

FEBRUARY 18, 2005 MINUTES
HVCEO 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.....Alternate Robert Brown
Brookfield..... First Selectman Jerry Murphy
Danbury.....Alternate Michael McLachlan
New Fairfield.....First Selectman Peggy Katkocin
New Milford.....Alternate Tammy Reardon
Newtown.....First Selectman Herbert Rosenthal
Redding.....First Selectman Natalie Ketcham, Chairman
Ridgefield.....First Selectman Rudy Marconi
Sherman.....First Selectman Andrea O'Connor

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Lynn Waller of Danbury, Danbury Hospital Chief of Cardiology Doctor Andrew Keller, Andrea Rynn and Matt Cassavechia of Danbury Hospital, NY/CT Highlands Coordinator Katherine Rand, Lynn Werner, Director of the Housatonic Valley Association, Friends of the Lake members Greg Bollard, Scott Conant and George Walker, and CCM Energy Manager Andrew Merola.

Also Eric Hampton of the CT DECD, Ann Risen and Richard Schreiner of HART, Kathryn Faraci of Conn DOT, Danbury Planning Director Dennis Elpern, a representative of Ability Beyond Disability, River Trail Coordinator Peg Daley, Harold Mayer of the Candlewood Lake Authority, Jack Kozuchowski of the Danbury Health Department, George Blake, 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. Chairman Ketcham welcomed back Kathryn Faraci after her pregnancy leave, then members wished Alice Hutchinson a happy birthday. Under public comment Peg Daley spoke to River Trail and Kings Mark issues. Chairman Ketcham signed up for the 5/21 River Trail volunteer clean up. It was agreed that staff will write to the region's federal representatives in support of continuing federal funding for Kings Mark.

MINUTES FROM JANUARY 21, 2005

On a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Alice Hutchinson, the minutes of the meeting of January 21, 2005 were unanimously approved, with an abstention by Tammy Reardon.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR JANUARY 2005

Then on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by Alice Hutchinson, the financial statement for January 2005 was unanimously approved.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AMENDMENTS

Dave Hannon spoke to this topic, describing the amendments that had been received from Conn DOT, with a request for HVCEO endorsement. After discussion concerning the high mileage of HART buses to be replaced and a motion made by Herb Rosenthal and a second by Andrea O'Connor, a resolution of approval for the amendments was passed unanimously.

**CT DOT SECTION 5310 GRANT APPLICATIONS
FOR WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES**

Dave Hannon noted that only one application had been received, from Ability Beyond Disability, to replace a 1997

model year vehicle. After comment by a representative of Ability Beyond Disability, and as the written advisory report from HART was favorable, on a motion made by Herb Rosenthal and a second by Alice Hutchinson the application was unanimously approved.

WESTERN CT COALITION REGARDING FEDERAL RECOGNITION

It was noted that proposed cooperation with nearby regional planning agencies LHCEO and NWCCOG was already part of the 2005 legislative agenda. The proposal in front of the Council today, coordinated by Kent First Selectman Delores Scheisel, proposes to take this new policy to a more detailed level.

The Coalition would represent thirty municipalities and present a unified position against recognition of unmerited entities as legitimate tribes and against the expansion of gambling by locating a casino in Western Connecticut. The goal is focused, unified action by the three groups of chief elected officials.

There was discussion. Then on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and a second by Herb Rosenthal, the joining by HVCEO to the new Coalition was unanimously approved.

Regarding casino opposition, Rudy Marconi reviewed recent activities of the CT Alliance Against Casino Expansion (CAACE), of which he is a member. He noted how casino proponents speaking outside of Connecticut praise this State's two casinos as having all positive impacts, a claim which is not accurate.

Also, that a casino impact study is needed for Connecticut, that requests will soon be directed to each municipality by him representing CAACE and requesting \$1,000 each, and that could each member please view this request favorably.

UPDATE ON NEW CARDIAC CARE AT DANBURY HOSPITAL

Remarks on this topic were made by Danbury Hospital Chief of Cardiology Andrew Keller, M.D. Doctor Keller described the steps following the recent state approvals for open heart surgery and angioplasty. Many staff trained for open heart surgery were already in place, prior to the recent authorization for this procedure, he said. There have been 17 heart operations thus far, all successful, with the goal of 120 before angioplasty procedures start.

