

**MINUTES OF THE 2/19/2009
HVCEO MEETING
AT BROOKFIELD, CT TOWN HALL**

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES IN ATTENDANCE

Bethel.....First Selectman Robert Burke
Bridgewater.....Absent
Brookfield.....First Selectman Robert Silvaggi
Danbury.....Mayor Mark Boughton
New Fairfield.....First Selectman John Hodge
New Milford.....Mayor Patricia Murphy, Chairman
Newtown.....First Selectman Joseph Borst
Redding.....First Selectman Natalie Ketcham
Ridgefield.....First Selectman Rudy Marconi, Secretary-Treasurer
Sherman.....First Selectman Andrea O'Connor, Vice Chairman

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Newtown Selectman Herb Rosenthal, Carla Iezzi of Conn DOT, Reverend Phyllis Leopold, Jean Bowen and another representative of the Association of Religious Communities, Eric Hampton of DECD, Lynn Waller of Danbury, Dean Cerasoli, Matthew Cleary and other representatives of Conn DOT District 4, Ann Katis, Rick Schreiner and Bob Yastremski of HART, and from the HVCEO staff Camille Acquanita, David Hannon and Jonathan Chew.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Patricia Murphy at 12:30 PM, after which attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS AND REPORTS

--- **Minutes from 1/15/2009:** On a motion made by Bob Burke and seconded by John Hodge the minutes of the meeting of 1/15/2009 were unanimously approved.

--- **Financial Statement for 1/2009:** On a motion made by Bob Burke and a second by Joe Borst the financial statement for 1/2009 was unanimously approved.

--- **Conn DOT Transportation Stimulus Funding Update:** Dave Hannon referred to an agenda attachment entitled "Notice to Submit Stimulus Project Documentation" dated 2/10/2009. He described it as the HVCEO staff's "best advice to date" on how municipalities should apply to Conn DOT for federal Stimulus funding for shovel ready projects.

The estimated regional funding target for shovel ready projects is \$5,270,000, he said. A second agenda attachment identified how the region's shovel ready projects were fitting into this target amount. There was considerable discussion of the project development process. It was agreed that due to time constraints simple repaving projects have the clear advantage.

The Council authorized Dave to continue to apply the "fair share" dollar distribution approach in shaping the regional priority list, as agreed to at the January meeting, while working with each municipality in meeting Conn DOT guidelines and refining the scope of Stimulus projects.

Mark Boughton suggested, and members agreed, that a special meeting should be held on Stimulus funding applications, with public works directors in attendance. Carla Iezzi advised that this be held after the upcoming Conn DOT statewide technical meeting on Stimulus for regional staffs on 3/3/2009.

--- Transportation Improvement Program Amendments: Dave Hannon reviewed the amendments requested by Conn DOT, which were for a) changes of funding category and increase in estimate for Danbury's Coal Pit Hill Road and Route 53 intersection improvement totaling \$2.7 million, and b) replacement of high mileage buses statewide at \$30.0 million including a bus for HART.

Also c) construction of the first phase of the Centralized Traffic Control system for the Danbury Branch Line at \$40.0 million, and d) increase in estimate for reconstruction and realignment of the first phase of the New Milford/Sherman Route 37 realignment and reconstruction project, this first phase to be within the Town of Sherman, at \$8.4 million.

There was brief discussion of the proposed TIP changes. Then on a motion made by Bob Silvaggi and a second by Natalie Ketcham, the TIP changes proposed by Conn DOT were unanimously approved.

Representatives of Conn DOT District 4 then commented upon the progress of some of the major TIP endorsed projects. They noted that the Route 7 widening project from 2 lanes to 4 lanes in Danbury, the Route 7 Expressway extension from Brookfield to New Milford and the Grove Street realignment project in New Milford were all making good progress.

--- Applications for Elderly and Disabled Transit Funds: Dave Hannon and Rick Schreiner of HART reviewed the requirements for FY2010 funding under Conn DOT's 13b-38bb municipal dial-a-ride grant program, with municipal applications to be forwarded to HVCEO.

They noted that funding for this program is not included in the draft state budget. However, that Conn DOT advises completing the application process for use of remaining funds and in anticipation of restoration of some 13b-38bb funds.

A table accompanying the agenda projected the 2009 application scenario for each locality, with Bethel, Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, Newtown, and Ridgefield identified as likely to apply thru HART.

Rick Schreiner offered to assist HART municipalities with their applications, and Dave Hannon will do the same for Bridgewater, New Milford, Redding and Sherman.

Then on a motion made by John Hodge and seconded by Joe Borst a resolution authorizing Council Secretary Rudy Marconi to submit the Housatonic Valley Region's municipal applications to Conn DOT was unanimously approved.

--- Newtown Curb Cut Management Plan consultant selection: Dave Hannon reviewed the intent of the upcoming curb cut management plan that it is proposed HVCEO prepare for several state roads in Newtown. These include all of Route 6, all of Route 25, and part of Route 816 from I-84 easterly to Sandy Hook Center.

