

MINUTES OF 6/15/22 MEETING OF THE
SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
AT SCCOG OFFICE NORWICH, CT AND VIA ZOOM

PRESENT:

In Person: Glenn Pianka, Bozrah; Kevin Seery, East Lyme; Fred Allyn, III, Ledyard; Thomas Sparkman, Lisbon; Ron McDaniel, Montville; Michael Passero, New London; Robert Carlson, North Stonington; Danielle Chesebrough, Town of Stonington. Jim Rivers, Windham. Staff: James Butler, Amanda Kennedy, Kate Rattan, Annika Shiffer-Delegard. Military Liaison: RADM William Kelly, Samuel Andriessen, USCGA. Other: Rain Dougherty, Homeless Hospitality Center of New London.

Virtually:

Dana Bennett, Griswold; Keith Hedrick, City of Groton; Tim Sharkey, Borough of Jewett City; Peter Nystrom, Norwich; Sandra Allyn-Gauthier, Preston; Rob Brule, Waterford; Tom DeVivo, Windham. Council Alternates: John Salomone, Norwich. Military Liaison: Steve Sadlowski, SUBASE. Staff: Wendy Leclair, Justin LaFountain. Other: Mike Carroll, Cherise Simpson, Thalisa Clark, Al Fritzsche, SEAT; Patrick McCormack, Uncas HD; Jim Bellano, Eastern CT Tourism District; Wendy Bury SECT Cultural Coalition; Melinda Wilson, seCTer; Jennifer Pacacha, CTDOT; Maryam Elahi, Community Foundation of Eastern CT.

1. Call to Order: The Chairman called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
2. Roll Call: A quorum was present.
3. Pledge of Allegiance: The Chairman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Executive Director introduced SCCOG's new Sustainable CT Fellow Annika Shiffer-Delegard.

4. Act on Minutes of 5/19/22:

MOTION: To approve the minutes of 5/19/22 (Cwikla, Sparkman). So voted unanimously.

5. Treasurer's Report:

MOTION: To approve the June Treasurer's Report (Sparkman, McDaniel). So voted unanimously. The Chairman noted the unpaid DEMHS reimbursements from months ago; the Executive Director noted that they recently broached this subject with new DEMHS staff who have pledged to be timelier, and he said staff will continue to monitor the timing of the DEMHS payments.

6. Communications: The Executive Director noted there was a letter of support in the agenda packet from the SCCOG to USDOT Secretary Buttigieg regarding CTDOT's application for bus facility grant funds.

7. Public Comment:

Rain Dougherty of the Homeless Hospitality Center of New London said she wanted to inform the SCCOG of a new CHFA program called MyHomeCT. She distributed informational flyers which outline this program, which is intended to assist CT homeowners who have experienced a COVID-19 financial hardship.

Jennifer Pacacha of CTDOT read a letter from CTDOT Commissioner Joseph Giulietti congratulating SCCOG Executive Director Jim Butler on his retirement.

Maryam Elahi, President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Eastern CT, reported on the progress in establishing a Center for Housing Opportunity in the region. She said that she is close to have received the commitments of funding necessary to retain a full-time staff person, who might be housed at Connecticut College. She thanked the SCCOG Executive Director and Deputy Director for their support of this initiative.

8. Committee and Liaison Reports

A. Executive Committee

1) IJJA NOFA/Regional Transportation Safety Plan Amendment

The Executive Director said he had informed the Executive Committee that a NOFA had been released by USDOT for the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program. The SS4A program supports local initiatives to prevent death and serious injury on roads and streets commonly referred to as Vision Zero initiatives. Applicants are eligible if they have a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan that meets certain mandatory requirements. The SCCOG adopted its Regional Safety Plan last year. This Plan has been reviewed by SCCOG Planner Nicole Hagerty for its compliance with the mandatory requirements, and she has found that that the SCCOG Regional Safety Plan should be amended to include:

- Affirmation of CONNDOT's Vision Zero Interagency Policy
- Assignment of the responsibility to review, implement and monitor the Plan to the SCCOG Executive Committee, acting as the SCCOG Transportation Committee.

The Executive Director stated he believed that adding language toward this end as a minor amendment to the Regional Safety Plan would ensure that SCCOG member municipalities could document their eligibility for SS4A grant funding.

He said the Executive Committee has asked staff to invite Mark Boughton from the Governor's office to the July SCCOG Board meeting to discuss his plan for local/regional response to IJJA NOFOs.