A related effort of interest is to equip the EMS community with technology and training to transmit electrocardiogram data from the ambulance during transport, such that Danbury Hospital staff is better prepared for the specific circumstances of the arriving critical patient. The goal for angioplasty is to reduce the "door to balloon time" to under ninety minutes, a crucial time indicator for the survival rate. Discussion followed, after which Dr. Keller was thanked for his presentation.

OPEN SPACE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES THRU THE HIGHLANDS CONSERVATION ACT

A presentation on this topic was made by NY/CT Highlands Coordinator Katherine Rand and Lynn Werner, Director of the Housatonic Valley Association. They noted that the Coalition seeks to protect and enhance the sustainability of natural and human communities in the Highlands region of PA, NJ, NY and CT.

The Coalition is comprised of more than 110 local, state, regional and national conservation organizations. The location for potential grants in our area is the entire land area of the five qualifying municipalities; Danbury, Brookfield, New Fairfield, Sherman and New Milford. They noted that about \$10 million annually will be available over ten years. This is federal matching funds for up to 50% of the cost of purchasing lands or development rights from willing sellers.

Lynn Werner then reported that HVA will be providing technical assistance to help set preservation priorities for this and other open space programs. A question and answer period followed, after which Ms. Rand and Ms. Werner were thanked for their presentation.

IMPACT OF DISCHARGES TO THE STILL RIVER UPON LAKE LILLINONAH

George Walker of Friends of the Lake, Inc. began by distributed a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission letter

to Northeast Generating Services (NGS) dated February 2, 2005 concerning an NGS inquiry as to its "ability to assess reasonable charges on other entities to assist in funding debris removal" at the region's hydropower projects. FERC directed that NGS not recoup its costs for debris removal thru user fees, a clear victory for the municipalities. Mr. Walker thanked the members for the support that made this ruling possible.

A PowerPoint presentation on Still River water quality was then made by Friends of the Lake member George Walker and the groups' consultant Curtis Read. This was a summary of the full technical report entitled "Still River Study -Final Report: Determination of Influence by the Still River Tributary to the Water Quality of Lake Lillinonah" dated October 2004.

They noted that the Still River Study delivered consistent data showing that the Danbury Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) effluent is a major source of continuous nutrient loading. Also, that nitrogen and phosphorous are considered to be precursor nutrients that encourage algae and weed growth in Lake Lillinonah. While the Still River typically contributes 4% to 8% of the Housatonic River's flow, in contrast it is responsible for nearly doubling the concentrations of phosphorous and total nitrogen entering the Housatonic River at Lake Lillinonah.

Recommendations of the Study are year round removal of phosphorous by Danbury, not just seasonal. Then lower the phosphorous level from the STP to "best available technology", and also accelerate the timetable for correcting nitrogen emissions and revise permit conditions to best available technology levels.

There was then discussion of the study's findings, during which Mike McLachlan made comments concerning the Danbury STP. He noted that it has one of the strictest DEP permits in Connecticut, with nitrogen credits common and not unusual. Also, that Still River effluent issues are truly regional as the Danbury Plant discharge includes processed septage waste from Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, New Fairfield, Newtown and Redding.

He continued that the upcoming total loading study of the Housatonic River will provide a broader view of the water quality challenges that we all face, and that a study of year round phosphorous removal is already being willingly pursued. The presenters were then thanked for their attendance.

CCM ELECTRICAL SUPPLY PURCHASING PROGRAM

An overview of this program was provided by Andrew Merola, Manager of CCM Energy. Under this program CCM Energy acts as the municipality's agent for the purchase of electricity and natural gas in the deregulated marketplace. This gains the advantage of long term fixed pricing that improves local budgeting decisions, as energy costs are fluctuating and trending upward.

CCM Energy offers to gather municipal energy usage data for the last year, school system included, and thus determine current use and cost. Then the competition for municipal business will be maximized with the five electrical suppliers licensed to operate in Connecticut. Municipal acceptance of the low bid not required, but there is only a one day window of opportunity to decide to accept an offered price.

