



# NAUGATUCK VALLEY COUNCIL of GOVERNMENTS

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## MINUTES

February 21, 2025

Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments and Central Naugatuck Valley MPO

49 Leavenworth Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Waterbury, CT 06702

Speaker: Western CT Coalition – Kathy Hanley and Chelsea Kapitancek spoke about Vaping and how it impacts Youth and the Environment. Their presentation and resulting discussion may be viewed on NVCOG’s YouTube channel: [CNVMPO-NVCOG Meeting - February 2025](#) and runs from position 8:30 to 35:06.

### NVCOG CEOs/Reps:

#### In person:

Jeffrey Caggiano, Mayor, Bristol; Andrew Martelli, Alternate, Cheshire; Ed St. John, First Selectman, Middlebury; N. Warren “Pete” Hess, Mayor, Naugatuck; George Temple, First Selectman, Oxford; Kristyn Rosa, Alternate, Oxford; Joe Kilduff, Mayor, Plymouth; Edmond Mone, First Selectman, Thomaston; Judy Mancini, Alternate, Waterbury; Mark Raimo, Town Manager, Watertown; Tom Dunn, Mayor, Wolcott.

#### Remote:

David Cassetti, Mayor, Ansonia; Gerard Smith, First Selectman, Beacon Falls; Stephen Sordi, First Selectman, Bethlehem; Joseph DiMartino, Mayor, Derby; Annmarie Drugonis, First Selectwoman, Seymour.

#### Guests:

Kathy Hanley and Chelsea Kapitancek, Western CT Coalition; Jerry Lukowski, Public Works Director, Watertown; Daniel Davis, Eversource; Grayson Wright, DOT (virtual); James Nardozi, Executive Director, Waterbury Development Corp. (virtual); Michael D’Elia, The Kennedy Collective; Meg Haffner, The Kennedy Collective (virtual); Robert Phillips, (NW Hills COG); Paul Hughes, Republican-American.

Rick Dunne introduced Sustainable Communities Planner Nicole Sullivan, GIS Analyst Danny Thomas, and announced the promotion of Richard Crowther, Jr. to Senior GIS Analyst.

### NVCOG Staff:

Executive Director Rick Dunne, Drew Baklik, Trish Bauer, Desira Blanchard, Patricia Bruder, Aaron Budris, Heidy Coronel, Richard Crowther, Rich Donovan, Thomas Dougherty, Kevin Ellis, Molly Johnson, Mark Nielsen, Eyitayo Olaleye, Christine O’Neill, Inez Ortiz; Kate Pipa, Emely Ricci, Ricardo Rodriguez, Keith Rosenfeld, Craig Stevenson, Nicole Sullivan, Michael Szpryngel, Danny Thomas, Faith Thurmond, Savannah-Nicole Villalba.

**Public Comment** - No members of the public wished to speak.

## CNVMPO Meeting

### 2025-2028 TIP Amendments – Projects 0017-0197, 0170-3640

Rich Donovan explained, Project 0017-0197 is a new project being added into the 2025-2028 TIP – for the replacement of 10 signals along Route 6 in Bristol. Project 0170-3640 is an increase in the federal cost of replacing overhead signs on 95 and 395. This is a Region 70 project that includes parts of the CNVMPO.

**Ed Mone MOVED to adopt CNVMPO Resolution 2025-06; SECONDED by Jeff Caggiano. Motion carried unanimously.**

### 2025-2028 TIP Amendment – Project 0080-0128

Rich Donovan explained, this is the third project – it's a little different because we recommend that you not adopt the change presented by the State. This is the longstanding project to upgrade Routes 63/64 and the 84 exit 17 offramp into Middlebury. It affects Waterbury as well. This has been ongoing for a very long time and was delayed out of two full TIPs. While we generally agree with the concept, we are asking you to either reject, or table, the amendment as it stands until we can get further information regarding the timing for this project. By pushing it out of this current TIP, we don't have a real commitment as to when the project will move forward.

