

MINUTES OF 7/15/20 MEETING OF THE  
SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
HELD VIA ZOOM

PRESENT: Council Representatives: Mary Bylone, Colchester; Mark Nickerson, East Lyme; Charles Grant, Franklin; Keith Hedrick, City of Groton; Todd Babbitt, Griswold; Timothy Sharkey, Jewett City; 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; John Salomone, Norwich. Tribal Liaison: None Present. Military Liaison: Captain Todd Moore, Adam Wright, U.S. Naval SUBASE; RADM William Kelly, USCGA. Staff: James Butler, Amanda Kennedy, Kate Rattan, Wendy Leclair. Other: Mike Carroll, Al Fritsche, Cherise Perkins, SEAT; Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's office; Brianna DeVivo, Senator Murphy's Office; State Representative Holly Cheeseman; Grayson Wright, Maribeth Wojenski, Deputy Commissioner Garrett Eucallitto CTDOT; Erik Shortell, FHWA; Nancy Cowser, seCTer; Wendy Bury, SE CT Cultural Coalition; Theresa Jackman, Eversource; Phil Michalowski, Steve Sigel, Jeannie Sigel, Mark Oefinger, Garde Arts Center; David Fay, The Bushnell Performing Arts Center; Kevin Blacker.

1. Call to Order: Chairman Nickerson opened the meeting at 8:32 a.m.
2. Roll Call: A quorum was present.
3. Act on Minutes of 6/17/20:

MOTION: To approve the minutes of 6/17/20 (Lyden, Sparkman). So voted unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Report:

MOTION: To approve the June Treasurer's Report (Lyden, Grant). So voted unanimously.

5. Public Comment:

The Executive Director stated that he had forwarded an email yesterday from Peter Olsen regarding State Pier and CT Port Authority issues to all SCCOG members.

State Representative Holly Cheeseman stated that the General Assembly plans to hold a special session to consider a Police Accountability bill. She has sent a draft of the bill to the SCCOG Executive Director along with instructions for commenting on the bill, who has forwarded this to all SCCOG members. Representative Cheeseman said she wanted the COG to be aware of the bill because it would have impacts on local Police Departments and to raise the idea of addressing its requirements regionally in order to minimize costs. She recommended that the SCCOG members forward this information to their Police Chiefs; the Chairman suggested that the CEOs pass it on to their local Police Commissions.

Ms. Jackman reported on several initiatives that Eversource has underway to assist businesses and individuals impacted by the pandemic; she noted they are hosting a webinar later that afternoon.

Mr. Blacker introduced himself, stating that he has been working to establish a market for rocks and boulders that could be used by coastal communities to protect against sea level rise. He said he would like to ask SCCOG to take some action that would help in maintaining freight capacity at State Pier in New London, for shipment of diverse products. He said that Allyn Point in Ledyard is the next best option for use as a port. The Executive Director stated that the subject of shipping freight and use of State Pier to do so came up in SCCOG's recent TMA Certification review by staff of FHWA and FTA. He suggested that Mr. Blacker's request to SCCOG to support his position be made an item for discussion at the August meeting of the Executive Committee, which also functions as SCCOG's Transportation Committee. The Chairman concurred.

Mr. Passero introduced Steve Sigel and Phil Michalowski, Executive Director and Chairman respectively of the Garde Arts Center in New London, and David Fay, CEO of The Bushnell Performing Arts Center in Hartford. Mr. Sigel explained the submission to the State of a request for CARES Act funding by six cities and performing arts centers in the state, saying they were seeking some liquidity to maintain these important cultural facilities. Mr. Fay said that under the Governor's phased plan, all of these facilities are now closed and will be the last to re-open. He noted that across the country, these types of facilities' principal source of government funds are county governments, but in Connecticut we do not have counties, and the municipalities in which these facilities are located cannot alone provide such funding. He explained that their request to the State is for funds to keep these facilities from having to shutter themselves permanently.

MOTION: That the SCCOG send a letter to Governor Lamont supporting the request by the Garde Arts Center and five other performing arts centers in Connecticut for CARES Act funding to mitigate some of the financial loss these cultural institutions have incurred due to their closing during the ongoing pandemic (Brule, Burt). So voted unanimously.

6. Guest Speakers:

A) CTDOT Deputy Commissioner Garret Eucallitto

Deputy Commissioner Eucallitto introduced himself, stating that he began working at CTDOT in January. He presented a summary of what CTDOT has been doing during the pandemic; spoke to declining traffic volumes, which are starting to return to pre-pandemic levels; maintenance projects underway; and the approval by the Bond Commission of another round of LOTCIP funding. Discussion followed.

7. Committee and Liaison Reports:

A. Executive Committee

1. LOTCIP 2020 Solicitation

The Executive Director reported that this most recent solicitation resulted in eight applications, seven of which have been deemed eligible, and one which did not meet the minimum threshold for project cost. He said that in this round, only a pre-application was required, and that the SCCOG had a little over \$17 Million to fund projects at this time. He said that Transportation Program Manager Kate Rattan presented the seven eligible applications in a matrix made that was sent to all SCCOG members in the agenda packet for this meeting. He said that the Executive Committee recommends that the SCCOG approve the seven eligible projects and invite the submitting municipalities to submit full applications.

