

Region 4 Recovery Steering Committee Meeting

Date: Wednesday, July 8, 2020

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: Via Zoom video/teleconference. A recording of this meeting will be posted to the SCCOG and NECCOG websites: www.seccog.org/recovery | www.neccog.org.

Members Present: Jim Bellano (Eastern Regional Tourism District/Town of Windham), Chuck Bunnell (Mohegan Tribal Council), Wendy Bury (Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition), Jim Butler (Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG)), Allan Cahill (Town of Hampton/NECCOG Chairman), Mike Caplet (DEMHS Region 4 Coordinator), John Filchak (Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG)), Mark Hill (Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB)), Mike Licata (Regional Long-term Recovery Coordinator/Town of Windham), Dr. Kyle McClaine (Hartford Healthcare), Deborah Monahan (Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA)), Mark Oefinger (Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region (seCTer)), Tony Sheridan (Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut), Bishop Benjamin Watts (Shiloh Baptist Church of New London).

Others Present: Sam Alexander (SCCOG), Hoween Flexer (NECCOG), Carla Iezzi (DEMHS Region 4), Amanda Kennedy (SCCOG), Alexis Meehan (NECCOG).

The meeting began at 8:00 a.m. Discussion and business were delayed until 8:30 a.m. because a second, inadvertent communication noted an 8:30 a.m. meeting time.

1) Call to Order.

Co-chair Deborah Monahan (TVCCA) ran the meeting. Ms. Monahan welcomed those in attendance.

2) Opening Remarks.

Mike Caplet (DEMHS Region 4 Coordinator) noted that the Lieutenant Governor may attend the next meeting.

3) Public Comments.

Jim Butler (SCCOG) noted that attention and interest in the charge and work of the Recovery Steering Committee may increase as time goes on, and that the Committee was recently noted in an article in The Day newspaper. This may mean non-member meeting attendance and public comments.

4) Act on Minutes of the June 24th Meeting:

Mr. Butler made a motion to accept the minutes of the June 24th meeting as presented. John Filchak (NECCOG) seconded the motion. The motion carried with an abstention from Mark Oefinger (seCTer), and all else in favor.

5) Discussion re: Establishing Health and Social Services/Housing Working Group:

Mr. Butler stated that SCCOG, NECCOG, and DEMHS staff, have been discussing standing up the Health and Social Services/Housing (HSS/H) Working Group for some time and that this working group is a priority. Mr. Butler stated that a draft list of names for invitees to the working group was provided.

There was discussion regarding finalizing a list of health and social service providers and organizations dealing with housing, to invite to partake in the working group.

- Mr. Caplet will be meeting with a group of faith leaders in the region on Friday, who are happy to serve at the working group level.
- Ms. Monahan noted that the needs of citizens will be unique and there will not be a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Mr. Caplet noted the list will grow over time, even after the working group first convenes.
- All critical care hospitals and health district directors will be added to the list.
- Mr. Caplet noted that the state is currently taking proposal for a human services agency to fill the role of “community resource coordinators” that will link quarantined and isolated individuals with services meeting their needs during isolation. The list of agencies invited to be part of the working group will be important as a resource to the community resource coordinators.
- The regional Recovery Steering Committees across the state are still waiting on a framework for working group tasks, data collection, and strategy to come from the statewide recovery effort. It would be best to have this by the time the HSS/H Working Group is stood up, but there is a chance it will not be available by then.
- Chuck Bunnell (Mohegan Tribal Council) noted that the region may be competing for finite funding to meet needs and establish programs identified in the working groups.
- Mr. Filchak noted that the northern part of the region is oriented economically toward Worcester and Providence.
- The two Council of Governments directors will send invites to invitees within their region.
- The Committee will target standing up the HSS/H Working Group in mid-August.
- Mr. Filchak (NECCOG) expressed a need to develop baseline data for Region 4 for use by the working groups.

6) Discussion re: Standing up Other Working Groups:

Mr. Butler explained that the Recovery Steering Committee will have potentially two other working groups. The three potential working groups have been reduced from the six in Connecticut’s Disaster Recovery Framework. The two remaining, potential working groups are the Economic/Natural and Cultural Resources (E/NCR) Working Group and the Community and Capacity Building/Infrastructure Working Group. The Recovery Steering Committee could choose to stand up these working groups parallel to the HSS/H Working Group.

There was discussion regarding current challenges to business, industry and cultural institutions.

- Phase Three guidelines are sometime contradictory and harm certain businesses more than others. Tony Sheridan (Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut) shared an example of seating capacity for private events versus restaurants.
- Wendy Bury (Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition) agreed that there are contradictory policies in Phase Three guidelines, and stated that the Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition is assisting cultural businesses like event venues with programming online events.
- Mr. Caplet is able to communicate any recommendations from the Recovery Steering Committee to the state-level steering committee.

- Committee members discussed whether or not eastern Connecticut's re-opening strategy should be different than the rest of the State's. It was generally felt this would be difficult or imprudent.
- It is very important to get the economy back up and running.
- Committee members discussed testing and mandatory self-quarantining for travelers. Dr. Kyle McClaine (Hartford Healthcare) noted that there is a latency between testing and results, which creates an issue for self-quarantining. Mr. McClaine stated that there is low patient census in eastern Connecticut's emergency departments.
- The working groups should have a defined mission. This may come from the mission statement of the Regional Steering Committee, but may also come out of the working groups after they're stood up. Developing a mission statement prior to development of an invitee list may give greater definition to who is invited.
- Business and cultural representatives from the Regional Steering Committee will discuss possible E/NCR Working Group invitees in a smaller meeting prior to the next Committee meeting.

7) Other Next Steps:

The staff at the two Councils of Governments will work with Ms. Bury and others to set up a meeting to discuss E/NCR Working Group members.

8) Set Next Meeting Date:

There was discussion about the next meeting date. It was determined that the Committee should meet in the last week of July, in order to have enough time to prepare for a mid-August convening of the HSS/H Working Group. Amanda Kennedy (SCCOG) was tapped to send out an email and poll following the meeting to Recovery Steering Committee members to gauge preferred dates and times for future meetings. Additionally, Ms. Bury will reach out to members not in attendance today.

9) Adjournment:

Mr. Cahill noted that he attended a virtual meeting with the Town of Hampton's school staff and Board of Education the previous night, and stressed that the state and region will face challenges related to logistics and rising cases when schools open back up in six weeks, as was mandated by the State.

Ms. Bury made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Cahill seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m.