

**MINUTES OF THE 2/15/2008
HVCEO MEETING
HELD AT BROOKFIELD, CT TOWN HALL**

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES IN ATTENDANCE

Bethel.....First Selectman Robert Burke
Bridgewater.....Alternate Robert Brown
Brookfield.....First Selectman Robert Silvaggi
Danbury.....Alternate Chief of Staff Michael McLachlan
New Fairfield.....First Selectman John Hodge
New Milford.....Mayor Patricia Murphy, Vice Chairman
Newtown.....First Selectman Joseph Borst
Redding.....First Selectman Natalie Ketcham
Ridgefield.....First Selectman Rudy Marconi, Secretary - Treasurer
Sherman.....First Selectman Andrea O'Connor, Chairman

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Brookfield Police Chief Robin Montgomery, Branch Line Rail Study consultants Stephen Gazillo and David Chase of the URS Corporation, Rail Study Project Engineer Andrew Davis of Conn DOT, Kathryn Faraci and Anna Bergeron of Conn DOT, Bethel Planning and Zoning Official Steve Palmer, Robert Rush of the New Milford Planning Commission, Candlewood Lake Authority Director Larry Marsicano, Richard Schreiner of HART, Lynn Waller of Danbury, Roy Piper of DEMHS Region 5, News Times reporter Eugene Driscoll, and from the HVCEO staff Camille Acquanita, David Hannon and Jonathan Chew.

CALL TO ORDER / PUBLIC COMMENT

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Andrea O'Connor at 12:35 PM, after which attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public comment was then offered by Bethel Planning and Zoning Official Steve Palmer. He spoke to the upcoming rail study as it relates to the Bethel Railroad Station. He conveyed positions of the recently adopted 2007 Bethel Plan of Conservation and Development on the matter including a recommendation for an adjacent 133 acre transit oriented development district and a west side loading platform, requesting that Bethel's concerns be included in the Phase II rail study.

Then Lynn Waller of Danbury recommended that as Smart Growth issues are discussed, aspects that are important to senior citizens be included. Robert Rush of the New Milford Planning Commission then urged that planning work of the Danbury Branch Line be pursued to its conclusion with rail passenger service to New Milford restored.

MINUTES AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

On a motion made by Natalie Ketcham and seconded by Pat Murphy, the minutes of the meeting of 1/18/2008 were unanimously approved. Concerning the financial statement for 1/2008, on a motion made by Mike McLachlan and a second by Rudy Marconi the statement was unanimously approved.

UPDATE ON OPPOSITION TO FAA AIRSPACE REDESIGN

Rudy Marconi reported on this topic, representing municipalities to the south that have joined the Alliance for Sensible Airspace Planning. Highlights of his report and the following discussion were that: Ridgefield voters approved a financial contribution for Alliance membership last week, New Milford awaits answers to questions such as height of planes and details as to noise impacts before a final decision is made as to membership in the Alliance, the Alliance's legal challenge will be filed in April or May seeking to make routing over Connecticut the choice of

last resort only after all other options are more fully studied including advances in flight technology, more use of Stewart Airport, and a new flight approach over now militarily closed ocean areas.

Also, the proposed in coming flight plan changes at LaGuardia that effect Connecticut are part of a systemic shift meant to create more flight capacity at Newark Airport, that weaknesses of the current decision have been found to be lack of impact studies on 26 national parks and migratory bird patterns, also Danbury and Oxford Airports having ceilings lowered with less steep arrival and departure angles and thus more noise. Senators Dodd and Lieberman are also reported to be increasingly active in this fight.

LIST OF MAJOR EMPLOYERS AND CERC ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Jon Chew referred to an agenda attachment excerpting a page from hvceo.org featuring links to all economic development interests in the region and accompanying data sources. He noted that since the demise of the regional economic partnership in 2004, hvceo.org has filled some of the vacuum as a portal for researchers on economic development.

