

MEETING NOTES OF 4/1/20 TELECONFERENCE OF THE  
SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

PRESENT: Council Representatives: Carl Zorn, Bozrah; Mary Bylone, Colchester; Mark Nickerson, East Lyme; Keith Hedrick, City of Groton; Todd Babbitt, Griswold; Timothy Sharkey, Jewett City; Kevin Cwikla, Lebanon; Fred Allyn, III, Ledyard; Tom Sparkman, Lisbon; Ron McDaniel, Montville; Michael Passero, New London; Mike Urgo, North Stonington; Sandra Allyn Gauthier, Preston; Kevin Lyden, Salem; Cheryl Blanchard, Sprague; Jeff Callahan, Borough of Stonington; Danielle Chesebrough, Town of Stonington; Rob Brule, Waterford. Council Alternates: John Burt, Town of Groton. Tribal Liaison: Robert Hayward, Mashantucket Pequot Tribe. Military Liaison: Captain Todd Moore, Adam Wright, U.S. Naval SUBASE; RADM William Kelley, USCGA. Staff: James Butler, Amanda Kennedy. Other: Steve Mansfield, Ledge Light Health District; Patrick Green, William Stanley, L&M Hospital; Donna Handley, Hartford HealthCare.

Chairman Nickerson called the teleconference to order at 8:30 a.m. He introduced Mr. Green and Mr. Handley and invited them to update the SCCOG on the status of their hospitals.

Mr. Green provided an update on L&M Hospital. He said they were focusing on contingency planning, preparing for a surge of COVID-19 patients that are anticipated.

Mr. Nickerson asked if there was anything that the SCCOG and its towns could do for L&M. Mr. Green stated how well the community has already responded.

Ms. Handley said her hospitals are scenario planning, extending their critical care capacity. The message that the hospitals need to be sent by municipalities to their residents is that the hospitals are ready to take care of them.

Mr. Nickerson asked if we anticipate seeing any temporary hospitals built in the region.

Both Mr. Green and Ms. Handley responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Nickerson thanked both and all their health care workers on behalf of all SCCOG members.

Mr. Allyn asked about bed capacity.

Mr. Green stated they had 280 beds licensed today, with repurposing areas it can be 308; planning to increase by 50%.

Ms. Handley stated there were 231 beds licensed at Backus today; they were increasing capacity at both Windham and Backus using non-traditional areas for patient care.

Admiral Kelley stated that the USCGA was prepared to offer their Roland Fieldhouse and athletic fields for use as a field hospital if needed.

Mr. Mansfield said that LLHD was working with CT DPH on developing drive-through PPE distribution sites. He provided an update on number of COVID-19 cases in the LLHD.

The SCCOG Executive Director made three announcements/reminders: That he had emailed out a survey requesting information about transportation assets in the SCCOG region, that would be provided to the Chair of DEMHS Region 4 RESF 1, Transportation, and which would be used in the event of the need to move large numbers of people, with a requested deadline to respond of April 9; that tomorrow, there will be a teleconference for all CEOs in Region 4 dealing with HR issues, as requested by Norwich City Manager John Salomone; and that this Friday there will be a teleconference with Captain John Desormier, Navy Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer with FEMA.

Mr. Nickerson raised the issue of closing public spaces, and mentioned East Lyme's Niantic Boardwalk as a public space still open, which in the future might have to close to maintain public safety during the pandemic. He asked Mr. Mansfield if LLHD or DPH had any guidance on this.

Mr. Mansfield said he was looking for guidance as well, and hopes this comes from the Governor, so that it is uniformly applied across all towns.

Mr. Cwikla asked about guidance for farmers' markets. Mr. Mansfield said these are currently allowed to stay open under guidance issued.

Ms. Bylone asked a question about towns scheduling budget referenda. Mr. Nickerson said that should be a topic of discussion on the next weekly SCCOG call.

The SCCOG Executive Director stated he would send an email to all CEOs asking for information on budget schedules and referenda, and then would share with all. Discussion on what individual towns are doing/contemplating doing took place.

Mr. Mansfield provided an update on a new Executive Order allowing the Commissioner of CTDEEP to close and ban access to State Parks that have reached an attendance level that negatively impacts social distancing.

Mr. Urgo raised the fact that the SCCOG in its Legislative Agenda had expressed support for a bipartisan bill that would allow the region's two Tribes to offer online gaming. He suggested that the SCCOG send a letter to Governor Lamont urging him to issue an Executive Order to allow them to offer online gaming at this time, in order to mitigate the financial impact that they are incurring for voluntarily closing their doors. It was agreed that staff would circulate Mr. Urgo's draft letter, asking SCCOG members for any objections, and if none, then it would be sent to the Governor at the end of the day.

Mr. Hayward expressed his appreciation for this suggestion; in response to a question, he said he thought both Tribes could offer this very quickly if allowed.

The teleconference concluded at 9:33 a.m.

*Note: A recording of this teleconference has been posted.*

Meeting Notes Taken By:

James S. Butler

Executive Director