



Bethany - Branford - East Haven - Guilford - Hamden - Madison - Meriden - Milford
New Haven - North Branford - North Haven - Orange - Wallingford - West Haven - Woodbridge

SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Judy Gott, Executive Director

The June 11 Special Session Public Act No. 08-3 requires the posting of minutes on websites within seven days of a scheduled meeting. Please note these are Draft Minutes that have not been approved and, therefore, are subject to change at the next regular meeting.

TO: **SCRCOG Board**
FROM: **First Selectman Anthony DaRos, SCRCOG Secretary**
DATE: **March 1, 2010**
SUBJECT: ***DRAFT* SCRCOG Minutes of February 24, 2010**

Present:

Bethany First Selectwoman Derrylyn Gorski
East Haven Paul Hongo, Jr. Deputy Director of Town Affairs / Proxy for Mayor Capone Almon
Guilford First Selectman Joseph S. Mazza
Hamden Mayor Scott Jackson
Madison First Selectman Fillmore McPherson
New Haven Mayor John DeStefano, Jr.
North Branford Mayor Anthony Candelora
North Haven First Selectman Michael Freda
Orange First Selectman James Zeoli - *Chairman*
Wallingford Mayor William Dickinson, Jr.
West Haven James Burns, Chief of Staff / attending in behalf of Mayor John Picard
Woodbridge Joseph Hellauer, Administrative Officer / Proxy for First Selectman Sheehy
SCRCOG Staff Carl J. Amento – *Executive Director*
Albert Ruggiero, Stephen Dudley, Mona Beavis, James Rode, and Eugene Livshits

Guest Presenters:

Jeffrey Serena, Manager of Field Operations, and *Ken Joyner*, Regional Technician, both from the local New Haven Census Office; *J. Brendan Sharkey*, State Representative-88th Assembly District and Chairman of the MORE Commission; *Louis Mangini*, Legislative Aide for Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro; *William Villano*, Executive Director of Workforce Alliance; *Roy Piper*, DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator, and *Ginny Kozlowski*, Executive Director of the Regional Growth Partnership.

Other Guests:

Carlene Kulisch, South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority; *Stephen P. Livingston*, Field Coordinator from the Connecticut Department of Transportation and Liaison to SCRCOG; *Thomas Cariglio*, UI Company; *Jean T. Stimolo*, Executive Director of Rideworks; *Martin Mador*, Quinnipiac River Watershed Association and Sierra Club – CT Chapter; and *Nan Birdwhistell, Esq.*, Murtha Cullina, LLP

At 10:09 A.M. SCRCOG Chairman, James Zeoli, called the February 24, 2010 board meeting of the South Central Regional Council of Governments to order. Self introductions of officials and guests followed.

ITEM 1 – United States 2010 Census Presentation

Mr. Jeffrey Serena, Manager of Field Operations for the local New Haven Census Office, stated that his area encompasses seventeen towns in Connecticut, i.e. the shoreline towns from Stratford to Madison, and towns further north, Seymour, Bethany, Woodbridge, Hamden, North Haven and North Branford. Over the next few weeks, their team is planning to hire, train and deploy over a thousand temporary census workers to enumerate approximately two hundred thousand people. These include the homeless and people living in group settings, i.e. colleges, dormitories, nursing facilities, and those who either have not received census questionnaires by mail or have not returned them.

In three weeks, the U. S. Census Bureau will send one hundred thirty million questionnaires to citizens, non-citizens, and military personnel overseas. There are only ten non-controversial questions in this census form. It is the shortest form ever generated by the U. S. Census Bureau. It requests the address, telephone number, names, ages, and ethnic backgrounds of the people residing at each household.