He then distributed two new HVCEO reports recently linked to this web page. The first was an update from 2000 of the regional list of major employers, with credit given to the many local professionals who assisted and especially to Ann Katis of HART who led the project. The second was a review of sector by sector growth expectations for the regional economy, recently completed by the CT Economic Resource Center for use in the Council's regional plan update. This new overview identifies, for thousands of businesses in their entirety, overall expectations by economic sector, this data for use by realtors, chambers and economic development groups.

CONN DOT GRANTS FOR ELDERLY AND DISABLED TRANSIT

Dave Hannon of HVCEO and Rick Schreiner of HART reviewed the requirements for FY2009 funding under Conn DOT's 13b-38bb municipal dial-a-ride grant program, with applications due at HVCEO by April 3. They noted there are several steps required for the municipal grant submissions, including maintenance of funding effort certification as this grant source is for service expansion and not to be substituted for current local elderly transit funding.

A table accompanying the agenda projected the 2008 application scenario for each locality, with Bethel, Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, Newtown, and Ridgefield as in the last two program years likely to apply thru HART. Rick Schreiner offered to assist municipalities with HART related applications and Dave Hannon will do the same for Bridgewater, New Milford, Redding and Sherman. Then on a motion made by Bob Burke and seconded by John Hodge, a resolution authorizing HVCEO Chairman Andrea O'Connor to submit the Housatonic Valley Region's municipal applications to Conn DOT was unanimously approved.

VACANCY ON COUNCIL'S PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Jon Chew stated that a three person Personnel Committee has been in operation for many years, currently consisting of Bill Stuart, Rudy Marconi and Herb Rosenthal. But that as Herb Rosenthal is no longer an HVCEO member a new appointment needs to be made. The time commitment is one meeting per year, during April, with the committee's wage and salary recommendations then incorporated into the draft budget for full Council review.

Andrea O'Connor then requested a volunteer with Pat Murphy offering to serve. Then on a motion made by Bob Burke and seconded by Natalie Ketcham, Pat Murphy was unanimously approved as a new member of the Personnel Committee.

OPM REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN CONVENING SMART GROWTH REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE

Members then reviewed agenda attachments including Governor Rell's Executive Order 15 on Smart Growth, requiring that CT OPM's new Office of Responsible Growth "create regional

roundtables that will invite the ongoing participation of city and town officials and foster the development of planning agendas tailored to the specific needs of different parts of our state, starting with new transit corridors.”

The second attachment was a letter to the Council from David LeVasseur of CT OPM, asking HVCEO to create a roundtable for our area, and a third item was a more recent letter of clarification from Mr. LeVasseur. Comments from members were that while educational smart growth activity was admirable HVCEO had little capacity to absorb another unfunded mandate. Jon Chew indicated that most other regions were to use their current council as the administrative base, with the roundtable as a frequent agenda item there, rather than create a single purpose new organization.

There was then discussion of this and other aspects of Governor Rell's Roundtable proposal. It was agreed that 1) the current HVCEO meeting structure would serve as the base for the Roundtable and HVCEO would notify OPM it appointed itself to perform the Roundtable function, 2) municipal planners would be notified of the Roundtable process and would be welcome to be part of the dialogue, 2) other specialists would be invited depending upon the topic, and 4) the term "Roundtable" would appear on the HVCEO agenda for Smart Growth related items which will include the list of topics suggested by Mr. LeVasseur.

It was also noted that this area of emphasis on the agenda will coordinate well with the upcoming regional plan update. As for the statement in Mr. LeVasseur's letter that "there may also be instances when state agencies request time on your Roundtable agenda to conduct necessary outreach on state actions or plans," it was agreed that these visits will be welcomed.

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SUPPLY AND CONNECTICUT'S WATERSHEDS

Remarks were then made by Natalie Ketcham and Rudy Marconi on this topic. Since August of 2007 they had been working with members of the legislature's public health committee and others in an effort to upgrade protection when potentially detrimental development occurs in water supply watershed areas. The goal is to require the design and density of proposed developments to recognize the special fragility of water quality in surface water supply drainage areas.

