

MINUTES OF 1/19/22 MEETING OF THE
SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
VIA ZOOM

PRESENT:

Glenn Pianka, Bozrah; Kevin Seery, East Lyme; Charles Grant, Franklin; Dana Bennett, Griswold; Fred Allyn, III, Ledyard; Thomas Sparkman, Lisbon; Ron McDaniel, Montville; Michael Passero, New London; Robert Carlson, North Stonington; Sandra Allyn-Gauthier, Preston; Ed Chmielewski, Salem; Cheryl Blanchard, Sprague; Jeff Callahan, Borough of Stonington; Danielle Chesebrough, Town of Stonington; Rob Brule, Waterford; Thomas DeVivo, Windham. Council Alternates: John Burt, Town of Groton; Jim Rivers, Windham. Staff: James Butler, Amanda Kennedy, Kate Rattan, Wendy Leclair. Tribal Liaison: None. Military Liaison: RADM William Kelly, USCGA; Captain Ken Curtin, Steve Sadlowski, SUBASE. Other: Lee-Ann Gomes; Mike Carroll, Cherise Simpson, Thailisa Clark, Al Fritzche, SEAT; Deborah Monahan, TVCCA; Jennifer Granger, UCFS; Maryam Elahi, Community Foundation of Eastern CT; Jennifer Pacacha, CTDOT; Mark Oefinger, Paul Whitescarver, seCTer; Wendy Bury, SE CT Cultural Coalition; Patrick McCormack, Uncas Health District; Brianna DeVivo, Murphy's office; Catherine Young, CAA; Jim Bellano, Eastern CT Tourism District; Carey Redd, New London Parking; Paul Hearn; Michelle Puzzo, UR Community Cares; one reporter.

1. Call to Order: The Chairman called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
2. Roll Call: A quorum was present.
3. Act on Minutes of 12/15/21:

MOTION: To approve the minutes of 12/15/21 (Sparkman, Grant). So voted unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Report:

MOTION: To approve the January Treasurer's Report (McDaniel, Chmielewski). So voted unanimously.

5. Communications: None.
6. Public Comment:
None.

7. Guest Speaker: Michelle Puzzo, UR Community Cares

Ms. Puzzo introduced herself and said she was the President and co-founder of UR Community Cares, an all-volunteer organization formed in 2019. She said her organization provides assistance to seniors and disabled persons in four areas: companionship; house work; yard work; and transportation. She said the organization currently has 400 volunteers, providing services to 400 enrolled community members, in 115 towns throughout Connecticut. She then explained how a Community Assistance Team can be established in a town. She explained the source of the organization's funding from donations and the cost to serve their clients. She said UR Community Cares is always seeking additional funding sources including municipalities.

Ms. Monahan noted that TVCCA conducts a similar program for its clients, and invited Ms. Puzzo to network with her.

8. Committee and Liaison Reports:

A. Executive Committee

1) FY 2021 Audit

The Executive Director stated that the Executive Committee had reviewed the audit and recommended its acceptance to the SCCOG. He said that high points from the audit include a reported increase in the Reserve Fund of \$106,233 to \$713,621 and a new BF&O rate of 102.497%. The Auditors found no deficiencies in internal control over compliance which are considered a material weakness and the Audit made no recommendations to the SCCOG for improvements to its financial controls and reporting.

MOTION: To accept the FY 2021 Audit (Sparkman, McDaniel). So voted unanimously.

2) Build Back Better Regional Challenge Grant

The Executive Director stated that seCTer was recently awarded a Phase 1 \$500,000 Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant from EDA, which will be used toward the creation of an offshore wind industry cluster. He said that in October SCCOG provided a letter of support for seCTer's grant application, and has now been invited to be a member of a coalition that will work with seCTer towards a Phase 2 grant application. As a coalition lead, SCCOG has been asked to prepare a grant application which will be submitted to EDA by March 15th. The SCCOG project has been entitled by seCTer as the Thames River Offshore Epicenter, intended to identify and make ready sites where wind supply chain manufacturers and others could relocate or expand to. He said no action is required of the SCCOG at this time, but at some point the SCCOG's application will be brought to the SCCOG for formal approval of the grant application submittal and receipt should it be awarded.

3) Update on Hiring of Regional Zoning Official

The Executive Director said he had offered two experienced ZEOs contracts, one to work in Bozrah and one in Ledyard. He anticipated that both would accept these offers, and that work could begin in those towns by the end of the month. He mentioned the new state law requiring all municipal ZEOs be CAZEO certified by January 1, 2023 as one reason that it has been difficult for municipalities to attract applicants for ZEO openings.

4) Update on Funding for Regional Recovery Coordinator

The Executive Director said six municipalities have now sent in their voluntary assessment payment to support a Regional Recovery Coordinator position at the SCCOG and that others have approved or plan to approve this, but have not yet sent in the first payment. Because of this, he has informed the Executive Committee and they agreed that it would not be prudent to hire someone full-time until such time as more SCCOG towns provided their voluntary assessment for this purpose. Until that time, the SCCOG would use the funds received to date to fill this role on a part-time basis and said that he was pleased to announce that the SCCOG has now contracted with recently retired Norwich Human Services Director Lee-Ann Gomes for this purpose.

Ms. Gomes said she was looking forward to working with the SCCOG in this capacity.

