

MINUTES

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

COGCNV Conference Room
60 North Main Street – 3rd Floor
Waterbury, CT
7:00 P.M. Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Attendance: Richard Minnick, Beacon Falls; Maria Hill, Bethlehem; Martin Cobern, Cheshire; Thomas Gormley, Middlebury; Joseph McEvoy, Naugatuck; Harold Cosgrove and Herman Schuler, Oxford; Harmon Andrews, Southbury; Robert Flanagan, Thomaston; Kay Campbell, Woodbury. **Guests:** Cheryl Flanagan, Thomaston **Staff:** Peter Dorpalen, Executive Director; Sam Gold, Senior Planner; Joseph Perrelli, Regional Planner

1. Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call, Introductions

Chairman Robert Flanagan called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Those present introduced themselves and recited the pledge of allegiance.

2. Administrative Items

a. *Approval of March 6, 2007, Minutes*

With the reference to Rte. 63 and Rte. 4 in Middlebury corrected to read to Rte. 63 and Rte. 64, Martin Cobern made a motion, seconded by Thomas Gormley, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the March 6, 2007 meeting as corrected.

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

April 25, 2007 Letter to Joe Perrelli confirming his hiring as a regional planner, starting on April 25, 2007.

3. Transportation Planning

a. *Regional Transportation Plan Update* — Dorpalen reported that the 30-day public review period had been completed, following the State of CT's air quality modelling of the draft plan recommendations. Projects that affect air quality receive the greatest attention, including construction projects on I-84. Public comments were included in the meeting packet. Peter Dorpalen and Sam Gold presented an overview of the LRTP as a Powerpoint presentation. The draft can be found on the COGCNV website www.cogcnv.org/draftLRTP.html

There were questions and discussion during the presentation concerning ADA paratransit service, the potential for introducing routine bus service on Sundays, and the effect of rising gas prices on ridership and commuter lot usage. Joseph McEvoy expressed concern over increased congestion on the southern portion of Rte. 8 given the growing interest in housing in the area. Improvements to the Waterbury Metro-North rail service could help to alleviate the expected increase in congestion.

On a motion by Thomas Gormley, seconded by Richard Minnick, it was unanimously

VOTED: To refer the Long Range Transportation Plan to the Council of Governments for approval.

b. *Naugatuck River Greenway Signs and Brochure* — Sam Gold reported that the Naugatuck River Greenway Signs and Brochures Project are complete. The signs were installed last week. Duplicate panels were created for the signs to allow for replacement in case of vandalism.

c. *Safe Routes to School* — Sam Gold reported on the project, which is funded through the Federal

Transportation Act. The initiative will be used to create safe paths to encourage schoolchildren to walk or ride their bikes to school. The State has proposed to distribute \$12,000 from these funds to any planning region that would like to develop a plan for implementing related infrastructure improvements and educational programs. Solicitations have been sent to the region's superintendents and chief officials, and COGCNV has expressed an interest to ConnDOT based on the positive response from Thomaston officials.

- d. *Locally Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan - 211 Transportation Hotline, New minibus service* — Sam Gold stated that the LOCHSTP program provides funding to encourage coordination among regional transportation services for the disabled, seniors, and job access for low-income individuals. COGCNV has been working with officials from the Litchfield Hills planning region, the Northwest COG, and the Housatonic Valley Regional Transit Authority to develop a plan for coordinating these services. Funding from the New Freedoms Initiative (part of LOCHSTP) can be used to create transportation options for disabled persons. Proposed projects under the New Freedoms Initiative include:
- i. Incorporating human service transportation information into the United Way's 211 Infoline database.
 - ii. Providing funding for the minibus service in the Town of Southbury to include new evening and weekend hours.
 - iii. Providing funding for evening transportation for disabled riders within the Greater Waterbury Transit District.

4. **Comprehensive Planning**

- a. *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development* — Peter Dorpalen reported that the draft of the plan is almost fully written and that the staff is continuing to work on the report's layout. The deadline for completion of the plan is December 2007.
- b. *New Legislative Initiatives* — One item to point out is the HomeConnecticut initiative. The campaign seeks to address the high cost of housing in the state, which makes it increasingly difficult for CT to compete with other states in maintaining a population of young professionals.

