

**MINUTES FOR THE 1/21/2010
HVCEO MEETING
AT THE HART OFFICE
62 FEDERAL ROAD, DANBURY, CT**

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES ATTENDING

Bethel.....First Selectman Matthew Knickerbocker
Bridgewater.....Alternate Selectman Curtis Read
Brookfield.....First Selectman William Davidson
Danbury.....Mayor Mark Boughton
New Fairfield.....First Selectman John Hodge
New Milford.....Mayor Patricia Murphy, Chairman
Newtown.....First Selectman Patricia Llodra
Redding.....First Selectman Natalie Ketcham
Ridgefield.....First Selectman Rudy Marconi, Secretary-Treasurer
Sherman.....First Selectman Andrea O'Connor, Vice Chairman
and Sherman Alternate Selectman Kate McConaghy

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

State Senator Toni Boucher, from the HART staff Eric Bergstraesser, Richard Schreiner, Robert Yastremski and Ann Katis, Brookfield Police Chief Robin Montgomery, David Fink of the CT Partnership for Strong Communities and Dimple Desai of CT OPM and Chairman of the Danbury Housing Partnership Mark Nolan.

Also Carla Iezzi of Conn DOT, Bob Kenny and Tom Vannini of CT DEMHS, Kira Goldenberg of the Ridgefield Patch, Holly Burbank of Metropool, Marydale DeBor of New Milford Hospital, Robert Rush of the New Milford Planning Commission, and from the HVCEO staff Camille Acquanita, David Hannon, George Blake and Jonathan Chew.

CALL TO ORDER / PUBLIC COMMENT

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Pat Murphy at 12:30 PM, after which attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Murphy welcomed the three new members representing Bethel, Brookfield and Newtown and two new alternate members representing Bridgewater and Sherman.

WELCOME TO HART

HART's Chief Executive Officer Eric Bergstraesser welcomed HVCEO members and guests to the HART office. He provided a history of the facility and stated that a tour of maintenance operations would be provided at the conclusion of the meeting.

ADMINISTRATION AND SHORT REPORTS

--- Minutes for 10/15/2009 and 12/3/2009: On a motion made by Rudy Marconi and seconded by John Hodge the minutes of the meetings of 10/15/2009 and 12/3/2009 were unanimously approved, with an abstention by Bill Davidson, spelling error on 10/15/2009 minutes to be corrected.

--- Financial Statements for 10/2009, 11/2009 and 12/2009: There was discussion as to the rate of expenditure on certain line items. Then on a motion made by Andrea O'Connor and seconded by Rudy Marconi the financial statements for 10/2009, 11/2009 and 12/2009 were unanimously approved.

--- Communications with Legislators: A written communication from Danbury Representative Bob Godfrey attached to the agenda notified HVCEO members that a Blue Ribbon Commission on Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies had been created.

Deputy Speaker Godfrey will be the legislator representing the Danbury Area as the group seeks to identify opportunities for budget reductions from regional collaboration and savings thru municipal efficiencies.

A discussion followed. Comments included that 1) it is preferable for legislators to set as their priority resolving the extreme situation with the state budget imbalance rather than this local and regional financial focus, 2) by invitation Pat Murphy has agreed to attend the subset of meetings on municipal budget aspects, 3) a recent COST presentation featured U Conn research documenting that inter-municipal cooperation for savings has minimum yield except for regional board of education activity, and that 4) while adjacent New York State has highly developed regionalism due to its county government, property taxes on homeowners are also correspondingly high.

--- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendments: Dave Hannon reviewed the purpose of monthly TIP approvals, which are to promote Conn DOT – HVCEO communications and regularly exercise federally designated regional approval powers.

He then reviewed Conn DOT proposed TIP amendments which related to 1) a “positive train control” signalization upgrade for the New Haven Railroad Line, 2) federal funds to enable Conn DOT to scope, engineer and develop new projects, 3) Route 107 intersection improvements in Redding at Route 57 and at Main Street, and 4) the update of signs on Routes 7 & I-84 from Wooster Heights Road in Danbury to Federal Road in Brookfield.

Then on a motion made by John Hodge and a second by Rudy Marconi, the Conn DOT requested TIP amendments were unanimously approved.

--- Emergency Preparedness Update: Bob Kenny introduced Tom Vannini, his replacement as DEMHS Region 5 Coordinator. He noted that Mr. Vannini was promoted from the position of Region 5 Planner.

It was also announced that the DEMHS 5 office and its monthly meetings of municipal emergency officials will be relocating this year from Southbury Training School to the Rowland State Government Center at 55 West Main Street in Waterbury.

The DEMHS report continued with comment on leadership emergency center changes, homeland security roundtable activities and information on state resources that may be used to assist Haiti.

Members then thanked Bob Kenny for his past significant assistance to area municipalities and wished him success with his new assignment at DEMHS Region 1.

