

HVCEO MEETING MINUTES

HELD 1/19/2012 AT BROOKFIELD TOWN HALL

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Bethel.....Absent
Bridgewater.....Alternate Selectman Curtis Read
Brookfield.....Alternate Jerry Murphy
Danbury.....Alternate Chief of Staff Wayne Shepperd
New Fairfield...First Selectman John Hodge, Chairman
New Milford.....Mayor Patricia Murphy
Newtown.....First Selectman Patricia Llodra, Vice Chairman
Redding.....Alternate Selectman Donald Takacs
Ridgefield.....First Selectman Rudy Marconi
Sherman.....First Selectman Clay Cope

OTHERS ATTENDING

Administrator Robert Zarnetske of the New England Region U.S. General Services Administration, John Brantley of CT Commuter Services, Eric Hampton of CT DECD, Danbury Emergency Management Director Paul Estefan, Thomas Vannini of CT DESPP, Rick Schreiner of HART, Carla Iezzi and Edgar Wynkoop of CT DOT, an emergency management consultant to New Haven, 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 John Hodge at 12:30 PM, after which attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The Chairman welcomed new member Clay Cope from Sherman. Public comment was then offered by CT DOT liaison Carla Iezzi who introduced her replacement Edgar Wynkoop.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

Members agreed to consider approval of the four administrative matters on the agenda as a group and by one vote. These were a) minutes for the meetings of 11/17/2011 and 12/01/2011; b) financial statements for 11/2011 and 12/2011; c) amendments to the current Transportation Improvement Program; and d) a Resolution Endorsing the Regional TIP and State STIP for FFY 2012 – 2015 and its accompanying Statement of Conformity with the Clean Air Act for Limiting Particulates and in addition its accompanying Statement of Conformity with the Clean Air Act for Limiting Ozone Pollution.

A discussion of the items followed, during which Dave Hannon reviewed the agenda attachment from CT DOT requesting a TIP amendment for funding for epoxy pavement markings on interstate routes in DOT District 4. He next reviewed the draft regional TIP, a component of the larger draft statewide TIP.

He noted that the Council had placed a legal notice regarding availability for review of these documents, and that a public informational meeting at the HVCEO office was held. Also that a proposed federally funded safety improvement on Route 133 in Bridgewater was deleted from the TIP pending further review by that Town.

After further discussion, and on a motion made by Pat Murphy and a second by Rudy Marconi, the items above were unanimously approved except for an abstention by Don Takacs.

MUNICIPALITIES WORKING WITH THE GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Remarks were then made by Robert Zarnetske, Administrator of the New England Region of the U.S. General Services Administration. He noted his roots in Connecticut, background, and overview of GSA services relevant to municipalities. The key item to be presented was the GSA role in the disposal of excess federal property, he said.

A list is maintained of items that may be transferred to local governments at no cost, with the local government providing the pick-up. The federal goal here is for the resulting savings to remain as a benefit to the tax paying public. There is also low cost purchasing of about 6000 vehicles per year, a wide variety of used computer equipment, fire fighting apparatus, etc.

He noted that both Congress and the State of Connecticut give blanket certification to all GSA purchases as meeting their procurement regulations, the only constraints being those as may be found in some municipal ordinances. Another important service is municipal access to GSA approved low bids by vendor, a check on what the lowest price on a needed item may be, etc.

Mr. Zarnetske's presentation was followed by questions and answers. He agreed to forward his PowerPoint presentation to staff for distribution to the municipalities. He was then thanked for his informative visit.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING

A report on progress with implementing the recent CT Two Storm Panel and other recommendations was then given by Tom Vannini of DEMHS 5. He noted a major finding was that the old DEMHS portion of DESPP should again be free to operate as a single unit within state government, that reverting to independent status to speed response time.

