

MEETING NOTES OF 3/16/20 TELECONFERENCE OF THE
SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

PRESENT: Council Representatives: Mary Bylone, Colchester; Mark Nickerson, East Lyme; Charles Grant, Franklin; Todd Babbitt, Griswold; Fred Allyn, III, Ledyard; Tom Sparkman, Lisbon; Ron McDaniel, Montville; Mike Urgo, North Stonington; Sandra Allyn-Gauthier, Preston; Danielle Chesebrough, Town of Stonington; Council Alternates: John Burt, Town of Groton; John Salomone, Norwich. Tribal Liaison: Robert Hayward, Mashantucket-Pequot Tribal Nation; Military Liaison: Adam Wright, U.S. Naval SUBASE; LCDR Daniel Stepler, USCGA. Staff: James Butler, Amanda Kennedy. Other: Steve Mansfield, Ledge Light Health District; Patrick McCormack, Uncas Health District

Chairman Nickerson called the teleconference to order at 11:03 a.m. He asked the SCCOG Executive Director to read the protocols for participating in this morning's conference call. The Executive Director did so, and stated the teleconference was being recorded.

Mr. Nickerson announced he had just received a communication stating that Governor Lamont had just announced that all bars and restaurants in the state will be closed as of 8:00 tonight. He said that East Lyme was closing public access to Town Hall, but that employees are still working. He has established drop-off points for important documents.

Steve Mansfield of LLHD summarized the Governor's announcement this morning, including the closure of all non-essential businesses.

Mr. Grant stated that he would be meeting tomorrow morning with all Town of Franklin department heads to discuss next measures.

Ms. Chesebrough stated that Stonington Town Hall was closed to the public effective today, as well as Public Works garage and Human Services office. The transfer station was remaining open, and trash collection was proceeding. She said that Stonington public schools was providing curbside pickup for breakfast and lunch for students.

Mr. Allyn said that Ledyard's food pantry was making deliveries and dropping off food for Ledyard elderly residents and others in need. He said the Town had just issued 10 laptops with VPN to department heads so they can continue to work from home. He said that Public Works crews are being kept separate, keeping them intact in groups of four, and not interacting with other crews, to minimize the chance of virus contraction.

Mr. McCormack of Uncas Health District provided updates on what his Health District is doing. On question that came up is whether or not the Governor's ban on restaurants opening impacts the Saint Vincent DePaul soup kitchen in Norwich. He also commented on the reductions in donations to food pantries, stating that United Way is already

experiencing this. Mr. McCormack stated he had several upcoming meetings scheduled with towns, and he suggested these be done by teleconference.

Steve Mansfield spoke to the importance of coordination and communication. He also said that the health districts are to the point they will have to lead the response to COVID-19 investigations. He briefed those on the call regarding LLHD's investigation of the child from Rhode Island who attended day care in Stonington. He said eventually they will assume there is community wide transmission, which will make these investigations impossible.

Mr. Urgo stated that last night he posted a message to North Stonington residents on his and the Town's Facebook page, which he would share with all SCCOG CEOs.

Mr. Grant said he had issued a memo this past Friday to all Town residents. He said he stressed remaining calm.

Mr. Mansfield addressed the issue of testing for the COVID-10 virus. He said in CT the patient must exhibit COVID-19 symptoms, and then have a doctor's referral for admission to the hospital. He said that there will be COVID-19 testing at L&M Hospital in New London. LLHD will be assisting L&M with the testing.

Mr. McCormack said Uncas HD is working with Backus Hospital and he anticipates they will be testing within the week.

Mr. Burt inquired whether any towns are looking to declare a local State of Emergency, which might help with federal reimbursement of costs associated with addressing the virus. Ms. Chesebrough responded Stonington is considering this on advice of town attorney. Mr. Nickerson responded that East Lyme has declared a State of Emergency. Discussion on how the local declaration of emergency during a hurricane has assisted in seeking reimbursement in the past.

Mr. Hedrick said the City of Groton is considering closing the doors to the public on Wednesday. He noted other measures the City has taken. He said they are looking into how to handle employees paid time off; he is looking for employees to take sick or vacation leave. Mr. Grant responded that all of his employees have remote capability, and he intends to pay all employees during this. Ms. Chesebrough said she would share guidance from her attorney on this issue.

Mr. Sparkman asked which town halls in the region are closing, and which senior centers are closing. Discussion on applications, document submission, etc. ensued.

The Executive Director stated that he had been advised that the Governor's office will be extending land use application deadlines. SCCOG staff Planners have been asked to contact the P&Z Commissions we staff to arrange for attending remotely; we also will help any municipal planner who has questions about how to deal with any deadline. He said that he plans to stay in the office during this time, and will share anything with the

SCCOG membership that is sent to him by SCCOG CEOs. He did note he had sent out an email this morning from a communications consultant regarding a proposal for messaging by towns

The Chairman announced that we will go ahead and allow SCCOG members to attend Wednesday's COG meeting, which will have a short agenda. All other are urged to attend via conference call. The Executive Director said he would prepare and email out a revised, shorter agenda for Wednesday's meeting.

Mr. Mansfield said there are still questions about what the Governor's announced closings impact; DPH has a hotline to try to answer questions.

Mr. Urged communications through the COG to be shared with all CEOs.

Mr. Salomone asked for a tally of all towns closing town halls/meetings in the region. The Executive Director said he would email all SCCOG CEOs asking for this information. He said he would send out meeting notes from this call, a recording of the meeting, and that he had previously sent out an email in the Governor's office to request information on the State's response.

Mr. Sparkman asked if we still plan to have a roundtable discussion on local response at the COG meeting Wednesday. The Executive Director responded affirmatively.

The teleconference concluded at 11:40 a.m.

Meeting Notes Taken By:
James S. Butler
Executive Director