

# NEGGOG

Ashford - Brooklyn - Canterbury - Chaplin - Eastford - Hampton - Killingly - Plainfield Pomfret - Putnam - Scotland - Sterling - Thompson - Union - Voluntown - Woodstock

**Results through Regionalism** 

January 2024 Meeting

January 19, 2024



#### January Special Meeting

January 19, 2024

9:00 am - Canterbury Town Hall, 1 Municipal Dr, Canterbury, CT 06331

Hybrid Meeting - In Person and ZOOM - **Zoom Link** 

#### Agenda

- 1. Open Meeting Maureen Nicholson, Chair
  - a. Welcome
- b. Roll Call
- 2. Executive Director's Report John Filchak, Executive Director
- a. Transit Services Program
- b. Animal Services Program c. Crumbling Foundations

g. EDA Grant Status h. 2024 Legislative Session

i. Other

f. Transportation Planning & Projects

c. Public Participation

- d. Paramedic Intercept Program
- e. Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan
- 3. Discussion and Action Items
  - a. Connecticut's America 250 Commission Denise Merrill, Chair of the AM250 | CT Commission and Cyndi Tolosa, AM250 | CT Project Manager
  - b. Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program and the ARPA Capital Projects Fund-funded ConneCTed Communities Grant Program - Kevin Pisacich, Director of the Office of Telecommunications and Broadband
  - c. NDDH FY 25 Town Assessment Request NDDH Chair Lana Sheridan and Finance Director
  - d. Annual Policy Affirmations (NECCOG and NECTD) ADA, TitleVI/Environmental Justice, and LEP
- e. 2024 NECCOG Legislative Platform
- f. RPIP Applications
- i. Regional Inspections & Enforcement
- ii. Regional Assessment
- iii. Regional Town Administration
- g. STIP Actions and Amendments
- i. Amendment Project #0141-0157, Interstate REPLACE BR 02128 o/ SUNSET HILL BROOK AC CONVERSION - Phase, Construction, 2024, \$295 (\$1,180 federal, \$295 state)
- h. Regional Referrals

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- i. Town of Voluntown (Draft) Section 1: Title, Authority, and Purpose.
- ii. Town of Canterbury Amendments to Recreational Campgrounds, See Section 4.11.7.
- iii. Town of Ashford Report on Zoning Referral Z-2023-144, amendment to Day-Care facilities
- iv. Town of Brooklyn ZRC-23-007 Zoning Regulation Change to overnight accommodations for special events.
- i. NECCOG FY 25 Assessments
- Other Agenda Items
- 4. Roundtable
- 5. Executive Session Personnel Discussion
- 6.Adjourn

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# Executive Director's Report

- a. Transit Services Program
- b. Animal Services Program
- c. Crumbling Foundations
- d. Paramedic Intercept Program
- e. Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

- f. Transportation Planning & Projects
- g. EDA Grant Status
- h. 2024 Legislative Session
- i. Other



### a. Connecticut's America 250 Commission

Denise Merrill, Chair of the AM250 | CT Commission and Cyndi Tolosa, AM250 | CT Project Manager

b. Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program and the ARPA Capital Projects Fund-funded ConneCTed Communities Grant Program

