

MINUTES OF 4/21/21 MEETING OF THE  
SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
HELD VIA ZOOM

PRESENT: Mark Nickerson, East Lyme; Charles Grant, Franklin; Todd Babbitt, Griswold; Keith Hedrick, City of Groton; 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; Council Alternates: John Burt, Town of Groton; John Salomone, Norwich. Tribal Liaison: Rodney Butler, Mashantucket-Pequot Tribal Nation. Military Liaison: Captain Todd Moore, Dawn Works-Dennis, U.S. Naval SUBASE; LCDR Samuel Andriessen, USCGA. Staff: James Butler, Amanda Kennedy, Kate Rattan, Wendy Leclair. Other: Deborah Monahan, TVCCA; Mike Carroll, Al Fritzsche, SEAT; Grayson Wright, CTDOT; Erik Shortell, FHWA; Brianna DeVivo, Senator Murphy's office; Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's office; Ayanti Grant, Congressman Courtney's office; State Representative Doug Dubitsky; Melinda Wilson, seCTer; Wendy Bury, SE CT Cultural Coalition; Steve Mansfield, Ledge Light Health District; Patrick McCormack, Uncas Health District; Teresa Jackman, Eversource; Carey Redd, New London.

1. Call to Order: The Chairman called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.
  
2. Roll Call: A quorum was present.
  
3. Act on Minutes of 3/17/21:

MOTION: To approve the minutes of 3/17/21 (Sparkman, Hedrick). So voted unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Report:

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

5. Communications: The Executive Director noted the letter from Chairman Allyn to USDOT Secretary Buttigieg supporting CTDOT's grant application for INFRA funds to rehab the northbound span of the Gold Star Memorial Bridge.

6. Public Comment:

Ms. Jackman said that Eversource is now awarding Community Impact Grants.

Representative Dubitsky informed the SCCOG about House Bill No. 6423, An Act Concerning Immunizations, which would eliminate the religious exemption from immunization requirements.

7. Guest Speaker:

A) Ann Dagle, Brian Dagle Foundation

Ms. Dagle introduced herself and said that she was present to talk about the difficult subject of suicide prevention. She said her foundations does that by providing “gateway training”, and that QPR (Question. Persuade. Refer) is one of the tools used to provide this training. She presented a Power point presentation, including a short video, on QPR training. This training can be tailored to different professions and occupations. Ms. Dagle concluded by encouraging SCCOG members to train their employees, and invited those who are interested to contact her.

8. COVID-19 Response Discussion:

Mr. Mansfield discussed level of COVID-19 cases in the LLHD; funding for the health district.

Mr. McCormack reported on the Governor’s announcement on the rollback of COVID-19 restrictions beginning May 1<sup>st</sup> and May 19<sup>th</sup>; recent work of the Uncas Health District regarding vaccinations.

Mr. Lyden suggested that the SCCOG write a letter of support for the increase in funding to health districts. The Chairman agreed to write and send such a letter.

Mr. Grant inquired what other towns are doing regarding public hearings and annual town meetings for budget approval; he requested that staff poll SCCOG members on this issue.

9. Committee and Liaison Reports:

A) Executive Committee

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1) DEMHS Region 4 Regional Recovery Steering Committee – Update

The Executive Director reported that the three working groups met yesterday, and that the Regional Recovery Steering Committee will meet on April 29th.

2) JLUS Parking Management Plan - Update

The Executive Director reported that he and the Deputy Director recently met with the consultant to discuss potential sites for a parking structure; the consultant has begun work on phase 2 and 3 of the study.

3) New London LOTCIP Project/Estimate Adjustment

The Executive Director stated that the estimated cost for the Broad Street/Williams Street roundabout project in New London has gone from \$653,187 in the City's initial pre-application for LOTCIP funds to \$2,990,000. He said that City Public Works Director Brian Sear and the City's consulting engineer John Guzze had met with and provided the Executive Committee a detailed explanation of the cost increase; a copy of the memorandum they had prepared was in the SCCOG agenda packet. The Executive Committee has recommended that the SCCOG approve of this cost adjustment.

MOTION: To approve of the increase in cost estimate for the New London LOTCIP project for a roundabout at Broad and Williams Street from \$653,187 to \$2,990,409 (Sparkman, Grant).

The Chairman expressed concern over the process that the SCCOG uses to vet these projects, and the level of detail leading to low estimates of project costs during the pre-application phase. The Executive Director stated that he and the Transportation Program Manager have discussed eliminating the pre-application stage, and requiring municipalities to do a better job in providing the details necessary to provide accurate cost estimates at the time of application for LOTCIP funds.

The motion was then voted upon and unanimously approved.