5) Route 32 and Route 161 Corridor Study Updates

The Executive Director stated that Fuss & O'Neill has been selected to prepare the Route 32 corridor study in New London and that Beta Group, Inc. has been selected to prepare the Route 161 corridor study in East Lyme. Both consultants have been approved by CTDOT which is funding these studies, and scoping meetings with the consultants and CTDOT have been held. It is anticipated that final agreements and scopes will be arrived at by the end of the month and then SCCOG staff will work with both municipalities to establish study advisory committees.

6) BRIC Grant Application for Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

The Executive Director stated that recently he and Deputy Director Kennedy had a virtual meeting with David Murphy, who when he worked at Milone & MacBroom, had been the lead staff on the last two SCCOG MJHM Plans. Mr. Murphy now has his own consultant business, and was reaching out to SCCOG because he was working with the CT Institute for Climate Resilience and Adaptation (CIRCA) which is looking to expand its Resilient Connecticut efforts in the western part of the state. CIRCA would like to work with SCCOG to develop resilience and climate adaptation projects for the so-called "Project Pipeline" that the Governor's office has been contemplating. One option discussed was combining the Resilient Connecticut planning process with the hazard mitigation plan

update as this would be efficient, make the plan and the Resilient Connecticut process that much stronger, and would help eliminate confusion and redundancies if the two efforts were conducted separately. The Executive Director said he had noted Mr. Murphy's record working with the SCCOG and recommended that the Executive Committee consider waiving the SCCOG's consultant selection process to allow Mr. Murphy to be retained as sole source consultant without having to advertise the job, in light of the high quality of his previous work for the SCCOG, due to the fact that his engagement provides a unique opportunity to coordinate the conduct of the Connecticut Resilience work in the region with the update of the MJHM Plan, which in turn would be cost effective. The Executive Committee voted to waive the SCCOG's consultant selection process in this case for these reasons. The Executive Director said that staff was still waiting to hear back from DEEP regarding the status of the SCCOG's application for FEMA funds to prepare the MJHMP update.

7) Ledyard LOTCIP Grant Application

The Executive Director said the Executive Committee considered the Ledyard LOTCIP application for a multi-use pathway on Colonel Ledyard Highway. He said the SCCOG approved of this project conceptually about two years ago, and the Town's consultant has now completed the application for this project which has a cost estimate of \$3,058,800. With SCCOG action, the application can be submitted to CTDOT for issuance of a Commitment to Fund letter.

MOTION: To endorse the Ledyard LOTCIP project for a multi-use path on Colonel Ledyard Highway, with a cost estimate of \$3,058,800 (McDaniel, Callahan). So voted unanimously.

B. Legislative Committee

Mr. Grant presented the draft Legislative Agenda which had been emailed yesterday to all SCCOG members.

MOTION: To approve of the 2022 SCCOG Legislative Agenda (Passero, McDaniel).

Discussion ensued. Mr. Grant said the next step would be for staff to schedule a meeting between the SCCOG and the legislative delegation.

The motion was voted upon and unanimously approved.

C. Tribal Liaison Representatives

No report.

D. Military Command Representatives

Captain Curtin reported that the Historic Ship Nautilus was still undergoing overhaul and was expected to be returned to its dock at the SUBASE by late summer. He said that the SUBASE remains in HPCON level Charlie, which requires continued masking and occupancy limitations in most buildings on the base.

RADM Kelly said that the USCGA's COVID protocols are similar to the SUBASE, and he reported on the infection status of cadets after they returned from winter break on January 2nd.

E. Congressional Office Report

Ms. DeVivo reported on Senator Murphy's recent trip to Ukraine; she said her office was working on preparing an infrastructure grant guidebook.

F. seCTer

Mr. Whitescarver outlined the projects in the Phase 2 BBBRC grant application. He reported that DECD did not award seCTer a small business development loan program.

G. Eastern CT Tourism District

Mr. Bellano reported that the ECTD recently closed out their next round of marketing program applications; he said that the ECTD board was looking to add sub-brands to their marketing program.

H. SEAT

Mr. Carroll reported on ridership which is climbing, now at 70% of where it was two years ago; it has been difficult to find new drivers for open positions at SEAT; and that there have been 1,100 boardings for the new on demand micro-transit service in New London.

I. SCCOG Regional Water Committee

No report.

J. Regional Emergency Planning Team

Mr. Sparkman stated that 9 municipalities, 6 from the SCCOG region, still have not returned their FY 2021 MOAs which were due December 15th to the SCCOG.

K. Regional Human Services Coordinating Council

Ms. Monahan said the RHSCC is scheduled to meet this coming Friday. She also said that in light of the rising fuel prices she wished to remind SCCOG members that TVCCA has an energy assistance program which is adequately funded, and which will not count assets toward eligibility this year, making it available to a wider group of those in need.

L. SE CT Cultural Coalition

Ms. Bury reported on recent activities of the Cultural Coalition.

9. Executive Director's Report:

The Executive Director reported that SCCOG Planner Jenna Albers has resigned effective January 21st; he said the Executive Committee has decided that with the recent uptick in COVID infections, it would be good to hold an additional SCCOG COVID call each month, with the first one scheduled for January 26th.

10. Old Business:

A. COVID-19 Response Discussion

Mr. McCormack reported on testing, and significant dates when new guidance for quarantine and isolation have been issued by various agencies to which the health districts then have to pivot.

11. New Business:

Mr. Sparkman stated that all SCCOG CEOs were sent an email this morning from DEMHS Region 4 Coordinator Mike Caplet announcing another distribution of test kits and masks.

12. Next Meeting:

The Chairman stated that the next regularly scheduled meeting would be held on February 16th.

13. Adjournment:

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 9:51 a.m. (Grant, Sparkman). So voted unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cheryl Blanchard, Secretary