



# MINUTES OF THE NHCOCG MEETING

## 2/6/2025

### Remote

#### **Member/Representative Attendance:**

✓	<b>Barkhamsted</b> , Nick Lukiwsky	✓	<b>Harwinton</b> , Michael Criss	✓	<b>Roxbury</b> , Patrick Roy
✓	<b>Burlington</b> , Doug Thompson	✓	<b>Kent</b> , Marty Lindenmayer	✓	<b>Salisbury</b> , Curtis Rand
✓	<b>Canaan</b> , David Barger	✓	<b>Litchfield</b> , Denise Raap	✓	<b>Sharon</b> , Casey Flanagan
✓	<b>Colebrook</b> , Bradley Bremer	✓	<b>Morris</b> , Tom Weik	✓	<b>Torrington</b> , Elinor Carbone
✓	<b>Cornwall</b> , Gordon Ridgway	✓	<b>New Hartford</b> , Dan Jerram	✓	<b>Warren</b> , Greg LaCava
✓	<b>Goshen</b> , Todd Carusillo	✓	<b>Norfolk</b> , Matt Riiska	✓	<b>Washington</b> , Jim Brinton
☒	<b>Hartland</b> , Magi Winslow	☐	<b>North Canaan</b> , Brian Ohler	✓	<b>Winchester</b> , Todd Arcelaschi

#### **Others in Attendance:**

**NHCOCG Staff:** Sarah Better, Kathryn Faraci, Leo Ghio, Rista Malanca, Rob Phillips.

**Guests:** Jen Pacacha-CTDOT, Jennine Lupo-Rep Hayes Office, John Field-DEMHS, Michael D’Elia-The Kennedy Collective, Michelle McCabe-CT Main Street, Paul Harrington-Winsted Town Administrator, Riley Klein-Press, Troy Lamere-Winchester Board of Selectmen.

**Call to Order:** Chairman Dan Jerram called the meeting to order at 10:03AM.

**Public Comment:** NONE

#### **Report of the Executive Director:**

Mr. Phillips, the NHCOCG Executive Director, presented a detailed report on various topics, including the recent rescission of a federal OMB memo that had implications for funding, which alleviated prior concerns. He highlighted the ongoing CEO meeting series and provided an update on the recruitment of a Grants Financial Manager, noting a fairly strong applicant pool. Mr. Phillips also discussed the transition to using CCM for regional salary surveys to enhance accessibility and efficiency of data needs. Additionally, he informed the council about the CAMA GIS grant funding and the current state-wide RFQ process working with CRCOG, and the invoicing for the HHW October event, which resulted in significant savings due to a billing error.

Chairman Jerram raised concerns about the allocation of GIS funding (One time funding through ARPA to assist municipalities in bringing their GIS data up to date and filling gaps), questioning the fairness of supporting towns with outdated data over those that have invested in their systems. NHCOCG clarified that funding decisions would be based on data gap assessments from the state GIS office and as such won’t necessarily be distributed equally. Chairman Jerram suggested additional discussion on the topic at a later date.

In another initiative, Vice-Chairman Mike Criss proposed that Harwinton lead an application for a STEAP grant aimed at facade improvements for small businesses, seeking collaboration from other towns.

Chairman Jerram also initiated a discussion on the need for more frequent hazardous waste collection events, with support from other participants (Denise R, Doug T, Dave B, Todd C, Jim B., Brad B.) for potentially increasing the schedule to quarterly collections.

Chairman Jerram commented that New Hartford, Winsted and Torrington bill to RRDD1, instead of individually with regard to HHW event invoicing.

Mr. Phillips shared that the NHCOC FY Ending 2024 Annual Financial Audit is in progress and currently under extension and is expected to be completed prior to the March board meeting.

Mr. Phillips encouraged the board to support membership with the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) to have access to regional resources, advocacy efforts, and professional development conferences, etc.