Mr. Serena stated that all information collected is completely confidential and would not be shared with anyone, including the FBI. These census questionnaires will be held seventy-two years before their release into the national archives. Mr. Serena stated that the mission of the U. S. Census Bureau is to count everyone accurately at once. As mandated by the United States Constitution, a census is taken to allow the federal government to apportion congressional seats among the states and to provide a statistical snapshot of the American people. The data collected is used in planning the distribution of over \$400 billion in federal funds to the states and towns. This is money used for building and maintaining roads, hospitals, and schools. It also assists with planning community services. Every town in Connecticut will benefit from a complete count of its population.

Mr. Serena requested the officials present to act as advocates for the U. S. Census Bureau and to reiterate the urgency of everyone's cooperation with their endeavor. In addition, he asked that all municipal departments cooperate with the census workers. He desired to know whether any municipality had space available for the four-day census training session in April. Chairman Zeoli offered areas in the Town of Orange.

First Selectman Freda inquired about the final submission date of the census questionnaire. Mr. Ken Joyner reported that most people would receive their census questionnaires by March 15 to 17. Completed questionnaires would be accepted through late April, with reminders planned to be sent also. Starting on May 1, enumerators will be deployed to seek forms that were not returned.

ITEM 2 – Presentation on Regionalism by State Representative J. Brendan Sharkey

State Representative, J. Brendan Sharkey, Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee, commented on the concept of *Smart Growth* and the coordination of state and local government services. Several *Smart Growth* bills were passed at the last legislative session and the MORE Commission plans to build on that success.

Representative Sharkey was recently appointed Chairman of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE). The MORE Commission is comprised of forty-five Democratic members of the House of Representatives and several municipal, educational, and business representatives, including representatives from regional organizations, unions, and non-profits. Its function is to bring about real property tax reform by regionalizing certain activities that could save municipalities money and improve economic competitiveness in Connecticut.

Representative Sharkey reported that Connecticut currently faces structural deficits in an annual range from \$3 to \$4 billion. As a result of the current economic climate, Connecticut lost approximately twenty-five percent of its revenue in sales, income and capital gain taxes. Unlike other recessionary cycles, there are no projections for revenues coming back through fiscal years 2012 and 2013. The legislature has been able to moderate the impact to towns and cities from the dramatic funding decreases in municipal aide, ECS, etc. via cuts in funding at the state level, tapping the rainy-day fund, utilizing the federal stimulus dollars, and borrowing. We cannot afford the size and level of our current state government. Come fiscal years 2012 and 2013, the stimulus money will no longer exist, borrowing will not be an option, and the rainy-day funds will be tapped out.

Representative Sharkey emphasized that now is the time to create efficiencies through regional initiatives. Costs of unfunded mandates imposed on municipalities have to be reviewed to relieve their burden. The legislature is trying to find best practices and examples on how those savings can be realized.

Since its inception in late January, the MORE Commission has been divided into six subcommittees. Their plan is to roll out proposals in two phases. By March 1, each subcommittee will present specific recommendations to be implemented during this legislative year. Some "place keeper" bills are on hold, with others ready to be rolled into the legislative process by next week. In phase two, these subcommittees will meet throughout the calendar year and embark on the tougher issues in preparation of a legislative package for the FY 2012 legislative session. Representative Sharkey stated that one subcommittee focuses almost exclusively on unfunded state mandates. Preparation of a package of short and long-term ideas regarding mandate relief from CCM and COST is underway. Also under consideration are special education mandates, prevailing wage laws, collective bargaining (regionally versus town-by-town), streamlining healthcare, and several other proposals for reduction in town expenditures.

Representative Sharkey added that revenue in the form of a state-wide hotel and lodging tax for regional re-distribution might be implemented. Emphasis will be placed on regional entities such as Council of Governments and Regional Planning Organizations to implement the ideas generated as well as the development of a revenue stream to compensate these and other entities.

Knowing that municipal contractual obligations are staggered, First Selectman Freda asked whether there would be an opportunity for regional negotiation to aggregate health care carriers. Representative Sharkey responded that a health care pooling bill was passed by the CT General Assembly last year, but had been vetoed by the governor. Representative Sharkey stated that state legislative and statutory prohibitions would first have to be cleared before municipalities could join the state's health care pool. Coordination issues, in terms of levels of benefits and services, would have to be resolved too.

