

VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Railroad Station, 12 Main St., Derby, CT 06418
203-735-8688

VCOG MEETING NOTICE

Wednesday, April 11, 2007

11:30 a.m. *

at VCOG Offices

AGENDA

(Pledge of Allegiance)

1. **Public Session**
2. **Acceptance of Minutes of 3/14/07 Meeting (Enc.)**
3. **Treasurer's Report (Enc.)**
4. **Discussion on the Loss of Local Cable Access Programming under the Comcast Acquisition of Telemedia Co. – Tom Clifford (Enc.)**
5. **Discussion: Rising Energy Costs – Christopher Swan, Director of Municipal Relations & Siting, Northeast Utilities (Enc.)**
6. **Discussion/Possible Action re: ConnDOT Application to FHWA on Congestion Pricing Pilot Program**
7. **Discussion on Response Times for VEMS' New Service – Jerry Schwab, VEMS (Enc.)**

* Note: A light lunch will be provided at 11:30 a.m.

**MINUTES OF MEETING
VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Wednesday, April 11, 2007
at VCOG Offices**

Persons Present:

Mayor James Della Volpe, Ansonia
Mayor Anthony Staffieri, Derby
First Selectman Robert Koskelowski, Seymour
Thomas Clifford, Ansonia
Christopher Swan, Northeast Utilities
Matthew Hickey, “
Robert Axelrod, “
Jerry Schwab, VEMS
Joseph Burnett, VEMS Board
Madalene Taggart, “
Roy Tidmarsh, “
Dominick Thomas, VEMS Attorney
Phil Robertson, City of Derby
Jodie Mozdzer, Waterbury Rep-Am.
Elizabeth Benton, New Haven Register
Matthew Higbee, CT Post
Rick Dunne, VCOG Staff
David Elder, “
Jan Jadach, “

Chairman Koskelowski called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was said. The Chairman then asked if anyone wished to speak during the public session. No one spoke and the public session was closed.

The **Minutes** of the 3/14/07 VCOG regular meeting were accepted.

Motion: By Anthony Staffieri; Second: James Della Volpe; Vote: Unanimous

Treasurer's Report – Rick Dunne indicated that year-to-date through March, we are running ahead by \$40,000. This is due to the fact that we have special projects we are billing against. Staff is working more than 35 hours a week so we are billing more than 35 hrs. a week. Outside of this budget, we have been carrying a receivable on the radium project. We finally received \$40,000 from DEP on that project. There were no questions on the report.

Discussion on the Loss of Local Cable Access Programming under the Comcast Acquisition of Telemedia Company – Rick Dunne indicated that Mayor Lauretti requested this item be placed on the agenda. In their packets, the COG members have copies of letters between former Mayor Thomas Clifford of Ansonia, who is here as a private citizen, and Comcast. Attorney Clifford then handed a copy of a letter he sent to the Chairman of DPUC, Donald Downes. He began by saying that when he served as Mayor of Ansonia, he was concerned with getting grant funding into the lower Naugatuck Valley through the Gates Fund and CFGNH. He has been on the Telemedia Advisory Council since 1991. The Advisory Council works with the cable provider trying to raise public issues. As a result, there have been developments since Comcast acquired the cable service for the Valley. In the past, they have had a great relationship in

providing partnership programming in the LNV. Comcast is departing from Telemedia's practice of producing programs of local interest such as political debates, local high school football games, etc. With the loss of the Evening Sentinel and WADS, and with Comcast's decision to move away from producing public interest programs, there has been created a situation with which VCOG should be concerned. The letter from Doug Guthrie of Comcast does not really address the issue that has been raised. Atty. Clifford asks that the VCOG join with the Advisory Council for Comcast in contacting the Chairman of the DPUC, Donald Downes, to indicate their concern regarding this departure from a long-standing practice.

Mayor Della Volpe said that he definitely supports any type of correspondence to send to Comcast or DPUC backing the Advisory Council. Mayor Staffieri agreed, saying he knows a lot of citizens are concerned about this as well. First Selectman Koskelowski also agreed, indicating that he served on the committee at one time and feels this is an important issue. In the past, the cable company would show the Seymour Christmas Parade. Now, Seymour has to pay someone to tape it. This is a very valuable service and one we need in the Valley. He totally supports sending a letter out voicing these concerns. The Chairman then asked Rick to draft a letter.

Motion: By James Della Volpe – To have staff draft a letter on this matter; Second: Anthony Staffieri; Vote: Unanimous

Rick then asked who the letter should go to, and Atty. Clifford said it should go to Donald Downes, DPUC Chairman. Sharon Codeanne, the Attorney for Comcast, should be copied.

The Chairman then thanked Attorney Clifford for his time.

Discussion on Rising Energy Costs – Christopher Swan, Director of Municipal Relations and Siting for CL&P, handed out a copies of a power point presentation. He then introduced Matthew Hickey and Bob Axelrod, also from CL&P. They are speaking to COGs around the state about transmission and rising energy costs. He said that UI and CL&P rates are very close to each other at this time. He also said that CT is the highest ranking state by cost of electricity in the continental U.S. Only Hawaii is higher. Mr. Swan then went through the power point handout page by page. They have been trying to reinforce the transmission system for the last several years as it was a weak system. At present, there are special contracts with generator plants to keep the system on line during peak times. They need to make the system stronger so this is not necessary. CT has price pressures largely due to constraints that do not exist in other states. These constraints cost CT consumers millions of dollars each year.