He stated that a key upcoming issue is for DESPP to conduct a complete review of the storm response subsection of each municipal emergency operations plan. Several members objected to that activity as a priority, stating that the faults recently uncovered were not primarily at the local level of government and that the time to be expended on plan reviews would be better utilized if focused on the weak state response.

As for distribution of emergency commodities, Mr. Vannini stated the view that the poor performance in the first storm, Irene, had improved by the second storm, Alfred. Members agreed that there were improvements to the commodities distribution process, but noted it still took the National Guard three days to deliver ready to eat meal kits stockpiled in the state.

As for the issue of future federal funding to municipalities thru the DESPP 5 regional process, we can expect significant cuts this year and next, he said. Also that the federally required emphasis on use of these upcoming funds will be on emergency planning and exercise activity, not on equipment purchase.

There was then a discussion of animal sheltering issues. Mr. Vannini concluded by suggesting that members provide him with a list of their concerns to then be presented to DESPP management. Members agreed to this, each to bring items to the 2/16/2012 meeting for consolidation at that time into a regional list.

CT DOT ENHANCEMENT GRANT PRIORITIES

Dave Hannon addressed this topic, referring to a memo distributed at the meeting. He noted that a maximum of \$896,079 in federal funding is available to the region, that federal funding is for 80% of project costs, thus each project must include a 20% local share.

Also that as CT DOT allows up to three prioritized applications per region to be forwarded to it by 2/1/2012, HVCEO must determine those priorities at its meeting today. He then reviewed a memo distributed at the meeting as to evaluation criteria, staff scoring, and proposed prioritization for the four projects received. These were ranked as 1) Bridgewater Village Pedestrian Streetscape at \$300,000; 2) Newtown Central Pedestrian Loop Streetscape at \$303,000; 3) New Milford Boardman Bridge Pedestrian Streetscape at \$293,000; and 4) Downtown Ridgefield Parking and Streetscape at \$464,000.

A discussion followed. Then on a motion made by Pat Murphy and a second by Pat Llodra, a) the staff was authorized to submit to CT DOT in the order above the three top ranked Enhancement Program priorities and b) the staff was authorized to complete and submit the CT DOT RPO Allocation Priority Listing Form, voted all aye.

HART FEDERAL CMAQ GRANT APPLICATION FOR DANBURY TO BRIDGEPORT COMMUTER BUS SERVICE

Jon Chew provided background on the U.S. DOT "Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)" Grant Program, which is focused on new transportation projects with high air quality improvement benefits. Applications are only accepted from areas where national air quality standards have not been attained, such as the Greater Danbury Area, and then must relate to reductions in ozone, carbon monoxide or particulate emissions, he said.

As only one application has been received, from HART for a new interregional bus route, the Council need not set priorities amongst applications prior to the February 1 submission deadline, he said. Rick Schreiner of HART then reviewed his proposed Danbury to Bridgeport commuter bus service. Service provision would be a joint effort between HART and the Greater Bridgeport Transit District. A wall map identifying the proposal as one of the HVCEO's endorsed bus route expansions within the 2011 Regional Transportation Plan was also referenced.

A discussion followed, including comments on similarities with Danbury to Norwalk service. Then on a motion made by Rudy Marconi and a second by Pat Murphy, the HART and GBTD CMAQ grant application was unanimously approved as the HVCEO's sole and top priority submission.

SCHEDULES FOR COMPLETING CT DOT DANBURY BRANCH RAIL EIS AND I-84 EIS

Jon Chew then reviewed a completion schedule recently received from CT DOT as to the Danbury Branch Rail Passenger Study EIS. He noted that the study consultant's definition of service options is expected to be completed by 1/31.

After that CT DOT and other state and federal agencies will review the draft EIS. The opening of the final rail passenger plan to HVCEO, municipalities and the public for a 45 day review period then begins on 5/14. Next, in early June a Study Advisory Committee Meeting will be held, at which or before, CT DOT will make known its preferred improvement option.

A public hearing will also be held. Then, after additional administrative steps, the process will be declared closed in September of 2012.

