

MINUTES

Regional Planning Commission of the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley

COGCNV Conference Room
60 North Main Street – 3rd Floor
(Wachovia Bank Building – North Lobby)
Waterbury, CT

7:00 P.M. Tuesday, September 13, 2005

RPC Members: Richard Minick, Beacon Falls; Martin Cobern, Cheshire; Harmon Andrews, Southbury; Robert Flanagan, Thomaston; James Sequin, Waterbury; Mary Barton, Watertown; Linda Fercodini, Wolcott; Kay Campbell and Janet Bunch, Woodbury. **Other Attendees:** Ed Jurzynski, Beacon Falls, Samantha Frederick, Thomaston Express. **Staff:** Peter Dorpalen, Executive Director; Virginia Mason, Assistant Director; Michael Flood, Regional Planner; Samuel Gold, Regional Planner.

1. Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call, Introductions, Public Comment

Bob Flanagan called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM. Those present introduced themselves, and the pledge of allegiance was recited. There were no public comments.

2. Administrative Items

a. *Approval of May 3, 2005, Minutes* — On a motion by Rich Minick, seconded by Harmon Andrews, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the May 3, 2005 meeting.

b. *Correspondence* — Peter Dorpalen summarized recent correspondence:

June 30, 2005 Letter from Jack Fischer, a Southbury RPC representative, notifying COG and the RPC that he is resigning from the RPC because he is relocating.

September 1, 2005 Letter from Southbury EDC to COGCNV requesting support for EDC effort “to keep the Southbury Travel and Tourist Information Center alive”.

September 2, 2005 Letter to chief elected officials, water companies, and state officials inviting them to a September 21, 2005, public drinking water supply regional forum.

3. Nominating Committee Report and Election of Officers

Peter Dorpalen reported that the Nominating Committee recommends Bob Flanagan for Chairman, Jim Sequin for Vice Chairman, and Linda Fercodini for Secretary. All said they would be willing to serve as officers. On a motion by Harmon Andrews, seconded by Bob Flanagan, it was unanimously

VOTED: To elect Bob Flanagan as Chairman, Jim Sequin as Vice Chairman, and Linda Fercodini as Secretary for the Regional Planning Commission.

4. Connecticut’s Housing Situation — Housing Costs and Affordable Housing

David Fink, Policy Director of Partnership for Strong Communities gave a presentation on Connecticut’s affordable housing situation. The Partnership for Strong Communities is a non-profit funded through the Melville Charitable Trust and encourages an increase in affordable housing throughout the state. Fink explained that from 2000 to 2005, housing prices have increased by 50%, outpacing wage increases of just 12%.

There is a housing shortage in Connecticut, and the state ranked 47th in house construction per capita according to a recent study. Fink explained that a shortage of affordable housing is an economic

growth issue, since low cost labor will be forced to move out of state. Housing prices have skyrocketed particularly in areas that have traditionally been affordable, including Southeastern Connecticut, the Naugatuck Valley, South Central Connecticut and the western suburbs of Hartford.

Over the past five years Connecticut's housing wage has increased from \$14/hour to \$18/hour, according to the Connecticut Business & Industry Association. The median salaries for 324 of 688 occupations in the state are now below the housing wage of \$18/hour.

Fink distributed a Municipal Officials Questionnaire which he asked to be completed and returned to his office. The questionnaire requests information about the availability of affordable housing in your municipality.