Mr. Swan then discussed the rising energy costs indicating there was a cap on prices from 2000-2003. Then from 2004-07 the price went from .10 to .18 cents/kWh. Mr. Koskelowski then asked what price does CL&P buy electricity back at. Mr. Swan said it is .11 cents per kWh. CL&P buys from four suppliers. He then discussed the major transmission projects that CL&P has undertaken to strengthen the system, such as the recently completed Bethel-Norwalk Project and the Middletown-Norwalk Project which is now under construction and due to come on line by spring of 2009. Southwest CT, which has the highest demand in the state, will then have a strong system. Right now, on the biggest demand day last year, which was in August, we could only import 30% of the needs of CT from out-of-state. The rest had to come from in-state. Other New England states can import at least 50%. Mr. Swan talked about the weaknesses of the

transmission system in southern New England saying that the transfer capacity is limited between states and that the east-to-west flows in CT are a strain on the existing system.

Chairman Koskelowski asked if the casinos are a problem in eastern CT. Mr. Swan replied that it is a concern down the road in southeast CT, but the casinos are doing some generation for peak times. He then closed by saying that conservation is the key element. They need to work harder on conservation and load management to use resources more efficiently. This, combined with adding generation and increasing transmission capacity, will help meet the state's electric energy concerns in the future.

The Chairman then thanked all three gentlemen for making this informative presentation.

Discussion/Possible Action re: ConnDOT Application to FHWA on Congestion Pricing Pilot Program – David Elder indicated that we touched on this briefly at last month's meeting. Since then, we received a formal request from ConnDOT asking us as a COG to endorse the Urban Partnership Agreement Application. They are asking us to endorse this also as a member of the MPO which is part of the Urban Partnership. David said the application they are asking us to endorse includes value pricing which includes tolls. We are a member of the Urban Partnership which has some good initiatives included. This is just one of them. Rick added that this had been tabled last month. It is up to the COG whether it chooses to take a position on this value pricing study. It does not change that we will still be involved with the larger group regarding the Urban Partnership Agreement Application. Mayor Staffieri asked if this is regarding selective tolling which is done electronically during peak hours. David responded yes, but they are considering HOV lanes. There are some other initiatives that are doing well and will help get people off the highways. Rick added that this will help people rearrange their schedules if they do not have to be on the highways at peak times. The Chairman then said he prefers to table this.

Motion: By James Della Volpe – To table this matter awaiting additional information; Second: Anthony Staffieri; Vote: Unanimous

Discussion on Response Times for VEMS New Service – Mr. Koskelowski indicated he requested that Jerry Schwab attend the meeting today now that the new service went into effect back in September. We did discuss this at our October meeting. His concern is regarding response times. When we talked about adding a new service in the Valley to help the towns, it was discussed having this basically in Seymour, not Oxford. He went over CMED response times from Jan. 2006 – present. His concern is that we paid for this additional service and he doesn't think Seymour has benefited from this unit as much as if it was in Seymour. Seymour is still under the threshold he hoped would come with all the towns donating. He wondered if the town getting the biggest benefit out of it should be paying the larger portion of the cost. The towns should not be sharing the cost equally if they are not equally benefiting. If Oxford is benefiting more, then they should pay more.

Jerry Schwab then handed out some spreadsheets showing VEMS response times from last year until present. He indicated that he met with Mayors Della Volpe and Lauretti as a subcommittee following last year's discussion. They looked at paying by per capita or by call volume or by 5% across the board. It was decided to divide equally by the five municipalities as the most beneficial to all. Mr. Koskelowski felt after this period of time, Seymour should have benefited

more. He wants to resolve this without affecting the services everyone should be getting. A discussion occurred regarding the interpretation of the response times on the spreadsheets. Mayor Della Volpe then asked where the unit was being housed at present. Mr. Schwab said it was at Center Firehouse, 44 Oxford Road in Oxford. The Mayor asked if it had ever been in Seymour and the response was that it had not. Mayor Della Volpe wondered if they could try a three-month period of having it based in Seymour. Mr. Schwab said some wiring would need to be done before that could happen.

Mr. Burnett then said that VEMS has asked for a figure amongst the towns. The COG should have to determine how to split it up and should involve Oxford. Mr. Koskelowski, noting that Oxford is so spread out, wondered if they should have their own service. Atty. Thomas said it would not be cost effective for any town to have its own emergency service and that Oxford could not sustain a paramedic service. The important thing to VEMS is that the funding that exists be brought up-to-date. From this point on, they could meet and address these concerns. They would be willing to look at a pilot program. If there needs to be an adjustment in the funding, they could look at it. It is important that the funding be brought to date, hopefully in the next three months.

Mr. Koskelowski said he does not want to hurt Oxford by moving the car into Seymour. He suggested we meet again in about three months. We will watch the data as is for three months without any changes. He will release the \$20,000 check for VEMS. They will see if CMED can provide data. Rick asked for data by the end of June for the first half of '06 compared to the first half of '07. The Chairman then thanked all for taking the time to attend this meeting.

Rick Dunne then discussed audit services with the COG. As he had indicated to the Mayors in his memo to them, we went out to bid for audit services. Although several firms showed interest and requested further information, we received only one proposal and that was from the incumbent firm, Michaud and Accavallo. It is a three-year proposal. We can either award them the contract or go out to bid again.

The Chairman then asked for a motion to add this item to the agenda.

Motion: By James Della Volpe – To add action on VCOG audit services to the agenda; Second: Anthony Staffieri; Vote: Unanimous

Action regarding Audit Services to VCOG – As discussed, only one bid was received as a result of the RFP issued for audit services. That was from Michaud and Accavallo. The Mayors indicated they were satisfied with the past work of this firm.

Motion: By Anthony Staffieri – To award the contract for VCOG audit services for three years to Michaud and Accavallo; Second: James Della Volpe; Vote: Unanimous

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark A. Lauretti,
Secretary