricks discussed bringing the land sale into executive session on October 10th and then a public hearing in November. Mr. Brodeur expressed that it would be nice to have the sale done before the election as many may not be in office Mr. Griffiths offered to look into getting a special meeting.

Mr. Griffiths motioned to **adjourn** and Mr. Syme second at 9:21am - passed unanimously