

HVCEO

DRAFT MINUTES OF 5/21/2004 MEETING HELD AT BROOKFIELD, CT TOWN HALL

Chairman Natalie Ketcham of Redding

Vice Chairman Rudy Marconi of Ridgefield, Secretary-Treasurer Peggy Katkocin of New Fairfield

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES IN ATTENDANCE

Bethel.....First Selectman Alice Hutchinson
Bridgewater.....First Selectman William Stuart
Brookfield.....First Selectman Jerry Murphy, Alternate Selectman Judy Heise
Danbury.....Mayor Mark Boughton
New Fairfield.....First Selectman Peggy Katkocin
New Milford.....Mayor Patricia Murphy
Newtown.....First Selectman Herbert Rosenthal
Redding.....First Selectman Natalie Ketcham, Chairman
Ridgefield.....First Selectman Rudy Marconi, Alternate Selectman Peter Yanity
Sherman.....Absent

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

From the Department of Public Safety's Division of Homeland Security Acting Director John Buturla, Grants Manager Rosemary Salerno and staff member Jack Leonard. Also Robert Tomlinson of the Danbury Red Cross and Torrington Fire Department Chief John Fields.

In addition the audience included about thirty staff persons and volunteers in the emergency services and health fields. These included David Lathrop, Judy Pilch, Colin McCormick, James Lillis, James Purcell, Jean Flynn, Rosty Slabicky, Jim Gardner, Andrew McGuire, Laura Vasile, Laura Pagliaro, Richard Moss, Jack Kozuchowski, Paul Estafan, Donna McCarthy, Douglas Hartline, Douglas Fuchs, Lou Yarrish, and Edward Briggs. Also in attendance were James Bellano of HVEDP, various citizens, Candy Acquanita, David Hannon and Jonathan Chew of the HVCEO staff.

CALL TO ORDER/ PUBLIC COMMENT

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Natalie Ketcham 12:35 P.M.

REQUEST FOR APPOINTMENTS TO NORTHWEST CT HAZMAT RESPONSE PLANNING TEAM

The new Hazmat planning group, and the need for representatives to it from the Housatonic Planning Region, was explained by John Fields, Planning Team Chair and Chief of the Torrington Fire Department. Also commenting was Robert Tomlinson of the Danbury Chapter of the Red Cross. This planning process will coordinate responders from 45 municipalities currently without regional HAZMAT service.

This large area would be divided into manageable subsections. There would be a northern Torrington area, extending westerly to the New York Line, a Waterbury area, and third a Greater Danbury area, they said. Also, that boundaries with operating teams in the New Haven Area and Southern Fairfield County Area are still in flux.

The first meeting has been held and bylaws are being formulated. Of the two appointments from each of the six regional councils involved, only those from Housatonic Valley remain to be made. The time commitment will be for monthly Saturday meetings in the Torrington Area, also to report back to HVCEO and the new Housatonic Emergency Planning Committee.

A general discussion followed. David Lathrop of the Ridgefield Fire Department stated that a limitation was that the thirteen member area fire chiefs association had no communications with the hazmat planning group, and this needed to be resolved. Chief Fields agreed to speak to that group.

Concerning persons offering their services to the hazmat planning group, Richard Moss of Bethel's Stony Hill fire Department stated his willingness to be appointed. Mr. Moss reviewed his considerable credentials with radiological decontamination and management of hazardous materials.

Bethel First Selectman Alice Hutchinson and Newtown First Selectman Herb Rosenthal both stated the view that Mr. Moss was fully qualified for this task. There was then a discussion of this appointment, followed by a motion making the appointment by Alice Hutchinson and a second by Herb Rosenthal, all in favor.

As for the second appointment, it was agreed that this topic would be on the agenda for the June meeting. Also that prior to that meeting, staff would circulate a notice to members soliciting names of potential appointees, with a copy to fire department personnel.

**HOMELAND SECURITY DEPARTMENT
GRANTS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Major John Buturla, Acting Chief of the CT Department of Public Safety's Division of Homeland Security, made a presentation on this topic. He first noted his organization's support for the Northwest CT hazmat planning effort just discussed, also that funding thru his Department is available for such regional hazmat teams.

Major Buturla spoke to the upcoming use and administrative arrangements for municipal receipt of FY2004 federal Homeland Security grants. The aim of the grant is greater protection and training for all first responders, a baseline level of special protective suits, etc., not your everyday equipment. Training under the grant is to be designed for response to use of weapons of mass destruction. Another major goal is compatibility of equipment, a lesson learned the hard way from 9/11.

He also noted in the meeting handout the HVCEO staff's estimates to area municipalities from this grant totaling to \$1,069,731. The estimated distribution by municipality was shown as Danbury obtaining the largest amount at \$403,334, then New Milford \$116,008, Newtown \$108,610, Ridgefield \$103,696, Bethel \$83,957, Brookfield \$75,451, New Fairfield \$69,394, Redding \$49,276, Sherman \$33,548 and Bridgewater the smallest at \$26,457. The state will create an escrow account for each municipality, from which payments will be made for items desired by the municipality.