MOTION: The SCCOG approves the seven eligible LOTCIP pre-applications and invites the submitting municipalities to submit full applications (Lyden, Sparkman). So voted unanimously.

2. 2020 Solicitation for Section 5310 Applications

The Executive Director stated that ten applications for Section 5310 funding have been received. Staff will review these and make a recommendation to the Executive Committee at their August meeting.

3. Funding for COG Work in COVID Response/Recovery Update

The Executive Director reported that the 9 COGs in the state had been encouraged by OPM to submit a joint application for CARES Act funding to cover COVID related costs incurred from March 1 through December 31, and to also submit an application to the State that will be part of a State application to EDA for funds to cover COVID Recovery work for the two-year period January 1 2021 through December 31 2022. The first was submitted two weeks ago, but the OPM Underscretary had responded that all COVID -

related work must be for overtime work, which COGs do not pay for, as all COG staff are salaried employees, and overtime is never compensated. This is a problem as the COGs have previously been told by the State that this work cannot be charged to DEMHS or to OPM Regional Service Grants (RSG). The CTCOG Chairman is continuing to discuss this with OPM. He said he will continue to update the COG on this funding issue.

#### 4. SCCOG Municipal/Regional Long-Term Recovery Update

The Executive Director reported that the 18-person DEMHS Region 4 Long-Term Recovery Steering Committee has been named, has three co-chairs who are SCCOG Chairman Nickerson, the NECCOG Chairman Alan Cahill, and Deb Monahan of TVCCA. The Steering Committee has met twice, and has just begun the process of standing up a Health and Social Services/Housing Working Group; it is anticipated that at least two additional working groups will be established.

#### 5. SCCOG Nomination to SCWA Board

The Executive Director stated he had received an email from SCWA General Manager Josh Cansler forwarding a letter from SCWA RAB Vice Chairman Barry Weiner asking that the SCCOG nominate three persons for the position with the term expiring on September 18, 2020, currently held by SCWA Vice-Chair Harry Watson. Mr. Cansler has advised that Mr. Watson would like to be re-nominated and re-appointed. He said that at the SCCOG Executive Committee meeting, it was suggested that an email be sent to all SCCOG members before today's meeting asking if anyone was interested in being nominated by the SCCOG; the Executive Director reported that no responses had been received to his email. He noted that Mr. Watson was the Mayor of the Town of Groton when first appointed to SCWA.

MOTION: To nominate Harry Watson for re-appointment to the SCWA board (Sparkman, Grant). So voted.

#### 8. Executive Director's Report:

The Executive Director reported on three items.

He said that late last week staff had received the draft TMA Planning Certification Review report form FHWA/FTA, along with a letter providing a conditional certification of SCCOG's transportation planning program. SCCOG staff is currently reviewing this thorough report, and will respond to FHWA/FTA before their requested July 24 deadline; then once a final report is received, staff will provide this to the SCCOG Board and begin to work with the SCCOG Transportation Committee to address the required recommendations and one corrective action.

He said that yesterday he sent out DEMHS FY 2020 MOAs and draft resolutions which need to be returned to the SCCOG office by October 20<sup>th</sup>; he urged all SCCOG

municipalities to get these returned before the requested deadline and before any other COG in the state completes the return of these documents.

He reminded of the emails sent requesting information on areas in towns with inadequate broadband and cellular coverage; he asked that SCCOG members respond by the end of the week. This information has been requested by a Deputy Commissioner at DECD, working with a task force attempting to address this issue.

9. Old Business:

A. COVID-19 Response Discussion

The Chairman asked if SCCOG members continued to hold bi-weekly calls.

Mr. Sparkman noted that in light of the August Primary and the anticipated re-opening of schools, it might be worth holding to this schedule until we get closer to those dates before cancelling.

Mr. Grant agreed, and worried that based on what is happening around the country, the number of infections in Connecticut could increase, requiring continuing SCCOG discussion of a regional response.

The Chairman then stated that for now, a SCCOG call is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, July 29, at 8:30 a.m.

The Executive Director stated that he had sent out an email regarding another mask order with the contact information for the individual who is putting this order together.

10. New Business:

None.

11. Next Meeting:

The Chairman stated that typically the August meeting is cancelled and asked for the SCCOG's thoughts on cancelling.

MOTION: To cancel the August 19 meeting (Grant, Salomone).

Mr. Lyden recommending against cancelling at this time, due to all that is happening in the world at this time; he said the meeting might be needed and cancelling sends the wrong message. He said if there is no business to discuss as that date approaches, the Chairman can simply notify the SCCOG the meeting will not be called. The Executive Director stated his agreement with Mr. Lyden.

Mr. Grant and Mr. Salomone withdrew their motion and second respectively.

12. Adjournment:

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 9:40 a.m. (Grant, Hedrick). So voted unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Keith Hedrick, Secretary