

SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

5 Connecticut Avenue, Norwich, Connecticut 06360

(860) 889-2324/Fax: (860) 889-1222/Email: office@seccog.org

DRAFT Minutes of the October 16, 2024 Meeting
of the Southeastern CT Council of Governments
Via Zoom

PRESENT:

Bozrah	-	New London	Michael Passero
Colchester	-	North Stonington	Bob Carlson
East Lyme	-	Norwich	-
Franklin	Alden Miner	Preston	Sandra Gauthier
Griswold	Tina Falck	Salem	Ed Chmielewski
Jewett City	-	Sprague	Cheryl Allen Blanchard
City of Groton	-	Town of Stonington	-
Town of Groton	-	Stonington Borough	Michael Schefers
Lebanon	Kevin Cwikla	Waterford	Rob Brule
Ledyard	Fred Allyn	Windham	Thomas DeVivo
Lisbon	Thomas Sparkman	SEAT Rep (MPO)	Thomas Sparkman
Montville	Lenny Bunnell		
Military Liaisons:	US Coast Guard Academy: - New London SUBASE: Steve Sadlowski		
Tribal Affiliates:	Mohegan Tribe: Charles Bunnell Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation: Robert Hayward		
CT DOT	-		

SCCOG staff: Amanda Kennedy, Kate Rattan, Daniel Robinson, Helen Zincavage. seCTer: Captain Paul Whitescarver, Mark Oefinger. SEAT: Mike Carroll. Office of Sen. Blumenthal: Ellen Graham. Office of Sen. Murphy: Erin McBride. Office of Rep. Courtney: Noah Carver. Eversource: Egzon Balidermaj. SEAT: Mike Carroll. Health District: Jennifer Muggeo. Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority: David Aldridge. BL Companies: Dominick Celtruda.

1) Call to Order:

Chairman Brule called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. Mr. Brule led the Pledge of Allegiance

2) Roll Call:

A quorum was present.

Member Municipalities: Bozrah * Colchester * East Lyme * Franklin * Griswold * Borough of Jewett City * City of Groton * Town of Groton * Lebanon * Ledyard * Lisbon * Montville * New London * North Stonington * Norwich * Preston * Salem * Sprague * Stonington * Stonington Borough * Waterford * Windham

*If language assistance is needed, please contact SCCOG at 860-889-2324, office@seccog.org.
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3) Act on Minutes of the September 18th meeting:

MOTION: To approve the minutes (Chmielewski, Cwikla). Motion passed unanimously.

4) Treasurer's Report:

MOTION: To approve the Treasurer's Report (Miner, Blanchard). Motion passed unanimously.

5) Communications

Ms. Kennedy noted two communications: 1) request from CCM to participate in municipal salary survey. 2) Spreadsheet shared by Mayor Allyn showing OLR statistics for "Permanent and Totally Disabled Veterans by Municipality" spreadsheet. Ms. Kennedy noted that this resource would be relevant to the upcoming discussion of the Legislative Committee.

6) Public Comment:

Mr. Balidermaj shared that there were no major updates from Eversource. He announced that he, along with Jaquan Samuels, will be the new representatives for outreach in southeastern Connecticut. He noted that hurricane season is still underway, highlighting Eversource's hurricane outreach and storm preparation efforts.

7) Guest Speaker – David Aldridge: Executive Director of Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority:

Mr. Aldridge delivered a presentation on a new composting facility to be constructed just south of the "Waste to Energy" plant in Preston, CT. This new facility will be able to handle ~7500 tons of waste per year, utilizing hybrid technology and aerobic composting. This new facility will produce high-grade and marketable compost. Mr. Aldridge shared that SCRRRA's Environmental Justice Public Participation Plan was approved in September and that a related meeting will be held at their office soon. The SCRRRA Board officially moved forward with the project and will be issuing an RFQ for the operation of the new facility. He concluded with an update on their DEEP MMI grant application and shared that they received many letters of support.

Ms. Kennedy asked about local schools and if they will be required to compost food waste. Mr. Aldridge responded that food waste will soon become a mandated recyclable that large schools will have to follow, assuming the passage of Bill 191 in the upcoming state legislative session. Mr. Sparkman inquired about who the market would be for the compost, to which Mr. Aldridge replied that interested parties would be farmers and landscapers.

Ms. Zincavage added that SCRARRA's new site will keep the region ahead of the curve in regard to waste management. She concluded that she hopes both SCRARRA's and SCCOG's MMI grants will work in tandem to achieve synergistic goals.

8) Committee and Liaison Reports:

a) Executive Committee

- i) Ms. Kennedy announced that the minutes of the last Executive Committee Meeting on October 1st are available. She shared that the Executive Committee recommended two items for approval – the 2025-2028 TIP Amendments as of October 2024 and the Regional Open Space Plan.
- ii) Ms. Zincavage provided a presentation on the Regional Open Space Plan. She outlined the goals of the plan – to document existing conditions, built out goals, provide municipal annexes, and to highlight regional action items for the future. The ROSP aims to improve access to open space, protect water bodies, improve safety, encourage smart development (being clear where it should go), bring about active mobility, and reduce climate risks. Ms. Zincavage also brought up reactivating the Stormwater Collaborative in the wake of increased precipitation. She concluded with the mentioning of ROSP's yearly work plan to summarize recent work on open space. Mr. Allyn asked if the towns would be providing the needed info for said yearly work plan – Ms. Zincavage responded in the affirmative, that that info would be helpful. She added that Ms. Melonakos-Harrison will be configuring that data collection. Ms. Kennedy noted that there ought to be a source for continuous open space data collection. Chairman Brule commended SCCOG for their hard work.