The Deputy Director said that she was on a call with all of the COGs and Commissioner Boughton yesterday, where it was emphasized that USDOT was looking for well thought out and regionally coordinated grant applications, as opposed to single applications from

individual municipalities. She stated there will be a webinar on June 21st, at 10:00 a.m. with Mr. Boughton and CTDOT to discuss how best to develop fundable applications from the state; she said she will send the webinar information to all SCCOG CEOs. She noted there is a September 15th deadline for SS4A grant applications.

MOTION: To approve technical amendments to the SCCOG's Regional Transportation Safety Plan which will make the region and its municipalities eligible for SS4A funding (Pianka, Sparkman). So voted unanimously.

2) Second Year Voluntary Contribution of ARPA Funding

The Executive Director stated that last year the SCCOG agreed to request a voluntary contribution of 1% of ARPA County Tranche funds from all member municipalities over a four-year period (1/4 of 1% per year) for the purpose of funding regional recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. To date, 11 of 22 SCCOG members have contributed approximately \$67,000 of the requested \$134,000 in first year funding. A twelfth SCCOG municipality has informed the SCCOG it will be sending it an additional \$14,000. The SCCOG has used these funds to hire a part-time Regional Recovery Coordinator, and to date has only expended just under \$9,000 of this funding for this purpose. Eight towns have requested her assistance, six of which have sent in their requested voluntary contribution and two which have not. The Executive Director said that based on the response this first year, and due to the fact that the U.S Treasury Department has made it easier for municipalities to report their use of ARPA funds, he was recommending to the Executive Committee that the SCCOG not request any additional voluntary contributions of ARPA funding from its member municipalities. He said that the Executive Committee voted to direct staff to not request second year voluntary contributions of ARPA funding from SCCOG member municipalities.

3) Update on Hiring of Planner

The Executive Director reported on the hiring of a Planner to replace Carly Holzschuh. He said that the job notice was posted nationally due to our previous experience in attracting qualified candidates from the northeast, that more than a dozen applications had been received, first round interviews held with several applicants the week before last, and a second round of interviews have been scheduled by the Deputy Director with three candidates this week. He noted that most of the applicants little actual planning experience, but since the SCCOG has a team of experienced planners, an agency like ours is a perfect place for a new planner to begin their career.

4) FY 2021 STIP/TIP Amendments (to be taken up under Item 11. A, New Business)

5) Personnel Items

The Executive Director said that new SCCOG Planner Nicole Haggerty relocated from Texas and as allowed by the SCCOG Personnel Policies, he said he had offered to her the reimbursement of up to \$2,000 in relocation costs upon the provision of supporting

documentation and with the approval of the Executive Committee. Ms. Haggerty has provided documentation showing she incurred \$2,378.14 in relocation costs. The Executive Committee approved reimbursement of the full \$2,378.14 in relocation costs to Ms. Haggerty.

The Executive Director reported that on May 4th the General Assembly voted to make Juneteenth a State Holiday, and that the Governor has now signed that bill into law. This will be the 13th State holiday for State employees. He reported on what other COGs in Connecticut are doing about this holiday, and he said that the SCCOG currently provides 12 paid holidays and 1 optional holiday for a total of 13 to its employees. Because we are so close to June 19th, and because SCCOG member municipalities may or may not have determined what they will be doing with making this date a holiday, he said that he and the Deputy Director would like to recommend that no action be taken at this time concerning making Juneteenth a SCCOG holiday; any staff member wishing to take this day off can apply their optional holiday to do so. The Executive Committee concurred with this recommendation.

The Executive Director stated that he had previously informed the Executive Committee that his retirement date would be July 1 and last day of full-time employment would be June 30, but he had received a call from the CT Municipal Employee Retirements System (MERS) staff suggesting he make his last day June 29th, making him eligible for a COLA to his pension. He has discussed this with Chairman Allyn who had no objection. By moving the date of retirement up one day, he said it might impact his ability to take accrued vacation that would leave him with more than the 20 days maximum an employee may be reimbursed for when leaving the SCCOG's full-time employment under the SCCOG Personnel Policies. He said he was asking the Executive Committee's approval to be compensated by a day or two over twenty should making his last day June 29th or his SCCOG duties so require him to have more than twenty days on the books after retirement. The Executive Committee approved of the Executive Director's retirement date being moved forward one day to June 30th and his being compensated for more than 20 days of accrued vacation upon retirement should the need arise.