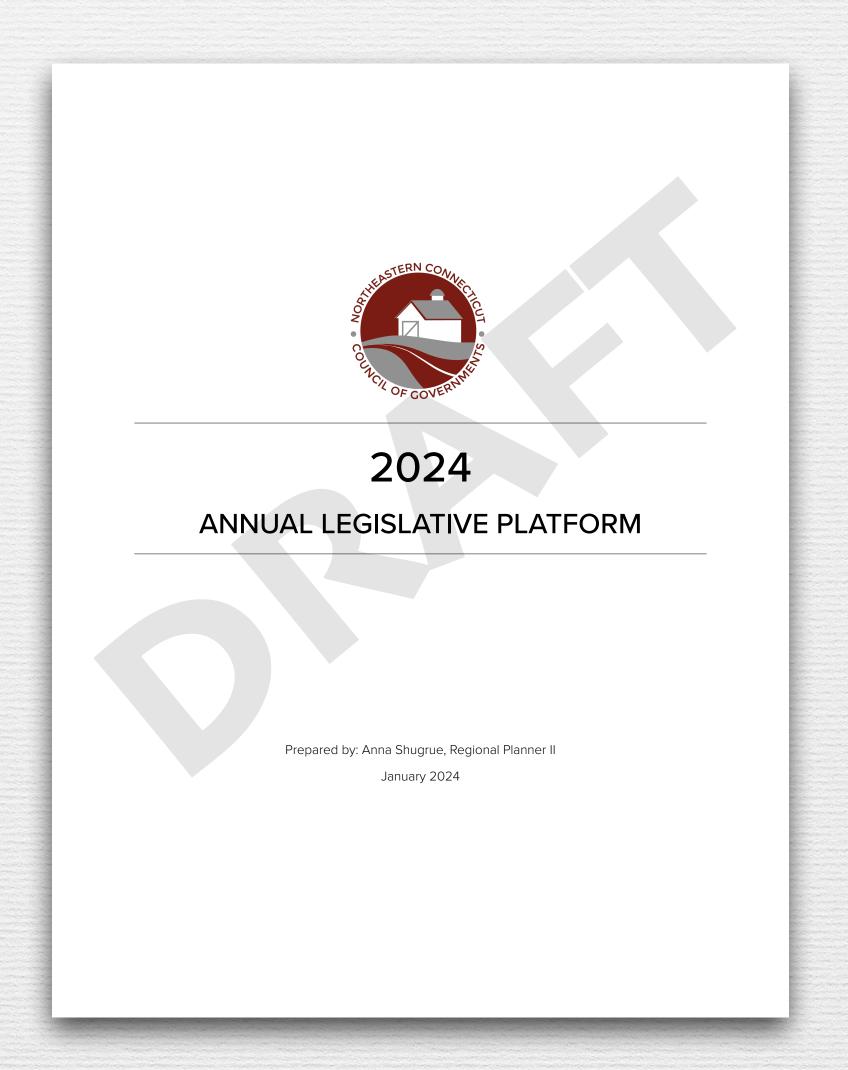
Kevin Pisacich, Director of the Office of Telecommunications and Broadband

c. NDDH FY 25 Town Assessment Request

NDDH Chair Lana Sheridan and NDDH Finance Director Melissa Nichols

d. Annual Policy Affirmations - (NECCOG and NECTD) - ADA, TitleVI/Environmental Justice, and LEP. TABLE for February

e. 2024 NECCOG Legislative Platform





#### 1. Regional Health District Structure

a. The current **Regional Health District Structure lacks accountability** to its member towns and should be reexamined through Connecticut General Statutes Sections <u>19a-240 through 19a-246</u>. Additionally, NECCOG supports efforts towards legislation reform the updates the qualifications, term and duties of the director of health position. Currently, the statute (19a-244) reads that a director of health holds a graduate degree in public health but does not outline other criteria (such as managerial experience) that may be imperative for directing a district of health.

#### 2. Housing

NECCOG supports the development of affordable housing and recognizes its importance in advancing economic development and quality of life within the region. NECCOG has completed several Affordable Housing Plans for its member towns to address housing challenges within the region and emphasizes its support for Affordable Housing legislation that considers the needs of individual small towns.

- a. NECCOG member towns are concerned that the Legislature will implement a 'one-size fits all' approach to the development of affordable housing in the state and fail to provide flexibility to towns.
- b. Properties being converted into Airbnbs are negatively impacting the rental market. The Office of Legislative Research (OLR) published a report with a variety of techniques to regulate and control Airbnb rentals, including implementing duration caps on rentals, density controls, etc.