Overall, the goal of CCM Energy's Purchasing Program is to reduce the retail margin on electrical supply, he said. The CCM fee per kilowatt hour is very small. However, with this procedure it is difficult to predict savings to the town.

Comments from members were that the cost components of transmission and administration would not be affected, and that the time of municipal staff to gather data is also an offsetting concern. Mr. Merola also commented that the old idea of a municipality aggregating for its residents never caught on as administrative costs are high and benefits overall to homeowners are very low. After additional questions Mr. Merola was thanked for his presentation.

ADMINISTRATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING APPEALS PROCEDURE

Alice Hutchinson reviewed a series of questions on this topic on an agenda attachment, issues dealing with affordable housing administrators, tracking the resale of affordable units, and the reverting of affordable units to market rate with no one noticing.

She also described her experience lobbying for Bill 888, inclusion of private market units that qualify into the 10%

goal. There was then brief discussion of these issues, including the comment that “deed restrictions do indeed fall off deeds.”

DANBURY BRANCH TRAIN CONTROL AND NEW MILFORD RIDERSHIP PROJECTION

Dave Hannon addressed this topic, presenting a draft letter to Conn DOT Commissioner Korta for the chairman’s signature and a bound report entitled “HVCEO Update on the Danbury Branch Line” updating members on Branch Line service expansion issues.

The report noted that the existing train control and signal system on the Danbury Branch Line is an archaic manual system that requires train personnel to throw rail switches by hand. To remedy this, the goal is to construct a signal system which is compatible with the mainline system and is centrally controlled, which will allow safer and closer spacing of trains, the key to Branch Line service expansion.

Also, quoting from the draft letter, “that we have contacted Conn DOT in the past with our concerns as this project periodically stalled” and “for over twenty years Conn DOT has continually delayed implementation of this rail management project. A meeting is to be requested at the Department to discuss plans to move this project to construction in an expedited manner.” Members agreed that this letter should be sent.

As for the recent Conn DOT ridership projection, the basis for future policy, Mr. Hannon noted that the possible restoration of service to New Milford was given a significant policy boost by the new high Conn DOT ridership forecasts. He noted that if service is extended to New Milford, daily boardings there are estimated by Conn DOT at 336 passengers, becoming the largest station on the line and indicating a very strong market for rail service. This same figure increases overall Branch ridership by 37%. There was then a short discussion of rail issues.

DISTRIBUTION OF STATUS REPORT ON MUNICIPAL PARCEL MAPS AND GIS

David Hannon and George Blake distributed their new report, entitled “The Status of Digital Parcel Maps and Geographic Information Systems in the Housatonic Valley Region.” The document included a specific review of the status of digital parcel mapping in each municipality and has been posted to hvceo.org. They noted that a PowerPoint presentation will be made on this topic at the next meeting, to which municipal staffs can be invited.

OLD BUSINESS AND NEW BUSINESS

1. Natalie Ketcham reported that the response was very good to the Council’s letter to all other chief elected officials in the state concerning the retention of the real estate conveyance tax. Replies to the Council’s lobbying letter were received from first selectmen, mayors, and legislators from around the state, she said.

2. Jon Chew presented a suggested structure for the water supply committee authorized at the last meeting, in the form of a one page outline entitled “HVCEO Technical Committee to Evaluate Regional Water Supplies and Interconnections.” This is a joint recommendation with Danbury City Engineer William Buckley, he said. After brief discussion and on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and a second by Jerry Murphy, it was voted unanimously to approve the committee charge and structure.

3. Jerry Murphy distributed to members posters proclaiming April as Parkinson’s Disease Awareness Month, an affliction upon his brother that he is familiar with. He asked that they post these in municipal buildings, thereby helping to form support groups for care givers via 888-400-2732 and apdaparkinson.org. He noted that the American Parkinson Disease Association, Inc. was founded to ease the burden and find a cure for Parkinson’s disease. Headquartered in New York, the organization focuses its energies on research, patient support, education and raising public awareness.

4. Andrea O’Connor noted the upcoming hearing on the Candlewood Lake Authority’s proposed legislation to modernize its enabling legislation. She also commented on the good progress being made with the scope for the mandated FERC studies of Candlewood Lake.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made and seconded the meeting adjourned at 2:50 P.M.