

DEMHS REGION 4 REGIONAL RECOVERY STEERING COMMITTEE

Community Planning & Capacity Building/Infrastructure Working Group
Economic/Natural & Cultural Resources Working Group
Health & Social Services/Housing Working Group

June 3, 2021

Steering Committee Meeting Summary

Members Present: Mayor Fred Allyn, Town of Ledyard/SCCOG Chairman (Co-Chair); Deborah Monahan, TVCCA (Co-Chair); First Selectman Tracey Hanson, Town of Voluntown/NECCOG Chairman (Co-Chair); Jim Butler, Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments; Maryam Elahi, Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut; John Filchak, Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments; Mark Oefinger, seCTer; Reverend Benjamin Watts, Shiloh Baptist Church of New London; Reverend Catherine Zall, New London Homeless Hospitality Center; Tony Sheridan, Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce; Alejandro Melendez-Cooper, Hispanic Alliance of Southeastern Connecticut; Tony Sheridan, Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut, Elsa Nuñez, Eastern Connecticut State University.

Others Present: Joe Delong, CT Conference of Municipalities; Diane Manning, United Services; SCCOG: Sam Alexander, Carly Holzschuh, Amanda Kennedy; NECCOG: Hoween Flexer; DEMHS: Mike Caplet, Carla Iezzi.

1. Call to Order: Co-Chair Monahan called the meeting to order at 10:15 AM.
2. Roll Call: A quorum was present.
3. Meeting Minutes:

Motion: To approve the April 29, 2021 and May 13, 2021 meeting summaries (Filchak, Allyn). So voted unanimously.

4. Update on Long-Term Recovery Effort

Mike Caplet reported that discussions are happening at the state level on how to transition COVID response out of its emergency response phase, recognizing that impacts are occurring or expected to occur (especially due to end of eviction moratorium). Those discussion may lead to changes to the

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structure and activities of the Region 4 Steering Committee. Mr. Caplet recognized the important engagement that has occurred in Region 4. Ms. Monahan noted that there may be regional differences in approach as well.

Mr. Filchak reported that the US Economic Development Agency has approved funding for six Councils of Governments to continue their COVID work, including NECCOG, but excluding SCCOG, which has been deemed ineligible. The grants will fund four work tasks, including updating the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies. Mr. Oefinger proposed that the State of Connecticut find funding to cover SCCOG's involvement in ongoing work. Mr. Butler noted that CTCOG (COG Executive Directors) would be discussing potential changes to COVID response structures in a coming meeting, potentially leveraging existing COG boards, human service committees, and economic development organizations.

Motion: To send a letter to Gov. Lamont and Connecticut's COVID Recovery Committee expressing concern over the lack of funding for SCCOG to support recovery work as will be carried out in the rest of Connecticut supported by EDA grants, and requesting State support to fill the gap (Filchak, Oefinger). Mr. Oefinger asked what level of funding is necessary. Ms. Monahan asked that staff develop an estimate to be included in the letter. The letter would be signed by the three co-chairs. Mayor Allyn volunteered to meet with State officials on behalf of the Committee. So voted unanimously.

5. Unmet Needs:

neccog



SCCOG

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Ms. Kennedy reported that the Unmet Needs process is ongoing but winding down. No updates have been received from the State since May 12. Many of the unmet needs may be addressed through ARPA funds.

6. Proposal for Discussions re ARPA Collective Impact Actions

Ms. Elahi reported that a small group convened to consider how to guide use of ARPA funds to create a strong and resilient human infrastructure. Three issues emerged: 1) early childhood education, 2) mental wellness, and 3) affordable and safe housing. The group reviewed how municipalities can be most effective in improving these areas and developed a proposal to recommend to municipalities and school districts that 30% of ARPA funding be dedicated to these three areas. Outreach would be necessary to municipal and school board officials to encourage the recommendation.

Mr. DeLong noted that this funding should be viewed as an opportunity for shared initiatives that could include regional activities. CCM is encouraging recipients to recognize that issues are cross-jurisdictional and that actions by municipalities and school districts affect each other. Ms. Zall shared that without a concerted effort to provide guidance and implement collaborations, ARPA funding will have less lasting impact. Ms. Kennedy asked for an example of how municipalities might use funds to address these issues, particularly housing. Ms. Elahi answered that municipal conversations need to happen and funding could be pooled in some cases.

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Ms. Flexer remarked that federal reporting requirements must be kept in mind and addressed. Mr. Delong mentioned that other states have stood up useful reporting portals. Members discussed the challenge of administering funds at the local level.

Ms. Elahi asked for the support of the Steering Committee for the 30% allocation recommendation so that the recommendation can be sent ASAP with the endorsement of the Steering Committee:

Motion: That the Steering Committee recommends that municipalities allocate 30% of local ARPA funds towards addressing mental wellness, early childhood education, and housing (Nuñez, Zall). Mr. Filchak proposed that before the Steering Committee endorse the recommendation, the Region 4 Housing & Social Services/Health Steering Committee (HSSH) have the opportunity to provide their comment. Mr. Butler proposed to amend the motion to endorse the recommendation with the condition that it first be presented to the HSSH for any potential objections. Ms. Nunez and Ms. Zall accepted the amendment.

Amended Motion: That the Steering Committee recommends that municipalities allocate 30% of local ARPA funds towards address mental wellness, early childhood education, and housing, on the condition that this recommendation is presented to the Housing & Social Services/Health Working Group for their comments prior to transmitting the recommendation to municipalities and school boards (Nuñez, Zall). So voted unanimously.

7. Other Business

No other business.

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8. Next Meeting

Ms. Kennedy: If we continue with the monthly schedule, the next meeting of the steering committee would be Thursday, June 24th at 9 AM, but wait for confirmation.

9. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 11:27 AM. (Elahi, Hanson). So voted unanimously.