#### 3. Agriculture/Animal Control

- a. Mandatory Mediation for Animal Control Violations Animal control issues are not priority issues for the courts. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods such as mediation, enables people to resolve disputes before trail and accelerates the court process. Legislation pertaining to animal control violations should allow for mediation to bypass the onerous court process dealing with animal control violation cases.
- b. Roaming Livestock Control PA 23-184 § 12 prohibits an owner for allowing their livestock to roam and grants an infraction when violated: but, the current law does not provide the authority for the state or municipalities to control this issue. Roaming livestock is a hazard and is impacting roadway safety within the region. Owners of roaming livestock can be cited; however, this only prolongs the issue as the court process is lengthy. NECCOG seeks to support legislation granting the state or municipalities to take more serious and immediate action against roaming livestock violations to be more effective in containing the issue and increasing roadway safety.
- c. **Avian Influenza Emergency Response Plan Impacts** on Municipalities- In the event of an avian influenza outbreak, the CT Department of Agriculture would have the right to utilize PA490 land within Voluntown. This is another unfunded mandate and potential public health/environmental challenge for towns with poultry farms.



#### 4. Property Tax Reform

High property taxes in CT despite cuts in the income tax remains a top legislative priority. A report done by the Property Tax Working Group of 1,000 Friends of Connecticut titled, "Property Tax Reform- If Not NOW, WHEN?" provides a <u>framework</u> for property tax reform that addresses the two fundamental issues with Connecticut's property tax system- horizontal and vertical inequity. NECCOG primarily supports property tax reform that works to address a town's fiscal inequalities and increase capacity to provide high-quality public services.

- a. Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for State Lands- The use-value assessment value (490 value) is utilized to the detriment of towns and should be increased.
- b. Non-profit and private educational costs of service to municipalities without local taxation or compensation The large amount of real estate that municipality's nonprofit organizations and schools buy up lies on un-taxable land that could be profitable.
- c. Valuation methodology change for motor vehicles and the adverse impact to municipal grand lists- NECCOG would like this bill to be amended to include an equitable formula for assessing vehicles that does not leave the towns facing large cuts in taxes collected. COST sent out a proposed change to this legislation that should be consulted. Furthermore, there is currently a Motor Vehicle Property Tax Taskforce Subcommittee on Collecting Revenue at the Local Level that will be putting out a report ahead of the legislative session.

#### 5. Municipal Solid Waste And Recycling

The state can benefit from a regional approach to municipal waste management, rather than individual town strategies. Municipalities would benefit from a statewide plan or cohesive messaging from DEEP that provides direction on how to manage waste.

- a. The publication, "Governor Lamont Announces 2023 Legislative Proposal: Addressing the Future of Materials and Waste Management," proposes Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging as an updated recommendation to the state's Comprehensive Material Management Strategy. This bill would impose a fee on businesses for the disposal of waste material generated from their products, thus encouraging producers to cut down on creating excessive packaging and move towards packaging made of recycled materials. While a positive impact of this bill may include holding producers more accountable for their material use, a resulting negative impact is the shifting burden of waste disposal to the town's businesses and associated costs. Businesses in the northeast may struggle to pay a new imposed fee.
- b. Environmental Depot Funding- NECCOG has been pioneering the creation of an Environmental Depot, which aims to be a self-sufficient location for municipal solid waste management.

  Currently, towns in the northeast region participate in intermittent Household Hazardous Waste Collection days, which are expensive, inconvenient, and often result in improper disposal. The Environmental Depot would provide a year-round regional waste disposal option and would assist the state in its 2024 goal of 60% diversion of materials from disposal.



#### 6.Education

NECCOG emphasizes the need for regional cooperative efforts amongst COGs and Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) to foster increased efficiencies, reduced costs, and improved educational outcomes, especially for special education. The "Report of the Task Force to Promote Municipal Shared Services" prepared by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations Work Groups explains that basic framework for shared services exists in the state, but the challenge is avenues of funding and service delivery. NECCOG supports legislation that advances restructuring service delivery and funding through COGs and RESCs.

