MINUTES OF THE NHCOG MEETING
10/8/2026
Remote Only

Member/Representative Attendance:

☐	**Barkhamsted**, Meaghan Cook	☐	**Harwinton**, Michael Criss	√	**Roxbury**, Patrick Roy
☐	**Burlington**, Doug Thompson	√	**Kent**, Eric Epstein	☐	**Salisbury**, Curtis Rand
√	**Canaan**, David Barger	√	**Litchfield**, Denise Raap	√	**Sharon**, Casey Flanagan
☐	**Colebrook**, Bradley Bremer	√	**Morris**, Tom Weik	☐	**Torrington**, Molly Spino
√	**Cornwall**, Gordon Ridgway	☐	**New Hartford**, Dan Jerram	√	**Warren**, Greg LaCava
√	**Goshen**, Seth Breakell	√	**Norfolk**, Henry Tirrell	√	**Washington**, Jim Brinton
☒	**Hartland**, Magi Winslow	☐	**North Canaan**, Jesse Bunce	√	**Winchester**, Todd Arcelaschi

NHCOG Staff: Robert Phillips, Rista Malanca, Annmarie Ryan, Erik Shortell, Leo Ghio, Grace Rennison, Tasha LaViera, Suzanne Prevuznak, Erin Reilly.

Others: Tim Waldron (Eversource), Eddie Velazquez, Ellen Graham (Blumenthal's Office), Jenn Pacacha (ConnDOT), Stephen Ivain, Michael D'Elia (The Kennedy Collective), Sarah Allyn, Brandon Young (State Comptroller's Office), Sean Scanlon (State Comptroller), P.J. Norwood (CT Fire Academy), Paul Januszewski (Fire Chief, North Haven), Fred Rosa (Charlotte Hungerford Hospital), Dr. Paul Scalise (Charlotte Hungerford Hospital)

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1. Call to Order and Public Comment

Chair Gordon Ridgway called the remote meeting to order at 10AM after a quorum was confirmed. He welcomed members and noted that State Comptroller Sean Scanlon would join later in the agenda. An opportunity for public comment was provided; no comments were received.

2. Member Roundtable

Falls Village/Canaan – Dave Barger

Barger reported that seasonal preparations were underway, including winter sand and salt supplies, with municipal operations otherwise proceeding normally.

Litchfield – Denise Raap

Raap reported that the Town has asked CT DOT to advance a road-safety project from concept to design. A recent public hearing addressed four options for the Bantam Annex, including renovation estimated at more than $32 million, housing-oriented reuse retaining portions of the property and existing uses, and demolition. The Town continues recruiting for an HR position. Raap also described municipal policies restricting anticoagulant rodenticides due to secondary poisoning of raptors and offered to connect NHCOG with advocates for a future presentation.

Winchester – Todd Arcelaschi

Arcelaschi reported that Winchester had voted to prohibit anticoagulant rodenticides on municipal property effective November 1. Main Street speed cameras were expected to begin operation October 19, initially issuing warnings for 30 days before citations. He also noted Paul Harrington's appointment to the CMERS Retirement Board and riverbank cleanup along Main Street.

Sharon – Casey Flanagan
Flanagan reported that the Sewer and Water Commission is considering rate increases for the first time in more than 20 years, in light of aging infrastructure and increased costs. He sought other towns' experience with transferring municipal water or sewer systems to a larger or private operator. Barger described Falls Village's prior sale of its water system to Aquarion and offered negotiation records; Raap suggested consultation with Dan Jerram.

Kent – Eric Epstein
Epstein reported construction on the Streetscape 2 sidewalk project, a contemplated referendum in the first quarter of 2027 on the future of the deteriorating town-owned Swift House (with possible costs of $2–4 million), and work on a food truck ordinance.

Norfolk – Henry Tirrell
Tirrell reported the State is working to reopen both lanes of Route 44 before year-end. He thanked NHCOG staff for assistance with housing, economic development, and transportation matters.

Roxbury – Patrick Roy
Roy reported that the ambulance building is expected to finish about three months ahead of schedule, with closeout anticipated later in October. Work continues on the Weller's Bridge and senior center projects, and the Town is exploring rodenticide alternatives.

Hartland – Magi Winslow
Winslow reported municipal renovation work complicated by a boiler failure and flooding, along with preparations for early voting.

Goshen – Seth Breakell
Breakell reported completion of the Pi Hill Road paving project and smaller drainage improvements. A recent electronics recycling and mattress collection event handled 57 mattresses and substantial electronics volume. The inaugural Goshen Fall Festival attracted an estimated 250–275 attendees.

Washington – Jim Brinton
Brinton reported seasonal bridge and road work and attention to potential winter fuel-assistance needs as costs increase.

Warren – Greg LaCava
LaCava reported progress toward concluding a Connecticut OSHA review, downtown revitalization improvements including a playscape and parking area, roadwork, and heightened concern about fuel and food costs. Warren has combined social services and parks and recreation functions under a community services director.

Cornwall – Gordon Ridgway
Ridgway reported discussions with NHCOG staff on housing and support for a prospective PROTECT grant project in Cornwall Bridge, along with pickleball court construction and community events.

3. Approval of September 10, 2026 Meeting Minutes
Jim Brinton moved to approve the September 10, 2026 meeting minutes. Greg LaCava seconded. The motion was approved without recorded opposition.

4. Monthly Financial Report
Annmarie Ryan presented the monthly financial statement through August 2026. Dave Barger moved to approve the report;

Todd Arcelaschi seconded. The motion was approved unanimously, with no opposition reported.

Chair Ridgway asked that the draft financial management policy be brought to the next Executive Committee meeting. Ryan confirmed that a draft would be ready.