### **DEMHS Update:**

John Field provided updates on the Crisis Track migration and introduced a new Civics grants management program to improve user experience. He also discussed the cleanup of past EMPG grants and preparations for 2024 deliverables. Specifically:

- Moving 2024 EMPG grant over to "Civics"; will make the grants more user friendly to track status. If towns need help getting registered, please reach out to John or Henry.
- Working on cleaning up prior EMPG grants to move those to Civics as well
- Working on 2024 deliverables that will be required to receive funding
- CCM April 1<sup>st</sup> - Niantic
- DEMHS in the process of filling open positions and are evaluating the effectiveness/span of control; will be some organizational restructuring to ensure efficiency.
- National Guard is providing cyber security assessments - if towns are interested but haven't been contact, reach out to John.
- Salisbury has a large race event coming up in June, DEMHS working with various services to plan for emergency services
- Trying to reboot ESF11 Animal Response Team; assessing available assets and personnel
- February 26<sup>th</sup> presentation at CCSU re: DESP, focusing on public safety personnel
- Towns should have received a request to update contact information for local emergency managers
- Will be enforcing the state statute that EMDs and Deputy EMDs receive a loyalty oath every 2 years

### **Legislative Subcommittee Update:**

Mike Criss, legislative chair, emphasized the importance of communication regarding proposed bills, particularly Bill 1160, which he opposed due to concerns over client confidentiality and costs. He expressed worries about legislative measures that could threaten the financial stability of small towns, particularly for seniors and those on fixed incomes. Discussions were conducted on solar array legislation and the need for greater municipal involvement in balancing development with community needs.

There was extensive discussion among members of legislative process, priorities and bills of concern currently before the legislature and what to expect moving forward. More specifically, Mike Criss offered the following:

- Keep legislative committee meetings going throughout the legislative session;
- Start sending our legislative alerts and testimony templates to the member towns;
- Currently following over 400 proposed bills;
- State surplus not being passed down to municipalities
- He is happy to have one-on-one meetings with members to discuss bills of interest;
- Be aware of the following bills:
  - SB1160 - Section 2 would require towns to make significant investments in body cameras for EMS, as well as data storage;
  - Many bills that erode municipal tax base with no bills to fill that gap
  - Summarized NHCOC 2025 Legislative Priority List
  - 6543 - fixed income households and senior citizens tax break
  - Proposing additional Veterans tax breaks
  - HB6522 - phasing our MV tax
  - HB6421 - online municipal legal notices
  - Bills proposing changes to MV tax mill rates (caps)
  - Municipal spending caps
  - Energy costs
  - Farming concerns

Mayor Carbone asked if there are any priorities on solar arrays? No, but we support having municipal seats on the CT Citing Council - Mike Criss will connect with the Mayor separately

Gordon R- asked about early voting, bear populations, MSW, Fire/EMS property taxes

Doug T requested scheduling a meeting for all interested in reviewing the priorities. Mike Criss requested that the Executive Director send out an email to the member towns to ask about interest in meeting

Chairman Jerrram suggested the board move to accept the draft of priorities with the ability to revise and requested to reschedule the previously planned Legislative Breakfast. Denise R requested adding language about bear safety education - "bear management framework". It was mentioned that CT DEEP should be distributing this information. Chairman Jerrram requested to add language removing public benefit charge in energy costs; and to add language to the suggest the state develop a single manual for all law enforcement instead of requiring each town to have their own.

***MOVED (RAND) and SECONDED (BARGER) to move to approve the 2025 NHCOC Legislative Priority List with the aforementioned revisions, and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY***

**Administrative Items:**

- a) ***MOVED (CRISS) and SECONDED (ROY) to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY***
- b) ***MOVED (BARGER) and SECONDED (CRISS) to approve the Monthly Financial Statement for December 2024, and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY***
- c) CORRESPONDENCE: Letters of Support Endorsed for CT DOT Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP) applications for the towns of Burlington, Harwinton, Kent, Litchfield, Morris, Washington, Colebrook, Barkhamsted, Goshen and Canaan (FV).

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**BUDGET WORKSHOP PORTION OF MEETING**

**Economic Development:**

CT Main Street - Launch of the NW CT Promise Reports / Proposed Regional Main Street Management Approach, Michelle McCabe, CT Main Street Center:

Michelle M. presented on the Main Street assessment tool and purpose of the program. Reports from assessments are meant to be used as a guidance tool for each community to strengthen their village center; includes recommended next steps and a list of possible actions

- Next steps - many towns seem interested in this program, CT Main Street hopes to provide trainings and build capacity in each community to execute possible action steps; they are working on adding additional staff to assist towns.
- CT Main Street Center does a lot of advocacies re: legislative actions