- a. **Special Education Reform** There are various unfunded mandates that town school districts face regarding special education students, with very little proper reimbursement from the state. Special education mandates pose a challenge for municipalities' Board of Ed budgets, as it is difficult to predict the number of students that will have Special Education needs from year-to-year.
- b. Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Reform The state has been projecting a reduction in Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding by \$10 million over the course of ten years which could be problematic since education costs have risen. Town's Board of Education budgets would benefit from a predictable, equitable funding formula.

#### 7. State lands

State-owned land is prevalent within the northeastern region, especially in Voluntown, where 66% of the town's land area (forest and recreational) is owned by the state. Less than ten thousand acres are left for private and municipal development (Voluntown POCD, 2020, p.7). State-owned land is regulated in various ways than municipally-owned land and impacts enforcement in several areas of the region.

- a. **DEEP Enforcement on State Lands and Water** towns are dealing with an unfunded public safety issue, as DEEP has little jurisdiction to patrol certain state areas. It may be worthwhile to consult EPA's Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) to increase availability of compliance monitoring.
- b. State's failure to maintain trails and other properties Trail maintenance is another unfunded mandate and possible liability.

#### 8. Issuance of Temporary Pistol Permits

a. **Pistol permit applications should be transferred to the State** when a town does not have a police department. The legislation should be rewritten so that towns can take applications and forward them to the appropriate state office for action. Since a temporary pistol permit is a state-issued permit, it should be granted and regulated at the state-level, through the state police who possess knowledge on background checks and CSPs.



#### 9. Transportation and Infrastructure

- a. **Create an Infrastructure Bank** to facilitate municipal use of IIJA and other federal programs. The Office of Legislative Research (OLR) released a report titled, "2020 Major Issues," in which other state agencies were consulted, including the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) and Legislative Commissioner's Office (LCO). In 2019, the Banking Committee introduced a bill proposing the creation of a state infrastructure bank which, "...use initial capital to lend funds for infrastructure projects and then, through a revolving loan fund, use the repayments to finance future projects" (OLR, 2020, p.5). SB 70, proposed in 2019 would, "...establish an infrastructure bank in Connecticut to finance improvements for things such as roads, bridges, ports, energy transmission and distribution, and telecommunication networks" (OLR, 2020, p.5).
- b. Lack of Predictability for the Local Bridge Program and other similar Infrastructure Programs. Towns would like to see funds awarded in a timelier fashion, since investment in this infrastructure is crucial. Other concerns for the bridge program are that the grant opportunities remain consistent from year-to-year and that more money from the state be allocated towards funding.
- c. Road Safety Assistance for towns without municipal police
- d. Airline Trail expansion delays for Killingly and Plainfield

#### 10. Hazard Trees and Related Vegetation Management

Aging trees across the state have been plagued with invasive insect species such as the emerald ash borer and gypsy moth, as well as storm damage. These hazard trees pose a threat to roadway safety and drivers. NECCOG would like to see the creation of a formal, optional COG-based program for the management of hazard trees on heavily utilized roadways, and to aid towns that may not have the municipal capacity to handle this issue on their own.

#### 11. Volunteer Fire and EMS Service

The current system of these services is not sustainable for small towns and requires reform. NECCOG would like the opportunity to pilot the consolidation of multiple small fire/EMS services into a sub-regional service with back-office support through the COG. This effort may be reached through RPIP or may require legislation. A law passed in session year 2021 required the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management to conduct a study regarding the obstacles to merging or consolidating the fire districts or fire departments of two or more municipalities. The Work Group report identified pros and cons to consolidation, obstacles to consolidation, paths to improving service, and statues, regulations and policies to be considered in a consolidation process. NECCOG supports the Eastern CT EMS Council's following policy areas of interest:

