

SECHA Board of Directors Meeting  
January 8, 2021  
8:30 AM

Conducted by Zoom Conference  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9927249843>  
Via phone: 929-205-6099 Meeting ID: 992 724 9843 (dial \*6 to mute/unmute)

**Draft Minutes**

Attendees: Norton Wheeler, Deb Monahan, John Bolduc, Bob Fusari, Mark Oefinger, Dave Stanland, Les King, Fred Allyn III, Julie Savin, Jim Butler, Amanda Kennedy, Carly Holzschuh. Guest speaker Jim Perras.

1. Call to Order  
Mr. Wheeler called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.
2. Introductions  
Mr. Wheeler led introductions of SECHA members, SCCOG staff, and guest speaker Jim Perras.
3. Approval November 13, 2020 Meeting Minutes  
MOTION: To approve the November 13, 2020 Meeting Minutes (Oefinger, Fusari). So voted unanimously.
4. Approval December 23, 2020 Special Meeting Minutes  
MOTION: To approve the December 23, 2020 Special Meeting minutes (Fusari, Monahan). So voted unanimously.
5. Financial Report  
Ms. Kennedy reported that SECHA expenditures are down for the month of December, as most of the SCCOG housing work is currently being covered under the Affordable Housing Plan contracts. With the new calendar year, we can start applying for new grants for revenue.  
MOTION: To approve the financial report (Bolduc, Allyn). So voted unanimously.
6. State/Legislative Activity: Jim Perras, CEO, HBRA CT  
Mr. Perras, as a lobbyist for land use reforms, spoke about the current conditions of the legislature. The coming focus is projected to be primarily on the State budget, COVID-19 relief, marijuana legalization, sports betting, and access to healthcare. He is skeptical that the legislation will have an appetite for land use reform. Current ranking member of the Planning & Development Committee is Republican Senator Tony Hwang of Westport, who has been an obstacle to passing land use reform legislation in the past. Democratic Senator Steve Cassano of Manchester, currently co-chair of the Planning & Development

Committee and a proponent of land use reform, is rumored to be leaving the committee to chair the Transportation Committee.

COVID-19 impacts on affordable housing have included a surge of people moving from urban centers like New York City to suburban Connecticut, very low mortgage interest rates, and low housing inventory. Construction of new units is low in part due to supply-side issues of high material costs and a smaller workforce, leading to difficulty supplying affordable units.

Mr. Perras also discussed proposed land use reforms including making Accessory Dwelling Units permitted as of right, extension of all land use approvals, allowing for third party approvals of septic systems to reduce the burden on local Depts. of Public Health, and tweaking septic system standards to use smaller systems and maximize density. Mr. Allyn asked if there was discussion of grant funding for water and sewer expansion. Mr. Fusari discussed advances in septic system technology in the last decades.

## 7. SCCOG Activities

### a. Affordable Housing Plans

Ms. Kennedy shared that the RPA's Affordable Housing Plan Guidebook has been released. The member towns that SCCOG is working with have released public surveys; Salem's survey was shared on a community Facebook page and received many responses, some of which were strongly in opposition to affordable housing and used racist slurs. However, overall about half of responses were positive in support of affordable housing efforts.

Mr. Oefinger said that that's not surprising, as many communities have informal community websites or Facebook pages. Ms. Monahan said that the feedback could be useful for knowing where to focus education efforts to be better prepared for opposition arguments.

### b. COVID Recovery

Ms. Kennedy reported that the COVID Recovery Steering Committees are working on a process where local needs get flagged for requests for State resources. She reported that Connecticut did not receive funds requested from the U.S. EDA, which would have supported an extensive long-term recovery planning process and leaves uncertainty as to how councils of government will fund their participation in ongoing recovery work.

## 8. New Business

Mr. Oefinger suggested that SECHA reach out to COST representatives to be a speaker at the next meeting.

Mr. Fusari reported that the HOPE project in Centerbrook is almost completed, with projected occupancy on Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>. He suggested that as a successful project without opposition, it could be a good case study.

## 9. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be March 12, 2021 at 8:30 AM.

10. Adjournment  
Meeting adjourned at 9:26 AM.