--- Award from the CT Chapter of the American Planning Association: Jon Chew reported that on 12/2/2009 HVCEO received an award for the high quality and quantity of planning information on the hvceo.org web site. The grantor was the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association at its annual luncheon meeting in Middletown. Recent web site usage statistics included in the agenda packet were also reviewed.

PROPOSED REGIONAL APPROACH TO DOMESTIC ABUSE COUNSELING SERVICES

Remarks on this topic were made by Brookfield Police Chief Robin Montgomery. Chief Montgomery raised the idea of hiring one social worker to assist police departments in all

regional towns. This staff person would respond with or after police officers to repetitive domestic abuse incidents, the goal being to direct victims when appropriate to social service systems and thereby reduce the many instances of recurrent police department response.

The proposal is to build on the present Danbury system whereby a part time, three day per week Women's Center of Greater Danbury employee serving the City of Danbury Police Department is funded for a full five days, such that surrounding towns can make use of the additional two days of service.

The program is directed at repeat offenders and has been effective in reducing police officer responses in Danbury so other police chiefs are interested.

The cost for the expansion from three to five days of service would be about \$23,000 annually, to be shared among participating surrounding towns such as Brookfield, Chief Montgomery said. However, that the Women's Center has applied for a domestic abuse counseling grant for this amount, thus municipal financial participation may be the future and not present support base.

A discussion followed. To Rudy Marconi's question as to why municipal social service departments would not be the best providers of this service with their current staff, Chief Montgomery replied that most do not have domestic abuse counseling skills. Mark Boughton noted that the annual Danbury contribution to the Women's Center is about \$110,000 and that administrative arrangements for contributions would be made directly between the Women's Center and participating municipalities.

It was concluded that if grant funding ends or is not successful that the possibility of town by town funding of a portion of the \$23,000 be reviewed by municipal leaders with their social service department staff.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE

A report on state affordable housing efforts was then made by David Fink of the CT Partnership for Strong Communities, assisted by Dimple Desai of CT OPM. They noted that CT OPM affordable housing planning grants to municipalities, using state funds, had been made thus far to Newtown (\$50,000) and Redding (\$20,000).

They described the high probability that federal HUD funds will soon supplement now depleted state funds for this specific planning program, and that the other eight municipalities in Greater Danbury are strongly encouraged to apply to CT OPM for federally funded affordable housing planning grants.

A report on municipal and regional affordable housing activities was then made by Mark Nolan, Chairman of the Danbury Housing Partnership. There is good cooperation amongst area town staffs on sharing data as to homeless and potentially homeless persons, he said. Mr. Nolan then reviewed various affordable housing activities in Danbury and the Region. A discussion followed.

Natalie Ketcham suggested that the Council give further thought to what affordable housing planning activities it wished to pursue during 2010. She requested that the topic be included on the next agenda and members agreed.

WASH FACILITIES FOR TOWN TRUCKS AND FIRE APPARATUS

Andrea O'Connor inquired as to the availability of fee shared municipal truck washing facilities, as Sherman's public works complex is under a groundwater quality restrain order

from CT DEP and washing there for road salt removal is not allowed. Watertown is currently provided assistance but the driving distance is lengthy.

During the discussion that followed Danbury, Newtown and Ridgefield offered to discuss detailed arrangements with Sherman for this service.

HART BUS ROUTES OVERVIEW

Members were then given an overview of the HART System Route Map by HART Operations Manager Robert Yastremski. The fixed route system now provides one million person-trips per year, he said.

Also that the routing system is carefully designed to be tied to employment locations, shopping centers, institutions, etc. that are most in demand by bus system users.

This was followed by an update by HART Service Development Director Rick Schreiner on the three HART shuttles running into adjacent New York State. Schedules and maps for shuttles from Ridgefield to Katonah, Danbury to Brewster and New Fairfield to Southeast were distributed.

Questions and answers followed, including issues involving insurance liability limitations within state agreements for use of privately owned parking lots. Senator Toni Boucher participated in that discussion.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Members Natalie Ketcham and John Hodge then gave their report, nominating Pat Murphy for Chairman, Rudy Marconi for Vice Chairman and Andrea O'Connor for Secretary-Treasurer.

Then on a motion made by Natalie Ketcham and seconded by Pat Llodra the Nominating Committee's recommendation was unanimously approved and the leadership team thanked for their continued willingness to serve.

OTHER BUSINESS

Members representing the five towns within the revised New Milford probate court district discussed plans for the naming of their district.

Rudy Marconi provided an update on legal activities regarding opposition to FAA's proposed metro NY flight paths that will negatively impact western Connecticut.

Toni Boucher spoke to Route 7 planning activities.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made and seconded the meeting was adjourned at 2:10 PM. A tour of the HART bus maintenance facility followed.