First Selectman Freda desired to know whether there would be a day when Boards of Education could be folded underneath Mayors and First Selectmen as part of consolidation. Representative Sharkey concurred with his comment and added that the statutory framework should be revised so Boards of Education could be elected directly by the public and allowed to levy their own tax bills.

Concerns relating to municipal budgets and the increased costs for education and health insurance were shared by several SCRCOG members. Representative Sharkey also reported that a \$260 million grant is distributed to every school board in the state for bus contracting. There could be at least a twenty percent savings in costs if contracts were regionalized. Grants could be formulated in such a way to promote this.

In conjunction with the Regional Entities Subcommittee, Executive Director Amento posed three questions. (1) Although there are fifteen regional planning agencies, only seven are councils of governments. How do you see us moving toward having COGs since there are five regional planning

associations having only planning and zoning members and no chief elected officials? (2) COGs are having problems with health insurance premiums. Do you see us having an opportunity to pool with municipalities or the state? (3) The state legislature took \$100,000 away from our region for our regional land use planner who is obliged by state mandates to work on the *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development* as well as planning and zoning referrals that may have an inter-municipal impact. Do you see any restoration of funding for our regional planning efforts?

Representative Sharkey responded that part of the smart growth initiative is to encourage very small COGS and RPOs to combine and create federal economic development districts. As an example, *One Coast* is a proposal combining SWRPA and the Greater Bridgeport RPA to form an economic development region eligible for federal economic development funding was discussed. In addition, a bill was implemented last year requiring chief elected officials to become members of Regional Planning Agencies. Representative Sharkey indicated he would propose that COG employees be allowed to join the state health insurance pool.

In response to question three, Representative Sharkey stated that it was not the legislature that had cut funding for regional planning, but a proposal from the governor. The legislature is fighting to sustain funding. He reiterated that funds acquired through the proposed hotel and lodging taxes could be dedicated to funding regional planning. In conclusion, he warned that the state budget crisis may lead to cuts in municipal aid in the coming years, and that municipalities working through COGs, like ours, should strive to create efficiencies and reduce costs through regionalism.

ITEM 3 – Legislative Reports

Louis Mangini, Legislative Aide to Congresswoman DeLauro, announced that last December the House had passed a jobs bill of close to \$150 billion that included tax breaks, state aide, money for transportation, etc. The Senate passed a \$15 billion jobs bill, about a week ago, that only included tax breaks.

Mr. Mangini briefed the officials on the state's TIGER grants. The \$40 million grant for the high-speed rail was received. He noted that Congresswoman DeLauro met with the Secretary of the U. S. Department of Transportation and work would be proceeding with those who had submitted projects. Acquisition of additional funds in the second round is anticipated—probably this fall. The deadline for FY 2011 earmark appropriations was last Friday. Because Washington, D. C. was closed for about a week, some may still be worked in. The Senate's deadline is this Friday.

Executive Director Amento pointed out that House and Senate bills of municipal importance are being tracked. A list of them was prepared and distributed along with a page noting the submission deadlines of each legislative committee. As other relevant bills are introduced, they will be added to this formatted form. In addition, a contact list of this region's State Senators and Representatives was also dispensed. Executive Director Amento stated that any particular bill an official needed full text of would be provided upon their request.

ITEM 4 –January 27, 2010 SCRCOG Minutes offering

Noting no additions or corrections, Mayor DeStefano offered a motion, seconded by First Selectman Mazza, to adopt the *SCRCOG Minutes of January 27, 2010* as presented. The motion passed by majority vote with abstentions by First Selectwoman Gorski and proxy Joseph Hellauer. Both were not in attendance at the January SCRCOG Meeting.