- a.Increase Ambulance Medicaid Rates: there is \$5 million for EMS in the 2024 budget. We hope the funds remain in place throughout the session.
- b.Medicaid In-town Mileage: the current Medicaid program is unclear as to whether they should be paying for "in-town" transports. We are seeking language to clarify the issue, so all organizations get reimbursed for mileage for "in-town" transports.
- c.Maximum Allowable Ambulance Rates: OEMS sets our rates as "maximum allowable" rates. Our preference would be that language change to become "standard" rates.
- d.Emergency Responses to be fully covered by insurance plans: eliminate cost sharing (deductibles) for emergency ambulance responses, prohibit prior authorizations on emergency responses, and ensure emergency responses are covered by insurance plans.
- e.Eliminate Ambulance Sales Tax: Currently wheelchair vans do not pay sales tax. Ambulances used to have the same benefit. We'd like to have ambulances added to the exclusionary list.
- f. OEMS Regional Coordinators: We need your support in transitioning these valuable positions to permanent positions from durational.
- g.CT EMS Advisory Board: The Board is seeking support in classifying the "Trauma Committee" as a standing committee much like the "Medical Advisory Committee". The active trauma committee does not have a vote on any board initiatives currently, this would allow them that ability much like their ED Physician counterpart's Medical Advisory Committee.

#### 12.RPIP Reform

Amend 4-124s(c)(2)(D) so that not less than twenty-five per cent of the cost of a proposal be funded by the council for the first three years of operation, and that by the fourth year, unless OPM in consultation with the COG agrees determines that an extension of the time frame is warranted to ensure the success of such program prior to the COG assuming one hundred per cent of the costs.

#### 13.MS4 Requirements

Some towns are facing difficulties reaching project and management plan goals to reduce polluted stormwater discharge due to lack of available municipal funding. NECCOG supports efforts to ensure that MS4 funding remains consistent from year-to-year and that funding is increased to support municipalities with lesser funding capacityNECCOG proposes that towns that are required to comply with the MS4 General Permit guidelines must adhere to the following basic requirements of the program:

- a. Submit a Stormwater Management Plan identifying 6 minimum control measures that a municipality will undertake to prevent and/or treat polluted runoff;
- b. Submit Annual Reports to DEEP indicating the progress with implementing that plan; and
- c. Monitor the quality of water bodies.

### f. RPIP Applications

- i. Regional Inspections & Enforcement
- ii. Regional Assessment
- iii. Regional Town Administration





The **Town of Ellington**, in 2021, studied the possibility of putting in place a town administrator. Their report, in part, states: "A Town Administrator would, first and foremost, add consistency and stability to the Town's top office. The office of the First Selectman and the Selectmen have the potential to change every two years, with each municipal election. It takes a new First Selectman time to get acclimated to the duties and responsibilities and in no time, the term is up for re-election. Having a position in place that is not subject to the election process provides the Town, the Town's management team and the staff members with a steadiness that cannot be offered through the ever-changing elected official process." Their report goes on to list some of the advantages of having in place a town administrator:

- Consistency of Government- a non-political position. This individual will maintain the day-to-day operations during transitions of First Selectman/Elected Officials
- Less change to current form of government. All boards and commissions remain active as established by the Town Charter.
- Professionally trained in Government Administration and will provide leadership to town government.
- Manages strategic short and long-term planning and development for the Town.
- Specific knowledge of state labor laws and grant writing.
- Provides administrative direction to all department heads in accordance with established town policies and procedures
  and state statutes.
- · Assists the First Selectman in managing the affairs of the Town.
- Less money spent on consultants and attorneys.
- Coordinates program information and data to assist the First Selectman in the review and preparation of the annual budget and capital improvement program recommendations.
- Professionally trained in Human Resources administration, compensation and wage analysis, benefits, employee relations, labor relations, organizational and employee development as well as employee recruitment. (emphasis added)

**Subsequent to the study, the Ellington established the position of Town Administrator**. They did this by amending their charter - which included relieving the first selectman of the routine administrative duties.