MOTION: To adopt the Regional Open Space Plan (Sparkman, Miner). Motion passed unanimously.

- b) Legislative Committee – Mr. Allyn shared information and concerns with the board regarding complications with the bill CGS § 12-81(83). The bill allows for property tax exemptions for veterans with service-related disabilities that are permanent and total in nature. Issues that were discussed by the greater board included: bill having been passed based on information that significantly underestimated the bill's impact on municipal tax revenue, the broad nature of conditions qualifying veterans as permanently and totally disabled not meeting the intent of the law, and the lack of state funding to compensate municipalities for lost revenue. Mr. Passero, Ms. Gauthier, and Ms. Blanchard echoed Mr. Allyn's concerns and provided relevant information on the issue in regard to their communities. Ms. Kennedy reminded the board that there will be a Legislative Committee meeting on October 30th at 8:30 AM to discuss the issue in greater detail and length. Chairman Brule concluded with the sentiment that this issue is not about not supporting veterans, but about the local consequences of a bill passed based on incorrect information as to its municipal impacts.
- c) Tribal Liaison Representatives

Mr. Hayward announced that the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation's election cycle is coming up. He shared that three council seats are up for election, along with the possibility of constitutional review and subsequent reforming of their tribal government. Mr. Hayward

also noted that teachers will receive free admission to the Mashantucket Pequot Museum on Saturdays this Fall. He concluded with a reminder about the Mashantucket Pequot's upcoming 41st Anniversary of their Federal Recognition on October 18th.

Mr. Charles Bunnell stated that new MPTN elders had been elected. Mr. Bunnell also shared that the tribe is proudly engaging in efforts in the region to assist the homeless, hungry, and women and children. Mr. Bunnell spoke about how the Mohegan Tribal Nation is always looking for more ways to help and that they are open to opportunities the board may suggest. Mayor Bunnell (no relation) stated that Montville has benefitted greatly from the tribe's help.

- d) Military Command Representatives – Mr. Sadlowski shared information about past and future commemorations of the founding of US Navy and launching of USS Nautilus.
- e) Congressional Office Report – Ms. Graham, of Senator Blumenthal's Office, announced that Norwich and New London just recently received funds to ameliorate lead-based paint issues in vulnerable areas of their respective communities. Mr. Carver, of Representative Courtney's Office, spoke briefly about the current election season in addition to the securing of \$1.5 Billion in new contracts to Electric Boat. These contracts entail maintenance and manufacturing important parts for Virginia Class submarines. Mr. Carver also mentioned Representative Courtney's involvement with AUKUS and the collaboration of the American and Australian navies. Ms. McBride, of Senator Murphy's Office, mentioned Senator Murphy's letter to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg to improve roadway safety in the wake of Officer Pelletier's and numerous DOT employees' deaths.
- f) seCTer – Mr. Whitescarver informed the board of seCTer's housing need study that he and Ms. Kennedy assisted with. He announced that Norwich had received a grant from the CT Port Authority and expressed that riverfront/waterfront communities should continue to apply. He concluded with an update on the work being done on the new Nautilus Dock in Groton.
- g) SEAT – Mr. Carroll said ridership rates increased in the last month and that service was being expanded in terms of weekday hours and weekend service. An update on the micro transit pilot program in Waterford, Stonington, and Groton was also provided. Mr. Carroll shared that several new bus operators were being trained, but that SEAT still needs more CDL operators. He concluded with the issue of non-SCCOG towns role in the transit district as well as the Legislative Committee's need to take action on the freezing of transit funding from the CGA.
- h) Regional Human Services Coordinating Council – Ms. Kennedy announced that there is a Human Services meeting on the morning of October 25th.
- i) Health Districts – Ms. Muggeo of Ledge Light Health District shared that parts of Connecticut will experience "first frost" tonight, which will hopefully quell the issue of mosquito-borne illnesses. She noted that there has been a case of West Nile Virus, but there have been no deaths. She shared that with temperatures slowly dropping, cases of the Flu and Covid will rise. She encouraged the board to receive vaccinations for these illnesses and to direct those without easy access to vaccines to their health district. Ms. Falck asked if vaccines will be provided to homebound individuals. Ms. Muggeo responded that Uncas

Health District will, but Ledge Light Health District will not due to resource constraints, but that individuals should call the District for assistance.

- j) Solid Waste Committee – Mr. Allyn stated that the next meeting of the Solid Waste Committee will be on the morning of October 22nd.

9) Executive Director’s Report:

Ms. Kennedy shared that capital improvements are complete, save for a few furniture items that will be arriving soon. She announced that Ms. Jessica Cobb will be leaving SCCOG in November and that SCCOG is actively recruiting for a GIS professional to fill the position. Ms. Kennedy also spoke of OPM funding arriving for GIS and parcel work purposes. In regard to Transportation, she noted that Ms. Pierce and Ms. Rattan will soon be announcing a couple of funding opportunities. On Municipal Services, Ms. Kennedy stated that an OSHA10 Training will be taking place next month at Montville Town Hall. Lastly, on Regional Planning, Ms. Kennedy gave an update on SCCOG’s work on the CHANGE grant and the Brownfield Coalition Assessment grant (and possibly getting the town of Preston involved). She concluded with a notice on SCCOG’s Achievable Housing Lookbook and the recent approval from the Department of Defense on the Compatible Use Plan for the Sub Base and adjacent towns.

10) Old Business

There was no old business to report on.

11) New Business

MOTION: To approve the TIP amendments as of October 2024 (Sparkman, Allyn). Motion passed unanimously.

12) Next Meeting

Chairman Brule stated that the next board meeting will be on November 20th, 2024.

13) Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting (Cwikla, Allyn). Motion passed unanimously.