ITEM 5 - Treasurer's Report for the Month Ending January 31, 2010

A motion to adopt the *Treasurer's Report* for the month ending January 31, 2010 was offered by First Selectman McPherson and seconded by First Selectwoman Gorski. Without further discussion, the motion was unanimously passed.

ITEM 6 – Transportation Committee Report

- a. **2010-2013 TIP Amendment Three** (Resolution is located on pages 13 and 14 in agenda packet.) Chairman of the Transportation Committee, Mayor Dickinson, informed the officials that the Transportation Committee had met and recommends approval of *FY 2010 - FY 2013 TIP Amendment Three*.

First Selectman Freeda offered a motion, seconded by First Selectwoman Gorski, to adopt *FY 2010- FY 2013 TIP Amendment Three*. Upon unanimous vote, the motion was carried.

- a. **Response to Nov. 16, 2009 Letter re: 511 Traveler Information System**
Mayor Dickinson referenced the letter on pages 16 and 17 in the agenda packet, drafted by staff, concerning the *511 Traveler Information System* worth millions of dollars that the Transportation Committee does not approve and that the state is still pursuing.

A motion to approve the sending of this letter, as drafted, to the Division Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration was offered by First Selectman McPherson and seconded by Mayor Candelora. With no further discussion, the motion passed by unanimous vote.

ITEM 7 – Workforce Alliance Report

Mayor DeStefano stated that a letter was sent earlier in the month to all the CEOs indicating revisions to the Regional Workforce Development Board's plan. The letter solicits suggestions from them. Another letter will be sent next week asking for nominations to the Regional Workforce Development Board. There are categories. Anyone having questions was asked to contact Mayor DeStefano.

ITEM 8 – Appointment of a SCRCOG CEO Alternate to Workforce Alliance Executive Committee

Mayor DeStefano stated that next month they will discuss the appointment of an Alternate to the CEO Executive Committee.

ITEM 9 – Adoption of Affirmative Action Policy Resolution

Chairman Zeoli referenced the *Affirmative Action Program and Policy Statement Resolution* located on page 19 in the agenda packet.

Mayor Dickinson entered a motion to re-appoint Albert Ruggiero, of SCRCOG staff, as the Equal Opportunity Enforcement Officer, per the *Affirmative Action Program and Policy Statement for calendar year 2010*. Proxy Hellauer seconded and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

ITEM 10 – Annual SCRCOG Self-Certification (Resolution located on page 23 in the agenda packet.)

Executive Director Amento explained that SCRCOG Self-Certification is done annually in compliance with all the different federal laws. Actually, the federal laws were updated this year.

Federal regulations require that metropolitan planning organizations annually certify to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration that the planning process is addressing major issues facing the area and is being conducted in accordance with all applicable requirements of Metropolitan Planning, Air Quality, Civil Rights, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Section 1003(b) of ISTEA, and the *American with Disabilities Act*.

A motion was offered by First Selectwoman Gorski affirming that the South Central Regional Council of Governments' transportation planning process is being conducted in compliance with federal laws. The motion, seconded by First Selectman Mazza, passed by unanimous vote.

ITEM 11 (a) – DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator

Mr. Roy Piper, DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator, stated that last month he reported Region 2's REPT funding for this round was approximately \$1 million. The official amount is \$1,001,250. This is the figure the Steering Committee is working with to develop a spending plan to be presented to the CEOs at the next REPT meeting scheduled for May 3.

On February 7, there was an explosion at the power plant in Middletown, CT and six lives were lost. The explosion was located in DEMHS Region 3 with close proximity to the northern part of Region 2. Mr. Piper expressed his gratitude and congratulated all the towns within Region 2 who offered their assistance. He elaborated that a number of those towns had organized a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). In the aftermath of the explosion and to relieve the Community Emergency Response Teams of Region 3, New Haven, Orange, Hamden, Milford, and Valley Shore CERTs responded and provided CERT members to the security checkpoint over the last couple of weeks at the Middletown power plant. Mr. Piper stated that the collaboration of the emergency response efforts between Region 2 and Region 3 was phenomenal.