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	
		3.5%	s increase estin	nated	
Indirect/Direct Costs	\$185,918	\$192,425	\$199,160	\$206,131	
	75%/25%	50%/50%	25%/75%	0%/100%	
RPIP	\$139,439	\$96,213	\$49,790	\$0	
NECCOG	\$46,480	\$96,213	\$149,370	\$206,131	

# Scenario One Member Towns Population 5,000 and Below

Shared Regional Town Administrator

		Year One 25%		Year 50°		Year T		Year Four 100%	
Town	Pop.	\$6.87 PC	\$10,000 Base \$3.24 PC	\$10.27 PC	\$20,000 Base \$3.00 PC	\$15.94 PC	\$30,000 Base \$5.04 PC	\$22 PC	\$40,000 Base \$7.46 PC
Ashford	4,185	\$28,751	\$23,559	\$42,980	\$32,555	\$66,709	\$51,092	\$92,070	\$71,220
Eastford	1,650	\$11,336	\$15,346	\$16,946	\$24,950	\$26,301	\$38,316	\$36,300	\$52,309
Pomfret	4,270	\$29,335 \$23,835		\$43,853 \$32,810		\$68,064	\$51,521	\$93,940	\$71,854

Total population - 10,105 (2021)

# Scenario Two Member Towns Population 5,000 and Below

Shared Regional Town Administrator

Officer		Year One 25%			Two		Three 5%	Year Four 100%	
	Pop.	\$6.87 PC	\$10,000 Base	\$10.27 PC	\$20,000 Base	\$15.94 PC	\$30,000 Base	\$22 PC	\$40,000 Base
			\$3.24 PC		\$3.00 PC		\$5.04 PC		\$7.46 PC
Eastford	1,650	\$11,336 \$15,346		\$16,946	\$24,950	\$26,301	\$38,316	\$36,300	\$52,309
Hampton	1,729	\$11,878 \$15,602		\$17,757 \$25,187		\$27,560	\$38,714	\$38,038	\$52,898
Scotland	1,576	\$10,827	\$10,827 \$15,106 \$16,7		\$24,728	\$25,121	\$37,943	\$34,672	\$51,757
Union	784	\$5,386	\$12,540	\$8,052	\$22,352	\$12,497	\$33,951	\$17,248	\$45,849

Total population - 5,739 (2021)

# Scenario Three Member Towns Population 5,000 and Below

Shared Regional Town Administrator, Assistant Town Administrator/Fiscal Director,

		Year 25		Year 50		Year 7 75	Three %	Year Four 100%	
Officer	Pop.	\$6.87 PC	\$10,000 Base \$3.24 PC	\$10.27 PC	\$20,000 Base \$3.00 PC	\$15.94 PC	\$30,000 Base \$5.04 PC	\$22 PC	\$40,000 Base \$7.46 PC
Ashford	4,185	\$28,751	\$23,559	\$42,980	\$32,555	\$66,709	\$51,092	\$92,070	\$71,220
Canterbury	5,041	\$34,632	\$26,333	\$51,771	\$35,123	\$80,354	\$55,407	\$110,902	\$77,606
Chaplin	2,141	\$14,709	\$16,937	\$21,988	\$26,423	\$34,128	\$40,791	\$47,102	\$55,972
Eastford	1,650	\$11,336	\$15,346	\$16,946	\$24,950	\$26,301	\$38,316	\$36,300	\$52,309
Hampton	1,729	\$11,878	\$15,602	\$17,757	\$25,187	\$27,560	\$38,714	\$38,038	\$52,898
Pomfret	4,270	\$29,335	\$23,835	\$43,853	\$32,810	\$68,064	\$51,521	\$93,940	\$71,854
Scotland	1,576	\$10,827	\$15,106	\$16,186	\$24,728	\$25,121	\$37,943	\$34,672	\$51,757

Total population - 20,592 (2021)

### g. STIP Actions and Amendments

i. Amendment Action - Project #0141-0157, Interstate - REPLACE BR 02128 o/ SUNSET HILL BROOK - AC CONVERSION - Phase, Construction, 2024, \$295 (\$1,180 federal, \$295 state)