The methodology will be much the same as was used to produce a curb plan for New Milford's Routes 7 and 202 in 2008, that document since incorporated as a standard into New Milford's zoning regulations, he said.

Dave then requested a motion to approve the selection of Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. to perform the Newtown study, that firm approved by a Newtown selection committee, and to empower the chairman or the executive director to sign a contract with that consultant for a scope of work and budget not to exceed \$40,000. Then on a motion made by Andrea O'Connor and a second by Bob Burke, the request was unanimously approved.

--- Emergency Preparedness Update: Dave Hannon advised that the memorandums of agreement currently being requested by DEMHS should now be approved locally. GPS units for public ambulances will then be arriving, along with some digital emergency scene staff skill identification equipment.

--- Alliance for Sensible Airspace Planning: Alliance Chairman Rudy Marconi reported that FAA is attempting to avoid public view by funding the implementation of the Metro New York airspace redesign with Stimulus funds, this sudden move being fought by the Alliance and congressional representatives.

--- Communications on draft Shoreline Management Plan: John Hodge reported that with the removal of proposed shoreline property owner fees from the draft FERC Shoreline Management Plan by new Candlewood Lake owner GDF Suez, the major hurdle to public acceptance of the Shoreline Plan had been removed.

--- Elimination of State Funding for Regional Planning: Members reviewed this topic, noting that enhanced regionalism via \$50 million in proposed bond funds was a key plank in the Governor's budget address. Yet at the same time, regional planning funds for HVCEO and the other regional agencies were entirely eliminated from the state budget.

Members agreed this is a contradiction, in that the very regional agencies that would insure cost-effective use of the new regional funds are cut out of the process. Mark Boughton said that regional planning agencies are widely respected throughout the state and that the recommendation to eliminate regional funding will not survive.

A statement by Governor Rell that the intent of her new regionalism program is to keep it away from the "red tape" characteristic of regional planning organizations was also discussed. Members were in unanimous agreement that for towns to create a new and parallel intermunicipal coordination mechanism as the Governor proposes is exactly the type of governmental duplication enhanced regionalism is trying to eliminate.

Also, that the mayors and first selectmen of Greater Danbury are capable of running HVCEO in an efficient and responsive manner. The current regional planning organization is the correct planning base for the Governor's new regional challenge, they said.

Then on a motion by John Hodge and a second by Bob Burke, all aye, members authorized Chairman Murphy to write to the legislative delegation to protest these contradictory policies on regionalism.

There was additional discussion as to the unknown nature of the ultimate extent of regionalism that state officials may be attempting. John Hodge noted the very heavy tax burden on property owners for the high level of county regionalism in adjacent New York State.

He said that homeowners move the few miles east across the state line into Connecticut to improve their quality of life and that intense regional government as found in New York State with its high cost must be resisted here. Members agreed that new regionalism should be an adjunct to, and not a replacement for, municipal government.

--- Out of Date Town Plan to Impact State Grant Eligibility: Jon Chew summarized a memo attached to the agenda from CT OPM Undersecretary David LeVasseur on this matter. He states that after 7/1/2010 certain state grant applications will take into consideration the age of the municipal plan of conservation and development.

If there has been no revision within 10 years, the municipality could loose scoring points, or in other ways receive a low rank, the memo said. The ages of the region's ten town plans and their relative exposure to this risk were then summarized by staff.

UPDATE ON DREAM HOMES COMMUNITY CENTER

The status of regional homelessness prevention and homeless services was then presented via PowerPoint by Reverend Phyllis Leopold and Jean Bowen of the Association of Religious Communities. Dream Homes serves as the point of entry to service options for persons about to experience, or currently experiencing homelessness.

The group's goals are to continue to receive funding from municipalities of this centralized service and to expend the coordinated homelessness data base currently operated cooperatively by Danbury, New Milford, New Fairfield, Ridgefield and Redding to other towns.

A statistical summary of homelessness in the region was then presented and an accompanying handout distributed. Questions and answers followed, after which Chairman Murphy thanked the ARC representatives for their visit.

EFFICIENCY REPORT ON SWEETHART TRANSIT SERVICES

This presentation by Richard Schreiner and Ann Katis of HART was accompanied by distribution of their report entitled "SweetHART Comprehensive Operational Analysis" dated September 2008.

They noted that SweetHART is the regional dial-a-ride paratransit service for elderly, disabled and all age federal ADA eligible riders. The regional system based in Danbury has been operated by HART since 1978. Municipalities served include Bethel, Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, New Milford (ADA service only), Newtown, Ridgefield and Roxbury.

Key statistical trends and recommendations from the report were then summarized, followed by questions and answers.

It was also noted that the report can serve as a useful reference for municipal boards of finance when discussing funding for SweetHART services. The HART representatives were then thanked by Chairman Murphy for their visit.

OTHER BUSINESS / ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on a motion duly made and seconded the meeting was adjourned at 1:50 P.M.