Mr. Piper reported that as part of the DEMHS grant program, Region 2 is required to conduct a regional exercise. It will be an exercise incorporating all aspects of setting up a large-scale shelter to care for animals and people with disabilities. A workshop on this, with management directors of Region 2, is set for tomorrow (Feb. 25). In April, there will be a table-top element to this particular exercise and followed with an actual exercise in late July at the Career High School in New Haven.

The federal government released a *Regional Catastrophic Grant Program* to develop continuity of operation plans. The region, basically the New York Metropolitan Region, goes from New Jersey, part of Pennsylvania, New York City and some surrounding counties, and three Connecticut counties, i.e. Fairfield, New Haven and Litchfield. Mr. Piper stated he had sent an e-mail addressing this operation to all the chief elected officials and emergency management directors. An announcement of a two-day workshop on March 23 and 24 at the New Haven Fire Training Academy was made. Mr. Piper urged that one to three representatives from each municipality in Region 2 attend.

Chairman Zeoli requested a motion to add an item to the agenda.

A motion was offered by Proxy Hellauer, seconded by Mayor Candelora, to add reports from RGP's Executive Director, Ginny Kozlowski and SCRCOG's Executive Director, Carl Amento. Upon unanimous vote, the motion passed.

ITEM 11 (b) – Reports by Executive Directors of RGP and SCRCOG

Executive Director, Ginny Kozlowski, announced that an RGP report update of the last four weeks was in the agenda packet. She stated that review of the application to the EDA for recognition as a Regional Economic Development District is underway. Their attorney is reviewing it and plans to submit a new application for federal recognition. Work is being conducted through Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro's office. Ms. Kozlowski stated that there were a lot of irons in the fire and RGP is moving forward on two Brownfield projects.

Executive Director Amento reported that he has met with about twenty organizations over the past weeks since being with SCRCOG. Presentations to the West Haven Chamber of Commerce and graduate students from the University of New Haven were made. He stated further that he has been attending the *Regional Entities Sub Committee* and *Town Functions Sub Committee* meetings of the MORE Commission. Nan Birdwhistell is Co-Chair of the *Town Functions Sub Committee*.

Other of his undertakings include: work on the budget, which will be presented next month; the logistics of RGP's move to SCRCOG's North Haven office; pursuit of regionalism initiatives; the follow up and update of a 2004 Housing Report prepared by SCRCOG as another regional initiative with potential federal funds to promote workforce housing in the region.

Executive Director Amento stated he is working with Executive Director Linda Krauss in trying to put together a combined meeting between the Connecticut River Valley COG and SCRCOG in April. The reason is that the Regional Workforce Alliance, which is composed of both those regions, needs to meet at least twice a year.

ITEM 12 – Regional Cooperation / Other Business

An update on one project funded through SCRCOG, Whitney Avenue Signalization at State Route 707, was given by Mayor Jackson. The civil engineers that were assigned to it called out pole locations from a schematic that did not include sidewalks. When they went to mark the sidewalks, about a dozen pole locations were in the middle of the sidewalks. The Connecticut Dept. of Transportation worked with the town to change those locations. As a result, new boiler-plate language had to be developed and the field visits, prior to the markings, added man hours and costs to their budget.

Ms. Carlene Kulisch, representing the Connecticut Regional Water Authority, thanked the many elected officials who had sent letters to Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection supporting their position on stream-flow regulations. The comment period closed on February 4. Anyone who commented on the regulations will receive a full package from the CT DEP when the new regulations are completed. Ms. Kulisch stated that the RWA would keep SCRCOG apprised.

ITEM 13 - Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was presented by Mayor Jackson and seconded by Mayor Candelora. Upon unanimous vote, the motion carried and the meeting concluded at 11:30 A.M.

Submitted by,
James Zeoli
SCRCOG Chairman and First Selectman of Orange

JZ:MB/SCRCOG