**George Temple MOVED to adopt CNVMPO Resolution 2025-07; SECONDED by Jeff Caggiano. Motion failed unanimously.**

**Jeff Caggiano MOVED to reject CNVMPO Resolution 2025-07, and further, request collaboration with CT DOT regarding the project timeline and scope; SECONDED by Joe Kilduff. Motion carried unanimously.**

### Update – CNVMPO 2026-2027 UPWP

Kate Pipa explained, the Transportation Team is in the process of updating the Unified Planning Work Program for federal fiscal years 2026 and 2027. This comprehensive document outlines the projects and planning initiatives we intend to undertake over the next two years. The draft UPWP will be sent to CT DOT early in March and will be submitted to this Board for endorsement in May. We are co-collaborating with MetroCOG for our portion of the GBVMPO.

### Update - Congestion Management Process

Joanna Rogalski gave a brief overview of the congestion management process (CMP) being developed for the Waterbury Transportation Management Area (TMA). The CMP is an ongoing process monitoring traffic congestion to improve air quality and transportation services and develop strategies to address congestion problems. She went on to explain the locations where, and when, traffic congestion is the greatest in the region and contributes to the congestion along I-84, Route 8, and 691.

Because space is limited in the region, strategies that include major highway expansion will likely not be built. The Waterbury CMP will consider other ways to reduce traffic congestion such as targeted expansions of existing projects – signal timing optimization, access management on major thoroughfares,

and the new Mixmaster in Waterbury. We will also consider strategies that give people alternatives to driving where and when it's possible, including projects to improve and expand public transit options and active transportation networks. The CMP draft is currently posted to the NVCOG website for public review and comment. The document will be before this Board for adoption in March.

In response to a question, Rich Donovan explained that Bristol, Plymouth and Thomaston are part of the Hartford TMA's CMP, which we are in the process of updating with the Capitol Region COG. Many towns on the west side of the MPO are part of the Bridgeport-Stamford Urban Area which we updated last year with MetroCOG and WestCOG.

**NVCOG Administrative Items**

**Minutes for Approval – 01-17-2025 CNVMPO-NVCOG meeting minutes**

**Ed Mone MOVED to approve the January 17, 2025 CNVMPO-NVCOG meeting minutes; SECONDED by George Temple. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Financial Report**

Michael Szpryngel reported that the Financial Report for the period ending 12-31-2024. We're six months through the year with a bottom line of just over \$93,000. In terms of highlights, there haven't been any specific unexpected funding cuts. To briefly address the federal freeze, the main grant that's currently affected is the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction grant (CPRG). We run that through SCRCOG, and we've been instructed to stop working on the project. That grant is approximately \$28,000 per year for staff time over the next three years. In the last week in January there was a freeze on our EPA RLF 2022 accounts, but access was restored the following week. We currently have access to our federal funds. There is some uncertainty as to the Kinneytown Dam Project funding and what will happen in the future.

**Ed Mone MOVED to approve the Financial Report for the period ending 12-31-2024; SECONDED by George Temple. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Director's Report – Rick Dunne**

Rick Dunne reported that he attended the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) annual meeting in Washington, DC. He came back with a lot of good information and insights as to how to operate the agency and prepare as best as we can.

Regarding State Legislative activities, the Governor has proposed creating two new positions at every COG – one for flood plain management including MS4 oversight activities for the region, and the other is a full-time municipal solid waste/recycling position, which would fit in well with the creation of a Regional Waste Authority. The funding for the positions will be an addition to the RSG Grant.

There are other proposals from leadership to give us a housing position. There is an additional bill sponsored that would refer regional wetlands issues to COGs. It's tied up with wetland reviews by COGs and historic building activities having to deal with the building officials. Questions have been

raised for the planning and development committee to consider. What we do is advisory, and wetlands is usually an enforcement or permit issue.