6) Other

The Executive Director said that the 457B retirement plan for SCCOG employees has been established and employees may now choose to participate in this plan. Mr. Sparkman asked if the SCCOG contributes to this plan, and the Executive Director Responded in the negative.

B. Tribal Liaison Representatives – None present.

C. Military Command Representatives: RADM Kelly said that the incoming class of cadets report to the Academy on June 27th; said that the Vice President spoke at graduation and he thanked all the CEOs who were able to attend; presented retiring Executive Director Butler with a Coast Guard Academy challenge coin.

D. Congressional Office Report: Ms. DeVivo reported on Senator Murphy's recent activities, including his work on a bi-partisan approach to gun control legislation.

E. seCTer: Melinda Wilson said that seCTer stands ready to support municipalities with any infrastructure grant applications; EDA has awarded seCTer \$2 Million in revolving loan funds; the 2022 CEDS update is underway; thanked retiring Executive Director Butler on behalf of the seCTer board and staff.

F. Eastern CT Tourism District: Mr. Bellano reported that the tourism district has now established three destination names in their district; adopted their budget; elected new officers.

G. SEAT: Mr. Carroll reported on SEAT's increase in ridership.

H. Regional Water: No report.

I. Regional Emergency Planning Team: No report.

J. Regional Human Services Coordinating Council: No report.

K. SE CT Cultural Coalition: Ms. Bury on the three municipalities that the Cultural Coalition expenditure of ARPA funding on arts and culture initiatives; reported on other recent activities of her organization.

9. Executive Director's Report:

The Executive Director read a statement from his written report, thanking the SCCOG's current and former CEOs and Managers, liaison Tribal and military members, and SCCOG staff for making his job so enjoyable for the past 24 years. He said he was looking forward to continuing to work with the SCCOG board in his new part-time role as Senior Advisor, and said that he was certain that the SCCOG's success will continue under incoming Executive Director Amanda Kennedy.

He then reported that SCCOG GIS Coordinator Liz Crutcher had resigned effective July 7.

He said that SCCOG had been awarded a CIRCA grant to prepare a pilot study of what steps are necessary to establish a stormwater authority in four SCCOG member municipalities.

Ledyard Mayor and SCCOG Chairman Fred Allyn III then read a Mayoral Proclamation thanking the Executive Director for his service to the region.

Montville Mayor Ron McDaniel then read a Mayoral Proclamation congratulating the Executive Director on his retirement.

10. Old Business: None.

11. New Business:

A. FY 2021 STIP/TIP Amendments

- BRFP, 0170-5031, I-95, Greenwich-Stonington, I-95 Bridges Concrete Sealing – AC Entry, CON, 2022, \$0, New Project
- BRFP, 0170-5031, I-95, Greenwich-Stonington, I-95, Bridges Concrete Sealing – AC Conversion, CON, 2022, \$7,000,000, New Project
- BRFP, 0172-0517, I-395, Montville-Thompson, Bridge Painting/Metalizing – AC Entry, CON, 2022, \$0, New Project
- BRFP, 0172-0517, I-395, Montville-Thompson, Bridge Painting/Metalizing – AC Conversion, CON, 2022, \$49,100,000, New Project
- 5307C, 0414-XXXX, SEAT, Norwich, SEAT-Admin Capital/Misc Support FY 22, OTH, 2022, \$2,409,000, Increase Estimate from Fed \$580,000
- STPA, 0103-0274, CT 82, Norwich, Safety Improvements from Maple St. t Fairmount St., ROW, 2023, \$6,000,000, Increase Estimate from Fed \$3.0M
- NHPP, 0094-0264, US 1, New London, NHS – Replace BR 02572 o/I-95 Ramp 310 & SR 641, FD, 2023, \$702,000, New Project
- NHPP, 0094-0264, US 1, New London, NHS – Replace BR 02572 o/I-95 Ramp 310 & SR 641, ROW, 2023, \$50,000, New Project
- NHPP, 0094-0264, US 1, New London, NHS – Replace BR 02572 o/I-95 Ramp 310 & SR 641, CON, FYI, \$15,150,000, New Project

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

12. Next Meeting:

The Chairman stated that the next regularly scheduled meeting was July 20, 2022.

13. Adjournment:

The Chairman then adjourned the meeting without exception at 9:23 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cheryl Blanchard, Secretary