CEDS Implementation: Set priorities for upcoming FY25-26

Rista M. began by stating that this is related to the topic above - assessments, identifying next steps, etc. Is there anything missing? Focus areas? Training? Denise R mentioned that Litchfield has lost businesses in town because there isn't enough housing for employees

Town of Kent, Municipal Brownfield Assessment Grant - Up to \$200,000:

NHCOG would apply for assessment only grant on 3 Seger Mountain Rd (5-acre site) - has interest from developers but they are hesitant due to environmental conditions and what future uses might be approved

***MOVED (RIDGEWAY) and SECONDED (BARGER) to support NHCOG to apply, and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY***

**Transportation Planning:**

Review of UPWP for Next Funding Cycle - Set Priorities for Next 2 Fiscal Years

Ms. Faraci presented a Power Point reviewing required UPWP tasks; NHCOG will receive an additional \$35,000 carried over from the previous program period. There should be over \$100k available over the next two years to conduct future initiatives such as:

- Update Regional Safety Plan from 2019
- Update corridor studies
- Expand recreational trails
- GIS mapping
- Data collection
- Community connectivity
- Roadway inventory software

Transit Analysis Study Update

Ms. Farci stated that we are in data collection phase, demographic mapping and route overlays, beginning community engagement next month

STIP Amendments:

- 0174-0459 - Replace Traffic Control Signals at Various Locations in District 4
- 0067-0123 - Pedestrian Improvements at Various Locations in Kent
- 0086-0094 - Intersection Improvement and Install Sidewalks in Morris

- 0097-0095 - Replacement of Retaining Walls on US 44 in Norfolk
- 0143-0196 - Construct Shared Path Along and Under SR800 in Torrington
- Replace Retaining Wall and Safety Improvements in Washington

***MOVED (CRISS) and SECONDED (CARUSILLO) to approve all STIP Amendments as presented, and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY***

Further STIP Actions: CTDOT requests that these projects below be REMOVED from NHCOG TIP due to these Section 5310 Program Projects being designated for the Worcester Urbanized Area:

- **0499-2025WO**
- **0499-2026WO**
- **0499-2027WO**
- **0499-2028WO**

***MOVED (CARUSILLO) and SECONDED (RIDGEWAY) to remove the above STIP Amendments as presented, and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY***

**Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (NHMP) Update Planning:**

SUMMARY:

- Current plan expires in June of 2027
- Estimated budget of \$250,000 for 2-year span
- Total match: \$62,500
- Anticipated match for each town: \$2,976.20
- Application is due March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- There are several different grants we can apply for
- Towns must provide commitment letter

Mike C mentioned that DOT is now requiring submission of the NHMP with any grant funding requests

***MOVED (CRISS) and SECONDED (CARUSILLO) to approve and allow NHCOG staff to reach out to each town for individual commitments as presented, and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY***

**Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Update Planning and Other Potential Regional Initiatives:**

SUMMARY:

- The Executive Director requested to table until next meeting due to time constraints.
- Discussed Annual Dues Proposal for FY 25/26 and the need to tailor this to increasing local matching needs. There has been no increase in at least the past 4 years.
- Dan requested to schedule an Executive Committee meeting and to send out the Dues proposal beforehand
- Mentioned governor’s budget that includes \$250,000 for additional COG staff to support MSW and Storm Water management, if approved at the end of the legislative session.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION - For the Purpose of Continued Contractual Matters Relating to Municipal**

**Solid Waste in the NHCOC Region:**

***MOVED (RIISKA) and SECONDED (RAND) to enter into Executive Session at 12:15PM, and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY***

Exited Executive session at 12:59PM – checked waiting room, no one to admit.

***MOVED (RAND) and SECONDED (LINDENMAYER) that NHCOC staff and NHCOC counsel be authorized to continue negotiations on behalf of NHCOC for a possible transfer of ownership, operations, and management of the Torrington Transfer Station as described in draft non-binding Term Sheet Between the Northwest Hills Council of Governments, the City of Torrington, and the MIRA Dissolution Authority dated 2/3/25 which was reviewed in Executive Session, and provided that no definitive agreement may be entered into or executed without further Board approval. PASSED BY MAJORITY, Troy L - Winsted OPPOSED.***

**ADJOURNMENT:**

***MOTION (CARUSILLO) and SECONDED (LINDENMAYER) by to adjourn the meeting at 1:02PM***

Respectfully submitted,

*NHCOC staff*