In response to a question, Savannah-Nicole explained that every municipality in Connecticut is part of the National Flood Plain Insurance Program which allows the FEMA funding to come to the region for the types of flood events such as what happened in August. You have flood plain regulations that are part of your zoning regulations. FEMA establishes special flood hazard areas that have specific zoning requirements. They have been working on updating the flood plain zones for a very long time; we haven't seen them. We think it would be beneficial to have someone in this position to advocate on behalf of our region when the FEMA flood maps come out, working with the communities to review the maps once they are created. We hope to send staff to the FEMA flood plain manager training.

Rick explained that one of the concerns is that the regulations must be adopted by zoning by town, and watercourses span more than one community. So, if you're at the end, you'd want to make sure the towns upstream have proper regulations in place and make sure all the communities are complying.

While the President has said that he wants to get rid of FEMA, he has also said that he wants to send the dollars directly to the states to deal with emergency management issues. Our assumption is that the State will be empowered and given dollars to do the work if there's not a federal organization.

We received word from our program manager in DC that the money that is contracted for Kinneytown is safe. We're operating under the assumption that the third year of the existing agreement and award for Kinneytown will be released in April. We filed an application for another \$8 million to NOAA for that project. We're talking to the State on that project – the owner of the site would be the Brownfield Land Bank so the COG won't hold the liability there and the Land Bank will have to deal with it if it's delayed over the long haul. We're talking with the state about backstopping this project. The State has to contribute some bond funds anyway, some matching to existing Federal, so we're having a larger conversation with DEEP and will be moving out into the General Assembly to talk about this over the next couple of weeks.

We will need to execute a Land Banking agreement between NVCOG and the CT Brownfield Land Bank at our March meeting. We expect the Land Bank to close before the end of March so we'll need to discuss this at the Executive Committee.

As you are aware, we're working to take over the hosting of the Economic Development District; we're supposed to start July 1<sup>st</sup> and are still planning for that to be the case. EDA has frozen any funds or grants, so we don't know anything about getting the funding. We're picking up and doing some of the work under Shelton Economic Development Corporation for the balance of this year, and Drew oversees that. Craig, Mark, and other people will be working on it as well.

### **GIS and Data**

Mayor Hess congratulated Richard Crowther, Jr., on his promotion. Richard thanked him and said he looks forward to advancing data throughout the region. Richard has developed a data tool that can be accessed at [www.nvcogct.gov/datadownload](http://www.nvcogct.gov/datadownload). He demonstrated it to the Council, explaining that it's all information that has been requested by the CEOs and their staff in the last year.

The data is accessible via chart or table; some of them are interactive. At the bottom of each table is the data source and a way to download the data in each graphic. There are eight different data sets available. If there is anything else anyone would like to see in this, please contact Richard. City GIS and Engineering staff have been made aware as well.

## **Community Planning**

### **NVCOG Community Planning Newsletter Update**

Savannah-Nicole Villalba announced that the winter edition of the Community Planning Newsletter has been published. It contains an update on our Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, our recent Youth Summit with the Town of Thomaston, our latest Land Use Brief focusing on stormwater management, and a Sustainability Spotlight focusing on the work of the Environmental Team's stormwater and MS4 resources. Our NVisualization highlights the Naugatuck Valley region historic resource interactive map. A presentation is included that was run by the City of Ansonia, Town of Seymour, and NVCOG to help businesses impacted by the Kinneytown Dam removal to access business capital. This newsletter provides information and resources for you, your land use staff, and your commissioners about what's going on in our region.

### **NVCOG Regional Plan of Conservation and Development Update**

Savannah-Nicole thanked the CEOs for allowing their staff and commissioners to participate in the RPOCD process. The RPOCD committee is about halfway through the initial stakeholder engagement. Molly is almost done conducting interviews – she has done them all and we are proud of the effort she's been putting in on that. A survey will be going out to CEOs, commissioners and staff in March. We are working on conducting a municipal-specific engagement opportunity in March through April.

