

MINUTES OF 3/16/22 MEETING OF THE  
SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
VIA ZOOM

PRESENT:

Glenn Pianka, Bozrah; Kevin Seery, East Lyme; Charles Grant, Franklin; Dana Bennett, Griswold; Keith Hedrick, City of Groton; Timothy Sharkey, Borough of Jewett City; Kevin Cwikla, Lebanon; Thomas Sparkman, Lisbon; Ron McDaniel, Montville; Michael Passero, New London; Robert Carlson, North Stonington; Peter Nystrom, Norwich; 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: Robert Hayward Mashantucket-Pequot Tribal Nation. Military Liaison: RADM William Kelly, USCGA; Captain Ken Curtin, Steve Sadlowski, SUBASE; Other: Mike Carroll, Thailisa Clark, Al Fritzche, SEAT; Deborah Monahan, TVCCA; Erik Shortell, FHWA; Jennifer Pacacha, CTDOT; Catherine Young, CAA; Mark Oefinger, Paul Whitescarver, seCTer; Wendy Bury, SE CT Cultural Coalition; Jen Granger, UCFS; Tony Sheridan, Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT; Patrick McCormack, Uncas Health District; Steve Mansfield, LLHD; Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's office; Brianna DeVivo, Senator Murphy's office; Ayanti Grant, Congressman Courtney's office; Carey Redd, New London Parking; Teresa Jackman, T.J. Magnoli, Eversource; Dominick Celtruda; Alvin Bingham, Jim Murray, CT CHRO; one reporter.

1. Call to Order: The Chairman called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.
2. Roll Call: A quorum was present.
3. Act on Minutes of 2/16/22:

MOTION: To approve the minutes of 2/16/22 (Cwikla, Hedrick). So voted unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Report:

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

5. Communications: The Executive Director noted there was a statement from SCCOG to the Department of Energy regarding the proposed consent-based siting process for the interim storage of spent nuclear fuel contained in the Communications section of the agenda packet.

6. Public Comment:

Ms. Jackman provided an update on Eversource matters.

Ms. Young stated that she will retire at the end of the month, and that CAA will have a change in staff.

Mr. Sheridan reported on the change in name from Mystic Coast and Country being contemplated by the Eastern CT Tourism District.

7. Guest Speaker: Alvin Bingham and Jim Murray, CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO).

Mr. Bingham and Mr. Murray provided a Power Point presentation concerning municipalities' contract compliance for State funded projects.

8. Committee and Liaison Reports:

A. Executive Committee

1) Update on Hiring of Regional Zoning Official

The Executive Director reported that Mr. John Herring, most recently ZEO in Portland, CT, had contracted with the SCCOG to serve as ZEO in Bozrah and Ledyard. Mr. Herring would begin work on March 21.

2) Update on Funding for Regional Recovery Coordinator

The Executive Director said that ten municipalities have now sent in their voluntary assessment payment.

3) Route 32 and Route 161 Corridor Study Updates

The Executive Director said that contracts had been executed for both studies and that advisory committees were being formed.

4) FY 2021 STIP/TIP Amendments

The Chairman noted these would be taken up under Item 11. A., New Business.

5) Bozrah Fitchville Sidewalk Extension LOTCIP Application

The Executive Director presented this application which is requesting \$1,893,500 in SCCOG LOTCIP funding. He noted that the Executive Committee has recommended in

favor of the application, and that if the SCCOG approves of the application today, it can be forwarded to CTDOT for their consideration of issuance of a commitment to fund letter.

MOTION: To approve of the Bozrah Fitchville Sidewalk Extension LOTCIP Application in the amount of \$1,893,500 (Grant, Sparkman). So voted unanimously.

#### 6) BBBRC Grant Application Match

The Executive Director said that the SCCOG had approved of this grant application by adoption of a resolution at last month's meeting, and that the application has now been submitted to EDA prior to the March 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. The SCCOG project is one component of seCTer's BBBRC grant which has additional components. He said the SCCOG is requesting \$536,800 from EDA for its proposed "Thames River Region Offshore Wind Industry Cluster Site Predevelopment Assistance & Digital Dashboard" which requires a 20% or \$134,200 match. He said he has made it clear to seCTer from the outset of SCCOG's involvement that the SCCOG had not budgeted funds for this required match. seCTer and the State are partnering with the energy company Avangrid which has committed funding to the State for the development of the offshore wind industry in Connecticut, and which has verbally stated that it would provide SCCOG this required match from these funds. The Executive Director stated that while the SCCOG has accepted private funding in the past, he could not recall it having done so in conjunction with a grant application and in such a large amount. He felt that the SCCOG should be aware of where the proposed match was coming from and that the board should take an action approving of its acceptance. He said the Executive Committee approved of the grant application submittal on behalf of the SCCOG by EDA's deadline, but it was submitted with the understanding that the full SCCOG board would consider the proposed match at today's meeting. The Chairman noted that the Executive Committee wanted to make sure that there was full disclosure of the fact that the SCCOG was receiving a match from a private entity. The Chairman then asked for any concerns over the acceptance of the proposed match and none were expressed by SCCOG members present.

#### 7) I-95 PEL Study

The Executive Director referred to the handout in the agenda packet concerning this Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study which CTDOT has just initiated. This PEL will study and make recommendations for the section of I-95 from the Connecticut River to the Rhode Island State Line. He said that staff will keep the SCCOG informed throughout this study process.

#### 8) Goldstar Bridge Pedestrian Upgrade Study Update

The Executive Director said that the SCCOG Transportation Program Manager continues to monitor CTDOT's efforts, and that her recent discussions with CTDOT regarding their study progress are summarized in a memo in the agenda packet.