4) Sprague LOTCIP Project/Withdrawal

The Executive Director said the Executive Committee forwarded to the SCCOG a letter from Sprague First Selectman Blanchard withdrawing the Town's application for LOTCIP funding to construct sidewalks on Main Street. He said that the plans are fully designed and paid for by the Town, but that Ms. Blanchard has informed him that despite the construction costs being fully funded by State LOTCIP funding the Town is concerned about other costs they might face including maintenance. Ms. Blanchard stated that the Town's financial situation is

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currently tenuous, and that Town's Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance were concerned about future costs associated with the sidewalk project including maintenance. The Executive Director noted that these funds, a little more than \$600,000, will be returned to the total LOTCIP funds for the region.

MOTION: To accept the letter from the Town of Sprague withdrawing their application for LOTCIP funding for the Main Street sidewalk project (Grant, Hedrick). So voted unanimously.

5) CTDOT Feasibility Study of Multi-Use Path on NB Gold Star Memorial Bridge

The Executive Director said that Groton City Mayor Hedrick had requested back in 2018 that CTDOT study this issue in conjunction with their design of the planned improvements to the NB bridge. The SCCOG followed up the Mayor's request with their own request that the construction of a second pathway across the Thames River be studied, after experiencing the disruption to pedestrian and bicycle traffic on the SB bridge when the pathway on that span was closed for several months for bridge repairs. He briefly summarized the five concepts that the State's feasibility study has identified, and noted that the study identifies a number of challenges associated with each option. The study concludes that due to the disadvantages of providing a multi-use path on the NB span, that CTDOT has initiated another feasibility study of widening the existing path on the SB bridge; this study is expected to be completed in September, 2021.

The Executive Director stated he had drafted letter to CTDOT for the SCCOG's consideration, which he said he emailed to all SCCOG members that morning and which he then read out loud.

MOTION: To send to CTDOT a letter stating the SCCOG's views on the importance of improved pedestrian pathways across the Thames River and providing comments on the Feasibility Study of a Multi-Use Path on the NB Gold Star Memorial (Sparkman, Grant). So voted unanimously.

6) FY 2022-2023 Unified Planning Work Program

The Executive Director explained and summarized the draft two-year Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) which has been submitted to CTDOT. He said the UPWP details how the SCCOG's transportation planning funding will be spent over this two-year period. He said that the draft UPWP reflects that based on the PL funds to be received over the next two years, the hiring of an additional Planner who will work on transportation, and that FY 2019 carryover funding will be used to continue the retention of a transportation engineering services. He said that since he had sent the draft UPWP to the SCCOG, he had received some technical comments from CTDOT and USDOT which he will address in the final plan.

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MOTION: To adopt of the Unified Planning Work Program, Southeastern Connecticut Planning Region, 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2023 (Lyden, McDaniel). So voted unanimously.

7) Draft Resolution No. 21-2 re: Climate Emergency

The Executive Director said that the Executive Committee had reviewed Dr. Roger Kuhns' draft resolution concerning the climate emergency as well as a resolution drafted by staff that was more typical of a SCCOG resolution and which attempted to capture Dr. Kuhns' most salient points. He said the Chairman has asked each member of the Executive Committee to review staff's draft and to send to staff any additions/edits/deletions they think might improve it, and said that this item will be placed on the next Executive Committee agenda for a recommendation to the SCCOG board in May. The Chairman noted that the original draft provided by Dr. Kuhns was 8 pages long, and that staff's was more concise at one page.

8) Ledyard and Preston Building Official Agreement with SCCOG

The Executive Director said that he had been contacted in March by Chairman Allyn and Preston First Selectman Allyn-Gauthier, both of whom asked for SCCOG assistance because they were losing their Building Official at the end of March. He said he was able to identify several possible candidates to serve in this role for both towns on a short-term basis, including former Mohegan Tribe Building Official Tom Weber, who is also part-time Building Official in Bozrah and Franklin. He said that establishing a code enforcement capability/service has long been a goal of the SCCOG, and that the issues that the two towns were facing presented an opportunity for the SCCOG to begin such a service. The SCCOG has contracted with Mr. Weber to provide this service, and has entered into an Agreement with the two towns which will pay the COG Mr. Weber's direct hourly cost, similar to the arrangement to the two towns which the SCCOG serves with a contract planner. These Agreements run through the end of this fiscal year, at which time the towns will evaluate how this arrangement worked and if they are satisfied, it is anticipated that the SCCOG will enter into a new Agreement for the next fiscal year. He said at that time, the SCCOG might choose to keep Mr. Weber as a contract employee, or if the demand increases in terms of number of hours, might hire Mr. Weber or some other certified Building Official as a full-time employee. Mr. Lyden suggested that staff check with the SCCOG's insurer to make sure that there was no additional coverage needed now that the SCCOG was overseeing enforcement and building official responsibilities.