### **Town of Thomaston Youth Summit Highlight**

Savannah Nicole reported, as part of our work with the Town of Thomaston Plan of Conservation and Development, the Town of Thomaston and Board of Education hosted a two-day Youth Summit for 60 high school students. We introduced the students to government and planning and created strategies that could be considered for adoption in the town's upcoming Plan of Conservation and Development. With 12 local partners participating, including their Representatives, they got to hear a presentation from First Selectman Mone and a variety of different governmental contacts about what our work looks like and how we do it. At the end of the process, we have some great strategies we'll bring to the Plan of Conservation and Development Steering Committee for consideration.

### **Land Use Brief Highlight**

Molly Johnson reported, we recently released our newest Land Use Brief. In general, the Land Use Brief is a resource for land use staff to support local land use decision making. This brief discusses enabling State Statutes for stormwater management and land use tools for the implementation of the municipal separate storm sewer system permit, also known as the MS4, as well as tools for planning, inland-wetlands and water courses and Zoning departments.

The brief also highlights low-impact development regulations, regional examples and resources, and funding opportunities. It is intended to support land use staff in their work.

## **Transportation Planning**

### **LOTICIP Cost Change: Guernseytown Road**

Kevin Ellis reported, this is a project that has already been constructed and completed. The original contract bid was \$3.5 million through the LOTICIP program. The town receives this amount of money plus an additional 20% - 10% for incidentals and 10% for any contingency that might occur. The total allocation was about \$3.9 million. Due to unforeseen challenges during construction, the Town of Watertown has requested an additional \$110,000 for cost overruns due to utility relocation delays and unanticipated subsurface issues.

LOTICIP guidelines state that municipalities are responsible for cost overruns unless there are unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances. In this case it has been determined that the delays and subsurface issues were not foreseeable during the design process. CT DOT and the LOTICIP unit there have reviewed and confirmed that these cost overruns are eligible for LOTICIP funding. This is the first time that a project has gone over during construction and additional funds have been requested through the LOTICIP program.

Rich Donovan explained, this is the first time we're bringing a project like this to the board. We have reviewed and confirmed that the overages are eligible for LOTICIP funds, we did present this to TTAC, which has endorsed approving the extra funds out of the LOTICIP program.

Rick Dunne stated, this is not something we're supposed to be doing under the LOTICIP program. The team ran it through not just TTAC but CTDOT, and they all agreed that this could not be reasonably anticipated.

**Tom Dunn MOVED to approve the allocation of \$110,687 in additional LOTIP funds for construction overages; SECONDED by Ed Mone. Motion carried unanimously.**

## **Title VI Update**

Desira Blanchard gave an update on the progress pertaining to NVCOG's Title VI plan which ensures our agency's compliance with federal civil rights regulations preventing discrimination in programs and services, and the public participation plan which outlines our strategies for engaging the public in our decision-making process. The first public meeting was held on January 30<sup>th</sup> at Waterbury City Hall. The next meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. February 26<sup>th</sup> at Valley Transit District Headquarters at 41 Main Street in Derby. Both plans are published and available on the NVCOG website [www.nvcogct.gov/project/title-vi-plan](http://www.nvcogct.gov/project/title-vi-plan). The public comment period opened on February 12<sup>th</sup> and will be open until March 17<sup>th</sup>. Call Desira Blanchard at (203) 757-0535 or email [info@nvcogct.gov](mailto:info@nvcogct.gov) with any comments. We will bring the final document to the board next month for adoption.

## **Section 5310 Grant Updates**

Joanna Rogalski reported, federal funding is available to municipalities through the 5310 Program, which provides funding for capital and operating expenses to improve transportation for seniors and people with disabilities. Grants would cover 80% of capital project costs and 50% of operating project costs. Capital projects include accessible vehicles (20% match, non-federal), transportation services under contract, wheelchair lifts and ramps. Applications are due by 4 p.m. Tuesday, April 1<sup>st</sup>. Please call NVCOG for assistance with grant applications.