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

Beacon Falls — Rich Minnick reported that:

- The Town's budget is currently the main focus.
- A new firm, Magna Steel, has opened at a new location in the industrial park. Two other buildings are under construction to be occupied shortly.
- Chatfield Farms, Phase I, has sold several houses. The developers are back before the Wetlands and Planning and Zoning Commissions looking to expand the size of the houses – some into wetlands setback areas.
- Chatfield Farms, Phase II, with 300 age-restricted units, is still held up in litigation.
- Pines Bridge on Rte. 42 worked as designed during the most recent storm.

Bethlehem — Maria Hill reported that:

- Not much has come before the Planning & Zoning Commission; just one request for a farm subdivision. The Town continues its efforts to maintain open space when these requests are made.

Cheshire — Martin Cobern reported that:

- The budget was approved unanimously by the Town Council.
- A proposed Lifestyle Center in the Rte. 10/I-691 Interchange Zone has been gaining attention. The Town Council voted to approve the plan of development change. There have already been several hours of debate on the proposed development, and all parties have maintained civility. The Planning & Zoning hearings will be closed on Monday night.

- The State has given the Town funding to develop the former Boulder Knoll dairy farm (near the Hamden border) into a farm museum or model farm for educational purposes.
- The Town Council approved accepting a grant to investigate improvements to West Main Street (Rte 70). Improvements would likely involve streetscape projects and incorporate the nearby Farmington Canal Trail. It is still in the early stages.

Middlebury — Thomas Gormley reported that:

- The golf community on Rte. 188 is looking great and should be an asset for the town.
- New commercial development on Rte 63. The developer originally intended to put a large drug store on the property. However, because of a regulated area in close proximity, the Conservation Commission was able to convince them to choose a more ideal use for the property, so a bank will be built on the site instead.
- Additional water connections are being made in town.

Naugatuck — Joe McEvoy reported that:

- Elections and referendum on Renaissance Place is next Monday.

Oxford — Harold Cosgrove reported that:

- Foreclosures in Bridgeport have risen from 6% to 12%.
- The high school will be opening in 2007.
- Over 300 multifamily homes in Waterbury are currently on the market.
- Plans to build manufactured homes by the airport will be coming before the Planning & Zoning Commission.
- The town's industrial park should be completed by July 30th.

Oxford — Herman Schuler reported that:

- Industrial properties are doing well. Flex spaces are moving nicely with small companies coming in to occupy these properties. Flex space is available at Willenbrock Industrial Park (54,000 s.f.), Morse Industrial Park (30,000 s.f.), and Hurley Industrial Park (28,000 s.f.).
- Larger spaces are not moving as well.
- The Town's Vice-Chair of the Economic Development Commission has been working on a small business incubator program. Perhaps we could consider developing a regional entrepreneur center to branch out elsewhere. Currently, there are models in cities like New Britain and Springfield. The program could be used to assist businesses in dealing with demand response and managing their electrical costs.

Southbury — Harmon Andrews reported that:

- Woodbury Telephone Co. closed down yesterday after 120 years. All of its services are now under AT&T.

Thomaston — Robert Flanagan reported that:

- It is town budget season, and revaluation has been completed. The mill rate has gone down from 39 mills to 26. There is only a small increase in the budget.
- A Smart Growth seminar will be taking place on May 15th, sponsored by the Thousand Friends group. The event starts at 7 p.m. and will be held at the University of Connecticut-Waterbury campus.

Woodbury — Kay Campbell reported that:

- Saturday, May 5th at 10 a.m. *Saving Your Family Land* seminar at the Town Annex to learn about land conservation strategies.

6. Other

Sam Gold reported that the CT Resources Recovery Authority will be conducting a residential electronics recycling event on Saturday, June 23rd from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Waste Treatment Facility, 210 Municipal Rd. in Waterbury. Materials will be accepted at no charge.

7. **Adjournment** — At 8:29 p.m., on a motion by Martin Cobern, seconded by Harmon Andrews, it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by
Joseph Perrelli
Regional Planner

for

Linda Fercodini
RPC Secretary