

MINUTES OF THE 6 APRIL 2021
SCCOG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Via ZOOM

Present: Fred Allyn, III, Mark Nickerson, Danielle Chesebrough, Keith Hedrick, Mike Urgo
Staff: James Butler, Amanda Kennedy, Kate Rattan
Other: Brian Sear, City of New London; John Guzze, Kirsten Salloway, Fuss & O'Neill

Chairman Allyn opened the meeting at 8:32 a.m.

1. DEMHS Region 4 Long Term Recovery Steering Committee - Update

Deputy Director Kennedy said the three working groups will meet individually on April 20 and the Recovery Steering Committee on April 29; she also reported on progress in addressing identified unmet needs which have been advanced to the State. The Executive Director stated that he still has not heard back from the State as to how they will fund the three COGs, including the SCCOG, which are ineligible for the EDA grants the state's other six COGs have applied for. He did say that there has been some discussion among COGs as to formulating a recommendation for COGs to receive some of the "county" portion of funding from the American Rescue Plan Act that will be sent to municipalities since Connecticut does not have counties. He said he will continue to keep the SCCOG informed.

2. JLUS Parking Management Plan - Update

The Deputy Director reported that the first phase of the project is complete, and that the consultant is now working on the next two phases, including the identification of sites for a potential parking garage structure.

3. New London LOTCIP Project/Estimate Adjustment

The Executive Director stated that the estimated cost for the Broad Street/Williams Street roundabout project has gone from \$653,187 in the City's initial pre-application for LOTCIP funds to \$2,990,000. He thanked and complimented City Public Works Director Brian Sear and the City's consulting engineer John Guzze for the detailed explanation of the cost increase in the memorandum that has been provided to the Executive Committee. Mr. Sear explained the initial estimate in the pre-application and why this was so low. The Executive Director stated that SCCOG Transportation Program Manager had recognized this was a low estimate and informed him of such, but also reminded him at the time that since this was a pre-application, a better estimate would be developed when design progressed. Mr. Guzze then highlighted the major items in his memo that contributed to the cost increase.

MOTION: To recommend to the SCCOG board the approval of an increase in cost estimate for the New London LOTCIP project for a roundabout at Broad and Williams Street to \$2,990,409 (Urigo, Chesebrough). So voted unanimously.

4. Sprague LOTCIP Project/Withdrawal

The Executive Director read 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. The Executive Committee requested that this letter be forwarded to the full SCCOG for their information and acceptance.

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 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 said that he had been holding off on approving a CTDOT requested administrative STIP/TIP action until the study had been provided to the SCCOG, and now that it has been made available, he would go ahead and approve of the Action if the Executive Committee concurred. The Executive Committee expressed their concurrence.

MOTION: To forward the Feasibility Study of a Multi-Use Path on the NB Gold Star Memorial Bridge to the full SCCOG for their review and consideration (Hedrick, Nickerson). So voted unanimously.

The Executive Director stated he would draft a letter to CTDOT with the SCCOG's views of the study for the SCCOG's consideration.

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.

MOTION: To recommend to the full SCCOG the adoption of the Unified Planning Work Program, Southeastern Connecticut Planning Region, 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2023 (Nickerson, Hedrick). So voted unanimously.

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

The Executive Director reminded the Executive Committee that at the end of his presentation at last month's SCCOG meeting, Dr. Roger Kuhns had offered to draft a resolution concerning the climate emergency that the SCCOG could consider adopting. The climate emergency resolution that Dr. Kuhns had written was contained in the agenda packet sent to the Executive Committee. Since this was a lot longer than the typical resolutions acted upon by the SCCOG, he said he drafted a resolution that was only a single page but in which he attempted to include Dr. Kuhns' most salient points. The Executive Committee agreed that the abbreviated resolution was more appropriate for the SCCOG to consider. The Chairman 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.

8. Ledyard and Preston Building Official Agreements with SCCOG

The Executive Director said that he had been contacted last month 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. If that were to happen, he said he would discuss with the Executive Committee and full SCCOG the issue of charging towns the BF&O rate in addition to the employee's hourly rate, in order to be consistent with the SCCOG's contracts with towns engaging one of the staff's full-time Planners.

9. Disposition of SCCOG Assets

The Executive Director presented the request to dispose of a non-functioning 11-year old plotter and a more than 6-year old non-functioning printer.

MOTION: To approve of the disposition of the two non-functioning pieces of equipment as presented in the March 10, 2021 memo from Liz Crutcher to the Executive Director (Nickerson, Hedrick). So voted unanimously.

10. FY 2021 STIP/TIP Amendments

MOTION: To recommend to the full SCCOG the approval of the FY 2021 STIP/TIP Amendments (Nickerson, Hedrick). So voted unanimously.

11. Other

The Executive Director presented a request from DataHaven to become a sponsor. The Executive Committee chose not to become a sponsor at this time

The Executive Director stated that he and the Chairman had recently discussed when SCCOG meetings might again be in person and open to the public; he said they will continue tracking what is happening in the region at town halls. Discussion took place.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:39 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

James S. Butler, Executive Director