

Community Planning & Capacity Building/Infrastructure Working Group

Meeting Notes

Recordings and additional information can be found at www.seccog.org/recovery and www.neccog.org

Date/Time: February 16, 2021, 9:00am.

Location: Zoom teleconference/videoconference.

Members in attendance: Jennie Arpin (Town of Willington), Cheryl Blanchard (Town of Sprague), Matthew Bordeaux (Town of Colchester), Mike Carroll (Southeast Area Transit District), Chief Patrick Daley (City of Norwich), Chris Ferace (Putnam Police Department), Sandra Allyn Gauthier (Town of Preston), Tracey Hanson (Town of Voluntown/Region 4 Recovery Steering Committee), Carly Holzschuh (SCCOG/Town of Franklin), Carla Iezzi (DEMHS Region 4), Teresa Jackman (Eversource), Phillip Johnson (Windham Regional Transit District), Justin LaFountain (SCCOG/Town of Salem), Chris LaRose (Norwich Public Utilities), Deborah Monahan (Thames Valley Council for Community Action/Region 4 Recovery Steering Committee), Stanley Nolan (University of Connecticut), Janene Vandi (UConn Avery Point), Norton Wheeler (Southeastern Connecticut Housing Alliance), Adam Wright (U.S. Naval Submarine Base New London).

Staff in attendance: Sam Alexander (SCCOG), James Butler (SCCOG), Mike Caplet (DEMHS Region 4), Amanda Kennedy (SCCOG), John Filchak (NECCOG), Mickey Morabito (NECCOG).

1) Call to Order.

Sam Alexander (Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG)) called the meeting to order at 9:02am. Mr. Alexander reiterated the purpose of the Community Planning, Capacity Building, and Infrastructure (CPCBI) Working Group.

2) Roll Call.

All members in attendance stated their names and affiliations.

3) Review of Meeting Notes from 1/26/21.

Meeting notes from January 26th were sent to members by e-mail.

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

4) Unmet Needs Discussion.

A number of Unmet Needs were discussed at the last meeting, and inputted into an online form. If no solutions exist, the Unmet Needs will be referred to the Statewide Recovery Steering Committee. These Unmet Needs were:

- Lack of physical main street for public notices (Willington).
- FOIA issues with e-mail collection (Chaplin).
- No continuation plan for replacing/updating tablets and laptops given to students (LEARN).
- Rural broadband infrastructure stretched thin. Economics prohibit ability to upgrade (Killingly).

A discussion ensued of Unmet Needs and other issues that may not meet the definition of an Unmet Need, but are nonetheless experienced by CPCBI Working Group members and are relevant to the conversation of response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Eversource offers payment programs and assistance to customers for whom paying a bill is made difficult by the pandemic. Eversource offers regular webinars on their programs.
- Norwich Public Utilities (NPU) also offers payment assistance and bill deferment. NPU does not anticipate issues covering costs due to this.
- The pandemic has highlighted the issue of food insecurity, and the number of food-insecure people is increasing.
- Southeast Area Transit District (SEAT) has seen a fall in ridership due to the pandemic. The fall in ridership may be used by funding agencies to justify cuts to transit funds in the future, which would be short-sighted. Transit is a lifeline for many people.
- Transit drivers are essential workers and should be considered for early vaccination.
- The pandemic has highlighted the gaps in transit that exist and the need for expanded transit access in eastern Connecticut.
- Military families are experiencing much of the same issues as civilian families. The Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton has a childcare facility for military members and it is trying to stay open as much as possible.
- Law enforcement officials from DEMHS Region 4 meet regularly with Mike Caplet (DEMHS Region 4 Coordinator). Staffing was a concern for law enforcement early on. Putnam Police Department experienced a staffing shortage due to COVID-19 but

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was able to get adequate mutual aid from the Connecticut State Police for policing and was able to transfer public safety answering point (PSAP) operations to a neighboring PSAP.

- Some residents are experiencing issues paying rent and mortgages; this is well known and documented. Landlords are having difficulty paying mortgages and taxes or paying for repairs. Amanda Kennedy (SCCOG) spoke with the City of Norwich about deferred home repairs: this is an identified Unmet Need. The Regional Recovery Steering Committee is monitoring the changing housing needs of the region's residents as they relate to the pandemic.
- Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA) is working with residents to find funding for rent and mortgage assistance, and leverage resources. A big concern is the fact that the funding is limited and cannot last forever. Towns are welcome to refer residents in need of housing assistance to TVCCA.

If any unmet needs are able to be identified from the discussion, Sam Alexander will follow up with members of the Working Group, off-line.

5) Other.

There was no other business.

6) Schedule Next Meeting/Establish Schedule of Meetings.

The next meeting will be scheduled one month away, on March 16th. In the interim the DEMHS Region 4 Regional Recovery Steering Committee will meet (February 25th). Sam Alexander will send members a schedule of meeting dates for the next three months.

7) Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:44am.