## **Environmental Planning**

### **Brownfields Update and Funding Opportunities**

Ricardo Rodriguez reported, because of the funding freeze, some of the Brownfield projects were placed on hold at the end of January up until the end of February. Now we are good to go again. That didn't impact any projects that were being funded under assessment.

In terms of work that NVCOG has assisted the CT Brownfield Land Bank with, staff assisted in preparing an RFP and conducted a site walk at 1106 Bank Street in Waterbury. Those bids are currently being reviewed. We should have a selected LEP in the next week or two and contracts to be reviewed afterward. Waterbury Housing Authority and the selected developer on site are going to be assisting in selecting a contractor once that's completed. The proposed reuse for that site will be 60-70 affordable units for senior citizens. In Hartford, Land Bank assisted a developer at 2030 Trinity Street. We are working with them on finalizing the financial assistance proposal and assistance agreement. Once those are completed, we'll be able to start the oversight of the abatement activities. The developer wants to convert two buildings into market-rate housing.

As a reminder, the DECD funding deadline is quickly approaching – it's due at noon on March 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **Kinneytown Dam Update**

Aaron Budris reported, the acquisition by the CT Brownfield Land Bank is proceeding. There are some outstanding tax liability issues that are being negotiated. We're hoping to close by the end of March. The design on the project is underway. GEI Consultants has been hired. They're on the ground and starting to do their data collection. We've been meeting with them regularly. They have a long track record of big, complex dam removal projects – the perfect consultant to help us through this process. Same goes for the design of the sewer relocation in Seymour. They're getting close to the end of their alternatives analysis, and they'll be presenting that to the town very soon.

We've been holding regular community meetings every other month and been getting good turnout – over 40 residents at each of these. We've started good conversations in the two communities.

On the funding, there are a lot of questions but even with the \$15 million that we're hoping to get from NOAA from our last grant award, we still have gaps and we're working on filling those gaps. We submitted an \$8 million request to NOAA through their Restoring Fish Passage through Barrier Removal Grant

Program, and we have another one that's due April 16<sup>th</sup> that we're planning to submit early – the Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant Program. We will keep you updated.

In response to a question, Aaron explained that even with this funding it doesn't get us all the way there – but it fills some significant gaps. The big question with this project is sediment management. If we have to move the sediment offsite it's going to be a really high number. We're going to be working with DEEP and EPA to figure out what that sediment management is going to look like. EPA has been working on it and will be putting together a sediment management plan.

Rick Dunne explained, anything that is a significant environmental hazard, we are going to have to remove. EPA is doing the actual testing; we don't know that yet. They're halfway through. This is an actual delay in the project because of the federal situation. EPA is not being allowed to spend the money that came through IJA and IRA internally, and it's an internal activity for EPA Region One to do this targeted brownfield assessment. Phase II of that is in a standstill right now.

### **Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan**

Rick explained that we've been receiving some pushback on this from a couple of towns. This is the project that we gave the board a memo and reviewed back in September. This is the regional hazard mitigation plan that we did five years prior, and we do every five years to be eligible for hazard mitigation funds.

In December, the board directed staff to file the application. We had presented it because there is a cost share for \$5,000 this year to say relatively the same thing as last time around. That amount will change based on how much we get awarded; we'll go in for the full grant and we usually get less than we apply for from FEMA on this. There's an ask for the money over two years, it's \$2,500 a year for next year and the year after that, if we're awarded. In December the board approved it and agreed to the cost share; the application is due on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

Not every town has to participate in this; it's voluntary. If you don't participate in the regional plan, you're either not going to be eligible for federal assistance, or you'll have to write your own plan. The benefit of having done this regionally is, rather than each of you having to do a \$100,000 plan that will probably cost you \$25,000 in match, we've been doing the whole region for under \$300,000 with a match of \$5,000 per town. It's an equal benefit to each town so the money has been distributed equally, not proportionally by population or size. Towns don't have to participate in this; anybody can go out on their own. It is a weaker application for us as a regional application if we don't have everyone in. We've been sending out requests for commitment letters from the towns and that's where we've been getting some push back. I want everyone to be aware – it's up to the towns, it's your choice.