9) SCCOG Participation in State of Connecticut Deferred Compensation Section 457 Plan

The Executive Director said that years ago, the SCCOG approved of language in the Personnel Policies that would establish a retirement option in addition to MERS for SCCOG employees, but that such a plan was never established. The primary reason was the cost to the employer of such a plan, and the ever-increasing cost to the employer for participation in MERS. He said when the Personnel Policies were being revised this past summer, he was reminded of this option and researched how it might be done at little or no cost at this time to the SCCOG. He said that the State of Connecticut has a Deferred Compensation Section 457 Plan, which other COGs belong to. It does not allow for employer contributions, and the administrative cost to employees is small because of the large number of State and municipal employees which participate in the plan.

Mr. Pianka expressed concern over the State considering not providing Municipal Revenue Sharing this year, despite having large surpluses and contemplating a gas tax deferral. The Chairman said he would ask the Executive Committee to consider this issue at their next meeting. Legislative Committee Chairman Grant was invited to attend that meeting.

B. Legislative Committee

Mr. Grant reported on HB 5002, which would expand grants in lieu of taxes payments by the state to include payments to municipalities of one hundred per cent of the amount of property taxes that, except for any exemption applicable to manufacturing machinery and equipment.

C. Tribal Liaison Representatives

Mr. Hayward on expansion projects at Foxwoods.

D. Military Command Representatives

Captain Curtin reported that the SUBASE is now in health protection condition Bravo Plus, with all mask mandates lifted; on security exercises at the SUBASE; and that the SUBASE recently welcomed back the crew of the USS Colorado which returned home Sunday from a seven-month deployment.

RADM Kelly reported that cadets had just returned from spring break and that 32 had tested positive for COVID, which although asymptomatic, is a reminder that the virus is still with us; construction has started on the \$23.5 Million Center for Excellence is under

construction on the Academy waterfront; reported that graduation is scheduled for May 18<sup>th</sup>.

E. Congressional Office Report

Ms. Grant from Congressman Courtney's office, and Ms. Graham from Senator Blumenthal's office, and Ms. DeVivo from Senator Murphy's office provided their respective reports.

F. seCTer

Mr. Whitescarver said that seCTer's Phase 2 BBBRC grant application has been submitted and that it could result in a \$60M investment in grant funds coming to the region.

G. Eastern CT Tourism District

Previously given by Mr. Sheridan during Public Comment.

H. SEAT

Mr. Carroll reported that February ridership was up 10% from January; New London's Smart Ride ridership is up 47% for the same period; the Governor has directed free transit ridership due to the steeply increasing gas prices; and is working with the State to evaluate how the SEAT facility will accommodate the electrification of the fleet.

I. SCCOG Regional Water Committee

No report.

J. Regional Emergency Planning Team

REPT Chairman Sparkman announced that all of the MOAs have now been collected and signed.

K. Regional Human Services Coordinating Council

Ms. Monahan said she had nothing to report from the RHSCC; she did report on the difficulty in hiring early childhood staff.

L. SE CT Cultural Coalition

Ms. Bury reported on a recent report on the arts economy.

9. Executive Director's Report:

The Executive Director provided an update on two CIRCA grants recently received.

10. Old Business:

A. COVID-19 Response Discussion

Mr. Mansfield reported on the status of testing centers; two proposed pieces of legislation. Mr. McCormack reported that in mid-April the State COVID reporting will go from daily to weekly; the health districts will be eliminating their weekly reports.

11. New Business:

A. FY 2021 STIP/TIP Amendments

- NHPP, 0058-0307, I-95 SB, Groton-No. Stonington, Safety Improvements/Pavement Rehab from Exit 89 to RI State Line – AC ENTRY, CON, 2023, \$0, add AC ENTRY
- NHPP, 0058-0307, I-95 SB, Groton-No. Stonington, Safety Improvements/Pavement Rehab from Exit 89 to RI State Line – AC CONVERSION, CON, 2023, \$1,111,000, Change in Scope
- NHPP, 0058-0307, I-95 SB, Groton-No. Stonington, Safety Improvements/Pavement Rehab from Exit 89 to RI State Line – AC CONVERSION, CON, 2024, \$16,944,000, Change in Scope
- NHPP, 0058-0307, I-95 SB, Groton-No. Stonington, Safety Improvements/Pavement Rehab from Exit 89 to RI State Line – AC CONVERSION, CON, FYI, \$16,944,000, Decrease Estimate
- NHPP, 0058-0340, I-95 NB, Groton-No. Stonington, Safety Improvements/Pavement Rehab from Exit 89 to RI State Line – AC ENTRY, CON, 2022, \$0, New Project
- NHPP, 0058-0340, I-95 NB, Groton-No. Stonington, Safety Improvements/Pavement Rehab from Exit 89 to RI State Line – AC CONVERSION, CON, 2022, \$45,000,000, New Proj Breakout of 0058-0307
- STPR, 0101-0119, CT 201, North Stonington, Culvert Replacement Under Route 201, PD, 2022, \$700,000, New Project
- STPR, 0101-0119, CT 201, North Stonington, Culvert Replacement Under Route 201, FD, 2024, \$300,000, New Project
- STPR, 0101-0119, CT 201, North Stonington, Culvert Replacement Under Route 201, ROW, 2024, \$50,000, New Project
- STPR, 0101-0119, CT 201, North Stonington, Culvert Replacement Under Route 201, CON, FYI, \$1,780,000, New Project

MOTION: To approve of the FY 2021 STIP/TIP amendments (Grant, Sparkman). So voted unanimously.

12. Next Meeting:

The Chairman stated that the next regularly scheduled meeting would be held on April 20<sup>th</sup>, and he polled members present about allowing in-person attendance at this meeting and those present agreed.

13. Adjournment:

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 10:00 a.m. (Allyn, Sparkman). So voted unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cheryl Blanchard, Secretary