5. **Transportation Planning**

- a. *Bus stop analysis* — Sam Gold reported that he has worked with North East Transportation to locate the actual locations where bus operators stop to pick up passengers. Sam rode the bus routes with NET staff and used GPS equipment to identify the exact coordinates of the actual bus stop locations. He has reviewed the location data and has worked with NET to develop recommendations for route modifications to make the bus system more efficient. At a meeting on September 22, 2005, Sam will present his findings and recommendations to the city of Waterbury, and to NET. A public meeting will be planned following this meeting.
- b. *Congested intersection analysis* — Mike Flood reported that he has completed the Central Naugatuck Valley Region Intersection Analysis: 2004. Mike used Highway Capacity Manual software to determine the optimal setting for the traffic lights at signalized intersections. He also spoke with traffic engineers and public works directors to get their feedback on specific recommendations. The study was reviewed by municipal public works officials and will be forwarded to ConnDOT following COG approval.
- c. *STP-Urban highway project priorities update* — Mike Flood reported that he has completed a review of the region's Urban Surface Transportation Program. The region is allocated approximately four million dollars annually for local road improvements within the Waterbury, Hartford, Bridgeport-Stamford, and New Haven urbanized areas. Mike collected and updated data on each previously submitted STP-U project, developed a ranking system, and prioritized projects. The project ranking and the criteria used for the ranking were approved at the last COG meeting. Mike met with engineers at ConnDOT to discuss the new ranking and to work to schedule high priority projects.
- d. *Naugatuck River Greenway* — Sam Gold reported that he has been working with Waterbury to conduct an environmental review of the Naugatuck River Greenway. The city has requested an Environmental Review Team from King's Mark.

6. **Pre-Disaster Mitigation Planning**

Virginia Mason reported that public officials have reviewed the draft Pre-Disaster Mitigation plans for Oxford, Watertown, and Woodbury. The next step will be for the public to review the revised draft plans. A public meeting has been scheduled for October 3rd in Oxford. Public meetings in the other municipalities will be scheduled soon. Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro's office has stated that the funding is available for Cheshire, Prospect, Waterbury, and Wolcott. COGCNV has not yet received written confirmation.

7. **Points of Interest/Local Activities**

Beacon Falls:

- A new firm is moving into the industrial park and will be hiring approximately 80 new employees.
- The commuter parking lot has been relocated adjacent to the rail station. ConnDOT is funding the improvements.
- A feasibility study of the Route 67 Connector, also called the Beacon Falls Connector will cost \$75,000.

Cheshire:

- Sewage plant nearing capacity, a study may be needed to examine options.

- Commercial development continuing; however, Lowe's is no longer interested in locating in Cheshire; Whole Foods Distribution Center is under construction.
- Post Office will be moved north on Route 10.
- The recreational trail will be extended.
- Age-restricted development has been approved.

Southbury:

- The new Stop & Shop will be open in November.
- The new 32,000 square foot library will be opening soon.
- Street light and sidewalk improvements have been completed.
- An office building near exit 16 has been proposed.

Thomaston:

- 22 units of senior housing will open in January.
- A developer is interested in building condos on South Main Street.
- Fines for wetlands setback violations are being considered.

Waterbury:

- A public hearing for the city's Plan of Conservation & Development will be held September 22nd.
- The city has considered lowering the zoning density to 12,000 square foot lot sizes.

Watertown:

- A 350 unit development has been proposed along with several single family subdivisions.
- Watertown is working to find a suitable location for a new Post Office.

Wolcott:

- A developer is interested in building a mini-industrial park in Wolcott. The development would include storage facilities for heavy equipment. Road access would be required to the proposed development which may be very costly.
- Wolcott's first age restricted development has been approved.

Woodbury:

- A six unit commercial office park is being proposed at the intersection of Route 6 and 64.

8. Other

- Municipal Social Service Assistance Grant* — Peter Dorpalen reported that seven towns have signed on to the municipal social service assistance project. COGCNV will administer the grant received from the Leever Foundation.
- Planning and Zoning Seminar* — Virginia Mason reported that there will be an Environmental Seminar on September 26th at 7PM at the Waterbury Chamber of Commerce. Mike Zizka will present "What's Legally Required".
- Water Forum* — Virginia Mason reported that a Water Forum meeting will be held in Middlebury on September 21st at 10AM at the request of the Connecticut Department of Public Health.

9. Adjournment

At 8:57 PM, on a motion by Mary Barton, seconded by Martin Cobern, it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by
Michael Flood, Regional Planner

for

James Sequin, RPC Secretary

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