Thus far the General Assembly's Public Health Committee has prepared a concept bill entitled "An Act Concerning Water Quality," with the goal of expanding the text into more substantive bill language. Natalie Ketcham noted that Representative Bob Godfrey and DOH Deputy Commissioner Norma Gyle have been very helpful to the process.

Rudy Marconi added that comparisons of watersheds with and without controls on development clearly document the advantages of extra protection to preserve water quality. A map of the state showing existing and potential water supply watersheds was then reviewed with discussion of those in this planning region. There is at least one in each of the ten municipalities except Brookfield. HVCEO is to be kept informed of this process and eventually be asked for legislative support.

NEXT STEPS WITH DANBURY BRANCH RAIL PASSENGER IMPROVEMENT PLAN

On this topic a PowerPoint presentation was made by Branch Line Rail Study Manager Stephen Gazillo of the URS Corporation with input from Dave Chase of URS and Andrew Davis of Conn DOT. Mr. Gazillo first provided a history of the study process, noting that the Phase 1 development of alternatives ended in 2006 and that the Phase 2 testing and selection of rail alternatives will begin soon.

He then reviewed local planning issues at each station and agreed that the proposed parking deck for the Branchville Station, transit oriented development and west side platform proposals at Bethel Station, and the need for evaluation of social impacts at the proposed New Milford Station would all be addressed by the Phase 2 study.

There was then considerable discussion of the presentation and upcoming Phase 2 planning efforts. Pat Murphy said that a potential station location near New Milford's Kimberly Clark property should also be evaluated. Rudy Marconi stated that we need to take this effort very seriously as a key to converting interregional travel to more public transportation. Also, that commuter rail service was extended to the South Shore of Greater Boston only due to an aggressive state commitment, rather than allowing the plan to be repeatedly stalled by every complaint, lawsuit or perceived impact.

Mike McLachlan stated that commuters want a travel time to NYC that is competitive with the Harlem Line. Dave Chase responded that electrification could shave nine minutes off of the current fifty minutes from Danbury to South Norwalk, possibly an additional three minute reduction with track improvements, but that those minutes would be lost once the new Georgetown Station stop is added. Rudy Marconi noted that the \$42 million centralized train control management system for the Danbury Branch is proceeding into construction. After further discussion, the presenters were thanked for their visit and urged to move the rail study forward.

PROGRESS REPORT ON PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RELATED GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Dave Hannon began his report by referring to an agenda attachment summarizing the roles of the groups involved in Greater Danbury's emergency management. All are cooperating to secure for the area a share of upcoming federal homeland security grants.

He then displayed a newly completed HVCEO GIS large size wall map identifying alternate care sites in the region to be used in a flu pandemic or other emergency. Dave noted that under our planning contract with DEMHS "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat" (SWOT) evaluations are soon to be undertaken for major emergency management resource groups.

Brookfield Police Chief Robin Montgomery then reported on the activities of the regional police chiefs group that meets every second Friday AM at the HVCEO office. This group, an offshoot of the Fairfield County Chiefs Association, is moving toward interoperability of police radio communications and has completed an internet based equipment and resource inventory project. There was then a discussion that included questions as to compatibility with Danbury's radio upgrade.

Then Roy Piper gave the DEMHS report. He noted that May 12 was set as the date for voting by municipal chief elected officials on the funding priorities in the DEMHS Region 5 spending plan. He explained that each town has one vote or one person can be designated as the delegate for several towns simultaneously. A newspaper article in the Ridgefield Press extolling the Region's new regional video conferencing capability will be featured in an upcoming statewide DEMHS newsletter. Also, that his new Southbury office is to be the backup for the main state emergency operations center in Hartford.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made and seconded it was voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 2:20 P.M.