Concerning the overdue I-84 EIS, there was agreement that the Council should request of CT DOT a completion schedule. DOT Commissioner Redeker is to be requested to forward a timeline and expected completion date for the Interstate 84 EIS, which is the area's dominant infrastructure challenge.

It was agreed that the delay in completion of the EIS is having the effect of preventing the start of area advocacy for the top corridor wide priority project. Chairman Hodge was then authorized to sign a letter transmitting the request, that motion made by Rudy Marconi, seconded by Wayne Shepperd, voted all aye.

IDEAS FOR APPLICATIONS FOR STATE GRANTS REGIONALIZING SERVICES OR STUDIES THEREOF

Jon Chew reported on this topic, which had been continued each month since the 10/20 meeting. A summary of the CT OPM web page explanation of the program was attached to the agenda. He then noted conversations with HRRR staff and the Public Health Emergency Planning Committee (area health directors) regarding their ideas for applications.

It would be useful to undertake feasibility studies in topical areas where such stable and on-going regional groups as these are operating, he said. The discussion continued, during which Pat Llodra expressed interest in exploring the idea of Newtown and several neighboring towns evaluating the potential of regionalizing municipal dog pound operations.

PROPOSED CROSS ACCEPTANCE PROCESS FOR STATE, REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANS

Jon Chew reviewed a request from CT OPM for HVCEO to take a leading role in the new "cross-acceptance" of plans process. By way of background, he explained that at present, differences between town and state plans are presented as municipal comments at state plan hearings. After those hearings OPM staff makes a comment on each local issue submitted.

It is now being proposed by OPM to give this process better organization and value to all government levels by having reports written as to state and local plan differences, one for each municipality.

OPM proposes that much of the work be completed by the staff at each regional planning organization. As OPM requested on 1/9 to be informed by 1/13 as to which regions would participate, Jon Chew provided a response by that date. He was requesting at this meeting a review of his response.

He had responded to OPM that Council staff does not have a block of time available for undertaking the work. That land use, housing, trail and some other traditional HVCEO planning elements were eliminated after a recent cut in OPM funding, time sheet hours expended now justified by remaining transportation, emergency management and economic development programs.

He then read an excerpt from his comment to OPM which was "we could dip into our reserve fund to engage a planning consultant via contract, say \$2,000 per town for ten towns and a planning commission meeting included, etc. But that does not seem likely to pass the board when this request is an expansion of a state process when by contrast local activities in the area are uniformly flat."

Also that "on the brighter side the 2009 HVCEO Regional Plan largely translated local plan maps into state plan map categories. Still fresh information, the availability of this should be a help with the process, etc." There was considerable discussion by the members of the OPM request. The consensus was that plan coordination is important to the municipalities.

After further discussion it was agreed that the requested block of staff time could not be made available, but that as proposed by staff we should assist OPM in this endeavor as much as possible, outside of the report writing role. These conclusions were then endorsed via a motion made by Curtis Read, seconded by Pat Murphy, all aye with an abstention by Rudy Marconi.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Chairman Hodge noted that as is done each November, a nominating committee of three with chair was appointed to make a recommendation as to officers for the upcoming calendar year. Pat Murphy then gave the Nominating Committee report, proposing a continuation of the present slate of officers; John Hodge for Chair, Pat Llodra for Vice Chair, and Matt Knickerbocker for Secretary-Treasurer.

Then on a motion made by Pat Murphy and seconded by Rudy Marconi, the recommended slate was unanimously approved as presented. That action was followed by applause for the good work of John Hodge as chair.

OTHER BUSINESS / ADJOURNMENT

Staff reported that as requested in October, a follow up meeting with Dr. Broderick and other Western CT Health Network leaders had been set, to be on 3/15/2012 at the Western CT Health Network Biomedical Research Institute, 131 West Street, in Danbury.

There being no further business, on a motion duly made and seconded the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 P.M.