5. 2026–2027 Legislative Committee
The Council discussed reconstituting the Legislative Committee in advance of a planned legislative breakfast in early December. Denise Raap and Patrick Roy confirmed their willingness to serve; Todd Arcelaschi indicated Paul Harrington remained interested. Staff reported that Michael Criss had not indicated an intention to relinquish the chairmanship.

Todd Arcelaschi moved to appoint Michael Criss, Denise Raap, Patrick Roy, and Paul Harrington to the Legislative Committee. Dave Barger seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Additional members may be added at a future meeting.

6. Executive Director's Report
Executive Director Robert Phillips referred members to the written activity report. He reminded members of the Household Hazardous Waste collection on October 24 at the Torrington Transfer Facility from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., noting strong early registration. He also referred to the annual Regional Service Grant report submitted to OPM, which was provided for review and required no Council action.

Phillips described proposed support letters concerning Mohawk Forest expansion, Camp Workcoeman, and Camp Strang. Chair Ridgway agreed the Executive Director could sign the letters without a separate motion.

7. Economic and Community Development
Rista Malanca presented a proposed Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant application to develop a regional business-resilience and economic-development strategy. The proposed study would assess commercial and industrial sites, infrastructure and site constraints, workforce and business-support needs, and establish an actionable project pipeline, strategic recommendations, and business attraction efforts. The proposed budget applies an 80% federal/20% match allocation across line items, including staff and consultant costs.

Dave Barger moved, and Denise Raap seconded, approval of the EDA grant resolution as presented.

After discussion regarding the competitive nature of the program and anticipated regional benefits, the resolution was approved unanimously.

Malanca also reminded municipalities to schedule meetings with her and Grace Rennison regarding Public Act 25-1 deliverables and the proposed regional methodology. A draft was anticipated for municipal review and comment in early November.

8. Presentation: Connecticut Fire Initiative
State Comptroller Sean Scanlon, joined by Interim State Fire Administrator P.J. Norwood and North Haven Fire Chief Paul Januszewski, presented an early-stage concept for "Connecticut Fire." Scanlon cited a reported 61% decrease in actively serving volunteer firefighters from 2018 through 2024 and challenges

facing rural fire response. The concept would study geographically located, state-supported firefighters who would supplement rather than replace local volunteer fire departments, potentially using one or two regional case studies.

The presenters reviewed recruitment and retention measures, volunteer benefits and incentives, fire service reporting, and forthcoming municipal fire protection plans. Members raised questions regarding coordination with volunteer EMS, housing and financial incentives for volunteers, accessibility of training, fire-district participation in municipal plans, radio communications, costs, and the potential for volunteer access to state health or retirement benefit programs.

Norwood clarified that direct entry of fire-response information into the federal NERIS system is free; departments may incur costs if they use third-party reporting or dispatch systems. Presenters emphasized that the initiative is exploratory, costs and operating details have not been resolved, and additional municipal input will be sought. No Council action was taken.

9. Housing and Town Planning

The written housing and town planning report had been distributed. Grace Rennison was unavailable to provide an oral update during this portion of the meeting. Municipal outreach concerning Public Act 25-1 was addressed under the Economic and Community Development report.

10. Special Projects / Natural Hazard Mitigation

Sarah Better reminded municipalities to schedule meetings with CIRCA and appropriate municipal planning and highway staff regarding the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. She also requested completion and return of municipal salary surveys.

11. Transportation and Public Works

Erik Shortell reported updated vendor pricing for two shared public works equipment purchases approved in September. The six-ton asphalt hot box/recycler had increased by $3,600 due to shipping, and the Vibrotech screener by $2,000 due to materials and manufacturing costs. He advised that delivery could take approximately three to four months after purchase orders are issued. The existing screener would be taken in trade, with the exact trade-in credit to be verified against purchase documentation.

Dave Barger moved to approve the equipment purchases at the revised pricing; Casey Flanagan seconded. The motion was approved without recorded opposition.

The combined increase over the September authorization is $5,600.

Shortell is compiling shared-equipment maintenance, utilization, and cost data for a presentation expected at a future meeting. He also reported that four Active Transportation Microgrant proposals had been submitted; two potential selections appeared to be North Canaan and Norfolk, subject to State approval. NHCOG also submitted a support letter for Norfolk's PROTECT grant application.

12. Rural Health Transformation Program / Regional Health

Leo Ghio introduced NHCOG's three newly hired Community Health Navigators, who had begun onboarding and were already receiving municipal referrals. He described the program's planned outreach to municipal social-service and senior-service staff and announced a November 3 Lunch and Learn on Rural Health Transformation Program initiatives.

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital – Mobile Stroke Unit
Dr. Paul Scalise of Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, with hospital and emergency-services colleagues, presented plans for what they described as Connecticut's first mobile stroke unit, supported by Rural Health Transformation Program funds. The vehicle is being developed to bring CT imaging, telemedicine-supported diagnosis, and trained clinical staff closer to patients experiencing suspected strokes, likely through coordination with local EMS and intercept protocols. A build and delivery period of approximately nine to ten months was anticipated.

Members asked about staffing, emergency dispatch coordination, and potential patient billing. Presenters indicated those operating and billing details remain under development. No Council action was taken.

13. DEMHS Region 5 Update
The DEMHS Region 5 representative was not available when the item was called. Phillips offered to distribute a written report if one was received.

14. Northwest Regional Recycling Authority (NRRA) Update
Phillips advised that Curtis Rand was unable to attend and that no substantive update had been provided. Chair Ridgway noted that NRRA was operational and expected to meet the following week.

15. Adjournment
Patrick Roy moved to adjourn. Chair Ridgway identified Casey Flanagan as seconding the motion. The Council voted in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 11:21AM

Respectfully submitted,
Northwest Hills Council of Governments