Tom Dougherty displayed the form and asked that the forms be returned by February 28<sup>th</sup>. If you're looking for the form in your email, they were sent out on February 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **Municipal Waste**

Christine O'Neill reported, the Regional Waste Authority study is underway. Our consultant, Tetra Tech, is looking to have each municipality respond to a survey to gather existing conditions. All CEOs and Public Works Directors have received an email from Drew Baklik on February 11<sup>th</sup> with the survey attached.

Please work with your staff to provide a response to this survey by February 28<sup>th</sup> to allow Tetra Tech to proceed with the study. The survey also prompts you to sign up for a one-on-one interview with Tetra Tech if you want to give a little bit more individualized feedback about the shape of this Regional Waste Authority. Because of this group's exceptional interest in waste, it is strongly recommended that you take advantage of that. The next Naugatuck Valley Waste, Reuse and Recycling meeting is scheduled for 10 a.m. Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **Municipal Affairs**

#### **Emergency Management Update**

Drew Baklik reported, the CT Emergency Management Symposium run by CCM is scheduled for 4/1/25 at Camp Nett, Niantic. It is a great event – please encourage your Emergency Management Directors and CERT teams or anybody else from your municipality involved in emergency management to attend.

The Homeland Security Grant resolutions that you're all required to submit. Our COG is split between DEHMS Region 1, DEHMS Region 2, and DEHMS Region 5. Each of you has a different fiduciary to whom you have to provide these resolutions. The 2024 Resolutions will be coming to you in the next few weeks. Some of you have missing years. Drew will try to get them all together and get them to the CEOs as a group in that same email that has the 2024 resolution so you can go to your legislative body once and have them endorsed – telling them you've already done this work, but the resolution isn't on the books.

#### **NVEDD Update**

Rick spoke on this - we are going to complete this year's report that is due July 1<sup>st</sup>. Our staff will help Shelton Economic Development Corporation do that in place of the consultant they had been using.

#### **Municipal Shared Services Update**

We have submitted a draft of an application for shared animal control for Bristol and Plymouth to OPM's RPIP Program – the Regional Performance Incentive Program. We received word yesterday that it didn't check all the boxes regionally the way that it was structured. There will be some outreach probably directly from Mayor Jeff to some of you to talk about potentially combining and/or finding some additional partners.

Rick stated, as most of you know, we run a municipal town planner program. We are having trouble filling slots for next year at the rates we're advertising for, and there are lots of town planner jobs open as most of you know. We will meet with participating towns and other towns that are interested in it. We need to meet to talk about how much the charge is.

#### **CEO Roundtable**

Jeff Caggiano raised discussion on what's happening with the new State motor vehicle revaluation. He suggested just raising the motor vehicle cap by 5 or so to 37. We would become flat with the motor

vehicle tax. The actual taxpayers wouldn't see a change. It would erase the \$2.5 million loss. Other Grand List growth would kick in and we'd have a relatively normal budget season. And then the state wouldn't have to pay anyone back that money. It's a zero-sum game for everybody. He asked that everyone talk to their legislators before Monday.

Pete Hess stated that Monday the Legislature is going to take this up and the towns will have the opportunity to opt out of the change in valuation and go back to the old. That could eliminate the 14% and increase the grand list proportionately.

George Temple noted that his Fire Chief came to him and said that it's still a request to put a Fire/EMS/First Responder training facility in Beacon Falls. The request has always gotten up to Hartford and seems to end there.

Ed St. John recalled that Drew went out and researched this and there wasn't enough interest with the legislators to push for it – he asked that Drew provide an update.

### **Adjournment**

**At approximately 12:10 p.m., Ed Mone MOVED to adjourn; SECONDED by Jeff Caggiano. Motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Bruder  
Executive Administrative Clerk