9) Disposition of Assets

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The Chairman stated that the Executive Committee had approved of the disposal of a non-functioning 11-year old plotter and a more than 6-year old non-functioning printer.

10) FY 2021 STIP/TIP Amendments

The Chair said this item will be taken up under Agenda Item 11 A., New Business.

B) Legislative Committee/Legislative Agenda Discussion - No report.

C) Tribal Liaison Representatives

MPTN Chairman Rodney Butler said the Tribe was partnering with the City of Norwich to provide a food bank distribution site which was providing food to almost 1,000 families on a weekly basis; reported on the ongoing discussions with the Governor and now the legislature concerning an internet gaming bill.

D) Military Command Representatives

Captain Moore said that the SUBASE was partnering with the CT National Guard and was hosting a clinic to vaccinate 996 people today.

LCDR Andriessen reported on the number of cadets currently in quarantine/testing positive for COVID-19 at the Coast Guard Academy; said that the Academy is making plans for commencement on May 19<sup>th</sup>.

E) Congressional Office Report

Ms. Grant from Congressman Courtney's office reported on the anticipated dates that the US Treasury will offer guidance on American Rescue Plan Act funds; reported on the community project application for earmark funds received, noting that the Congressman expects to submit 10 from the Appropriations Committee side and 10 from the Transportation and Infrastructure side.

Ms. DeVivo from Senator Murphy's office provided an update on the Farmers to Food program.

Ms. Graham from Senator Blumenthal's office reported on activities their office is working on.

F) seCTer

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Ms. Wilson reported on seCTer activities including their work with municipalities and small businesses on pandemic recovery; loan funding available to small businesses; new PTAC Counselor Alyssa Young.

G) Eastern CT Tourism District - No report.

H) SEAT

Mr. Carroll reported that that ridership was up about 30% in March.

I) SCCOG Regional Water Committee – No report.

J) Regional Emergency Planning Team – No report.

K) Regional Human Services Coordinating Council

Ms. Monahan reported on the RHSCC's April 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

L) SE CT Cultural Coalition – No report.

10. Executive Director's Report:

The Executive Director reported on a discussion between the state's nine COG Executive Directors concerning the possible funding of their COVID-19 recovery work with some of the County funding that will be made available to Connecticut's municipalities under the America Rescue Plan Act; stated that NY has appealed the decision of the Court to uphold EPA's decision concerning dredging in Eastern Long Island Sound and that the SCCOG was asked to again be a part to the Amicus brief being filed by the CT Port Authority opposed to New York's appeal.

11. Old Business: – None.

12. New Business:

A) FY 2021 STIP/TIP Amendments

- STPA, 0172-0496, Various, District 2, Replace Traffic Control Signals at Various Locations, ROW, 2021. \$160,000, New Project
- STPA, 0172-0496, Various, District 2, Replace Traffic Control Signals at Various Locations, FD, 2021, \$591,000, New Project
- STPA, 0172-0496, Various, District 2, Replace Traffic Control Signals at Various Locations, CON, \$7,600,000, New Project
- STPA, 0170-3417, Various, Statewide, Mast Arm & Span Pole Inspections – AC Conversion, OTH, 2021, \$1,000,000, Increase Estimate from FED \$480,000

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- STPA, 0170-3417, Various, Statewide, Mast Arm & Span Pole Inspections – AC Conversion, OTH, 2022, \$750,000, Increase Estimate from FED \$600,000
- NHPP, 0028-0207, CT 2, Colchester, RBC Program-Resurfacing, BR Rehab & Safety Improvements, PD, 2021, \$2,500,000, New Project
- NHPP, 0028-0207, CT 2, Colchester, RBC Program-Resurfacing, BR Rehab & Safety Improvements, FD, 2021, \$1,800,000, New Project
- NHPP, 0028-0207, CT 2, Colchester, RBC Program-Resurfacing, BR Rehab & Safety Improvements – AC Entry, CON, 2024, \$0, New Project
- NHPP, 0028-0207, CT 2, Colchester, RBC Program-Resurfacing, BR Rehab & Safety Improvements – AC Conversion, CON, 2025, \$12,500,000, New Project
- NHPP, 0028-0207, CT 2, Colchester, RBC Program-Resurfacing, BR Rehab & Safety Improvements – AC Conversion, CON, FYI, \$57,600,000, New Project

MOTION: To approve the FY 2021 STIP/TIP Amendments (Sparkman, Babbitt). So voted unanimously.

B) Next Meeting:

The Chairman stated that the next regularly scheduled meeting would be held on May 19<sup>th</sup>, and that a COVID-19 response call will be held in two weeks on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

C) Adjournment:

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 10:09 a.m. (Sparkman, Nickerson). So voted unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Danielle Chesebrough, Secretary

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