

DEMHS REGION 4 REGIONAL RECOVERY STEERING COMMITTEE

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

25 February 2021

Steering Committee Meeting Summary

Members Present: Tracey Hanson, Town of Voluntown/NECCOG Chairman (Co-Chair); Mayor Fred Allyn, Town of Ledyard/SCCOG Chairman (Co-Chair); Deborah Monahan, TVCCA (Co-Chair); Jim Butler, Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments; Maryam Elahi, Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut; John Filchak, Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments; Dr. Elsa Nuñez, Eastern Connecticut State University; Mark Oefinger, seCTer; Reverend Benjamin Watts, Shiloh Baptist Church of New London; Reverend Catherine Zall, New London Homeless Hospitality Center, Tony Sheridan, Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce, Alejandro Melendez-Cooper, Hispanic Alliance of Southeastern Connecticut.

Others Present: SCCOG: Sam Alexander, Carly Holzschuh, Amanda Kennedy; DEMHS: Carla Iezzi, Darlene Richards, Mike Caplet.

1. Call to Order

First Selectman Hanson called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM.

2. Roll Call

Twelve members were in attendance.

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

Ms. Hanson asked that members review the January meeting notes and report any corrections to Amanda Kennedy.

4. Recovery Update- Mike Caplet

Mr. Caplet reported that since the last Steering Committee meeting, GRI submitted a draft report to NECCOG and SCCOG for their review and submitted the final report earlier this week. SCCOG provided comments on the draft report and will review the final to see if/how they were addressed before circulating the report to the Steering Committee in the next few days. Mr. Filchak asked how the report would be used; Mr. Caplet responded that it may provide

neccog



SCCOG

DEMHS REGION 4 REGIONAL RECOVERY STEERING COMMITTEE

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

documentation for future grant applications and that it was noted by GRI that the report may not tell us much that we do not already know. Mr. Filchak and Mr. Butler reminded the group that while NECCOG may receive funding through EDA to support this work, SCCOG is not eligible for those funds and does not currently have an identified source of funds to support COVID-19 related work.

Mr. Caplet provided an update on vaccine distribution. Ms. Elahi and Ms. Monahan both added that their organizations are involved in efforts to reach individuals in underserved communities.

5. Summary of Working Group Meetings- Amanda Kennedy

Ms. Kennedy reported that since the last meeting all three working groups convened once or twice to develop a list of unmet needs, some of which overlap. The Community Planning, Capacity Building & Infrastructure reported the following issues: a) challenges with municipal transition to digital communications, b) plan for maintaining and replacing distance learning equipment, c) lack of broadband in rural areas. The Health & Social Services/Housing group reported the following issues: a) barriers to access to vaccinations b) housing security & safety issues esp. landlord education, code enforcement, barriers to rental assistance. The Economic/Natural & Cultural Resources group reported: a) language barriers to obtaining financial assistance for businesses, b) barriers to rental assistance for tenants/landlords, c) disrupted supply chains in agricultural sector. The working groups will meet monthly for the foreseeable future.

6. Unmet Needs Discussion

Ms. Kennedy reviewed the three unmet needs that had previously been discussed by the Steering Committee. Each will be escalated for state attention with additional information. Senior Services- will be escalated while noting that some senior centers have made good transitions to support their seniors through phone conversations. Housing- will be escalated with a focus on preventing evictions and foreclosure as well as developing a source of funds to complete emergency repairs (accessible to landlords or tenants with landlord permission). Food insecurity- will be escalated with a request that existing resources be better coordinated with local partners to ensure food assistance reaches those in most need. Ms. Monahan asked whether landlords are eligible for PPP assistance and Mr. Sheridan said he would find out. Ms. Zall and Ms. Monahan mentioned the upcoming rental assistance funds which should be adequate to meet about half the existing need.

DEMHS REGION 4 REGIONAL RECOVERY STEERING COMMITTEE

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

Mr. Sheridan raised the issue of small businesses accessing assistance programs, especially those run by ESL and non-English speaking individuals, and compliance with safety protocols. Ms. Elahi mentioned that the current state budget proposal would reduce funding for diaper assistance; Ms. Monahan agreed that this would cause great hardship to families and to nonprofits trying to assist them. Rev. Watts mentioned growing mental health issues and there are not adequate resources for providers to expand their services. Mr. Caplet agreed he has heard these issue raised frequently and they were also reported by another region. Ms. Kennedy stated that she would submit/escalate the previous three issues as well as the diaper and mental health issues. She noted that Region 4 has 13 unmet needs issues in the process of being escalated to the State, adding to the handful that have been escalated to the State from other regions.

7. Other

Ms. Monahan mentioned that the energy assistance program application guidelines have been simplified for 2021. Ms. Hanson noted that the proposed state budget would allocate federal COVID funding to municipalities; some of those funds may be available for social services. Mr. Sheridan raised the issue of collectively needing to bring workers back to the workplace. Mr. Oefinger expressed disappointment in the pace of the overall recovery work and lack of funding for all councils of governments involved.

8. Schedule Next Meeting

Ms. Hanson proposed setting the next meeting on Thursday, March 25 at 9 AM, one week after the next set of steering committee meetings.

9. Adjournment

Ms. Hanson adjourned the meeting at 10:10 AM.