### h. Regional Referrals

- i. Town of Voluntown (Draft) Section 1: Title, Authority, and Purpose.
- ii. **Town of Canterbury** Amendments to Recreational Campgrounds, See Section 4.11.7.
- iii. **Town of Ashford** Report on Zoning Referral Z-2023-144, amendment to Day-Care facilities
- iv. **Town of Brooklyn** ZRC-23-007 Zoning Regulation Change to overnight accommodations for special events.

i. NECCOG FY 25 Assessments

#### 2024 - 2025 Proposed Assessments

					Transit Se	ervices	Para	medic Serv	ices						
Town and 2022 Population (CT DPH Number	ation		ange -22 %	Common Assessment @ \$1.10 per capita	Basic @ \$1.75 per capita	Elderly Disabled \$1,500 plus \$0.35 Per capita or In- Kind	Estimated Transports Based on 2023	\$175 per transport without DKH Subsidy	\$115 per transport with DKH Subsidy	Engineering  @ \$2.45 per capita	\$1,000 base and \$0.55 per capita	Grants  Technical Assistance and Administration	Profession	Land Use hal Planning and/or Enforcement	
Ashford	4,222	36	0.86	\$4,644.20						\$10,343.90	\$3,322.10				
Brooklyn	8,502	14	0.16	\$9,352.20	\$14,878.50	\$4,475.70	340	\$59,500	\$39,100	\$20,829.90	\$5,676.10				
Canterbury	5,102	42	0.83	\$5,612.20		\$3,285.70									
Chaplin	2,156	13	0.61	\$2,371.60											
Eastford	1,675	15	0.90	\$1,842.50			45	\$7,875	\$5,175	\$4,103.75			Variable	Up to 25 hpm @\$70 per hour	
Hampton	1,738	10	0.58	\$1,911.80							\$1,955.90				
Killingly	17,837	95	0.54	\$19,620.70	\$31,214.75	\$7,742.95	1,400	\$245,000	\$161,000						
Plainfield	15,143	184	1.23	\$16,673.30	\$26,500.25	\$6,800.05	175	\$30,625	\$20,125			no fee			
Pomfret	4,307	36	0.84	\$4,737.70		\$3,007.45	75	\$13,125	\$8,625	\$10,552.15	\$3,368.85	110100			
Putnam	9,302	75	0.81	\$10,232.20	\$16,278.50	\$4,755.70	415	\$72,625	\$47,725	\$22,789.90					
Scotland	1,577	9	0.57	\$1,734.70							\$1,867.35				
Sterling	3,623	46	1.29	\$3,985.30		\$2,768.05	84	\$14,700	\$9,660				Variable	Up to 25 hpm @ \$70 per hour	
Thompson	9,315	89	0.96	\$10,246.50	\$16,301.25	\$4,760.25	245	\$42,875	\$28,175						
Union	793	12	1.54	\$872.30		\$1,777.55				\$1,942.85	\$1,436.15				
Voluntown	2,592	38	1.49	\$2,851.20											
Woodstock	8,312	91	1.11	\$9,143.20		\$4,409.20	157	\$27,475	\$18,055				\$45,000	50.5 hpm - \$70 per hour after	
NECCOG	96,196	805	0.84	\$105,831.60	\$105,173.25	\$43,782.60	2,936	\$513,800	\$337,640	\$70,562.45	\$17,626.45	\$0.00	\$45,000	\$45,000 Plus hourly income	

- ✓ 2022 is the most recent population estimate from the CT Department of Public Health
   ✓ Common Assessment No Change
   ✓ Transit Services No Change, Elderly Disabled participants in red are In-Kind payments
   ✓ Paramedic Services Change from \$150 to \$175 additional changes are pending and may impact the assessment
   ✓ Engineering Services No Change
   ✓ GIS Services No Change
   ✓ Grant Services Change to no fee due to increase in State Assistance. And all towns eligible.
   ✓ Land Use Base increase for Woodstock Hourly rates, no change

# 4. Roundtable



# 4. Executive Session - Personnel Discussion

# Adjournment