There are three administrative options for managing the grant, he said. The first would see the municipality sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Division of Homeland Security (DHS), keeping all administration at the state level, including purchasing and shipment to the

municipality. The MOU and request for municipal endorsement will arrive at each town hall on 5/24 or 5/25 he said, and must be received back by 6/4.

As for the second and third options, these are delegation of administration to the municipality or the regional council of officials. However, under these second and third options, the municipality or region must advance the funds to be expended, as this category of federal funds has for several years been provided only on a reimbursement basis.

Members then had a general discussion with Major Buturla and Rosemary Salerno, DHS Grants Manager, about the upcoming DHS funding. The most crucial point raised concerned the degree of policy control to be allowed under each option. Specifically, if members sign the MOU, they did not want to see their communities then receive a highly standardized and not necessarily needed amount of first responder protective equipment and training.

DHS staff assured members that this was not the case, that signing the MOU did not constitute state control of the mix of items selected for purchase with the grant, versus local determination if the municipality did not sign.

Although equipment and training specifications must be standardized to insure statewide compatibility, the municipality can make its own selections under the MOU administrative option, tied of course to the nine goals and sixty-one strategies of the state plan. Major Buturla stated that "only you know what you need in your community", and that this bottoms up approach is facilitated by more flexible federal grant outlines for FY2004 funds.

There was then further discussion, focusing on possibly using FY2004 funds for regional aspects of emergency response. The question posed was "Assuming all ten municipalities sign the MOU with DHS, thereby eliminating the possibility of the municipalities or the region administering the funds, have we effectively eliminated our ability to fund regional aspects of emergency preparedness?"

DHS staff stated that under the MOU option, it is still possible for multiple towns to assign some percentage of the local funds to be received, say 10% or 20%, to a regional project. Also, that such a cooperative spending plan does not at all conflict with federal grant guidelines, provided of course and again stressing that what is proposed must be in conformance with the goals and strategies of the state plan.

Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton then made remarks on the issue of combining resources, noting the special opportunity for intermunicipal cooperation provided by this federal grant. He stated that one option for use of a percentage of each towns local funds would be to expand Danbury's hazmat services to serve the participating neighboring towns. A regional command center was cited as another option.

Mayor Boughton further stated that the Danbury goal is not to make money on such new arrangements, neither to loose money on them, but as a public entity to aim for a break even point with the economics. And then, for all participants to benefit from both the new economies of scale and enhanced emergency services provided.

There was discussion of this offer. It was agreed that the newly formed Housatonic Emergency Planning Committee (HEPC) was not the best initial forum to develop the business model for this

joint funding idea, rather that HVCEO at its June meeting would appoint a smaller committee to formulate basic management options, then work with the HEPC and others.

It was agreed that a critical concern in these regional options will be costs of ongoing maintenance or staffing that may not be covered by joint use of present or future federal Homeland Security grants.

Chairman Natalie Ketcham then summarized the sense of the meeting resulting from the review of the MOU and its options. This was that signing the MOU with DHS was the preferred administrative option, allowing for near term obligation of funds, followed by a two year period to make all of the expenditures.

She also stated that all members wished to explore further the possibility of Danbury serving as the lead community for some Homeland Security grant related services and that this will be taken up at the June meeting. Major Buturla and his staff were then thanked for their informative presentation.

DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT RESOLUTION

Deputy Director Dave Hannon addressed this issue, noting that an authorizing resolution to enable receipt of emergency preparedness funds for HVCEO was needed.

Then on a motion made by Herb Rosenthal and seconded by Alice Hutchinson, it was voted unanimously to adopt the following resolution: "That the HVCEO Chairman is hereby authorized to execute a Memorandum of Understanding and other documents necessary to permit HVCEO to receive emergency preparedness funds from the FY2004 Homeland Security Grant Program."

ACTIVATION OF HOUSATONIC EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE

It was noted that the members of this group had been invited to the meeting and that many were in attendance today. CT OEM grant requirements to the region require that such a coordinating group be created.

Dave Hannon reviewed initial tasks for the group. They included review of emerging products from the Year One FEMA funded regional emergency planning program, with some technical comments on these already having been received from CT OEM.

Other tasks will be to help make decisions as to use of funds available for CERT training, exchange of information as to all aspects of federal Homeland Security grants, and possibly the upgrading of mutual aid agreements. He noted that a meeting of this group would be planned for late June.

NEW BUSINESS

Jim Bellano of HVEDP described a new Northeast Utilities energy efficiency grant program targeted towards municipal buildings. The grant formula is very favorable with only a 25% cost share for the municipality required. Jim will be calling each member to arrange a meeting with Northeast Utilities staff.

ADJOURNMENT

Then on a motion made by Jerry Murphy and a second by Alice Hutchinson, the meeting was adjourned at 2:35 P.M.