

VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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

VCOG MEETING NOTICE

Wednesday, March 14, 2007

11:30 a.m. *

at VCOG Offices

AGENDA

(Pledge of Allegiance)

1. **Public Session**
2. **Acceptance of Minutes of 1/10/07 Meeting (Enc.)**
3. **Treasurer's Report (to be emailed)**
 - (a) **FY '07-08 Budget Update (to be emailed)**
4. **Discussion re: CT Municipal Consortium for Fiscal Responsibility – Mike Guarco, George McLaughlin (Enc.)**
5. **Resolution of Support for Derby to Seek State Assistance for Downtown Infrastructure/Transit-Oriented Development (Enc.)**
6. **Approval of VCOG Resolutions: (Enc.)**
 - (a) **ConnDOT Resolution**
 - (b) **State Grant-in-Aid Resolution**
 - (c) **FTA Resolution – Capital Projects**
7. **Monthly Reports:**
 - (a) **RBP Monthly Project Report (Enc.)**
8. **Executive Session – Re: Valley Transit District**

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

Discussion re: CT Municipal Consortium for Fiscal Responsibility – Rick Dunne introduced Mike Guarco and George McLaughlin from the CT Municipal Consortium for Fiscal Responsibility. Mayor Lauretti requested that they be placed on the agenda. The Mayors were given a handout regarding the Consortium. Mr. Guarco then spoke, saying the Consortium is a bipartisan grassroots alliance. Their mission is to enhance communication among local municipal, finance and education officials on issues affecting them before the Legislature; to educate members of the Legislature regarding the significant challenges posed to local government by state actions; and to advocate for legislative changes to permit CT communities to live within their means without adversely impacting needed services, education or property taxes. Mr. Guarco indicated they meet with boards throughout the state looking for support. So far, 112 towns have registered support and six COGs have passed a motion supporting this initiative.

Mr. McLaughlin then spoke, saying the more towns that register support, the more the Legislature will listen. Their agenda is to focus on bringing about changes beneficial to taxpayers across the state, including: raising cost thresholds under the prevailing wage statute; leveling the playing field in binding arbitration by allowing an arbitrated settlement, if rejected locally, to then be sent back to negotiations, rather than into the last round of appellate review; a prohibition on new mandates on the towns from the state until the Legislature meets its own existing funding commitment. In answer to a question from Mayor Lauretti, Mr. Guarco said they have not been able to effect any changes, as yet. They are a growing group and have testified on two bills in the last year or two. However, neither bill advanced through the Labor Committee. He said more pressure needs to be placed to get a dialog on these issues.

First Selectman Koskelowski indicated that he and the other Mayors keep in touch with our local legislative representatives with regard to these items. We allow our legislators to represent their municipalities as far as funding goes. He noted that he receives alerts almost daily and contacts the local legislators when necessary. He supports any group that helps municipalities. However, if our local legislators don't have enough influence in Hartford to get support of an issue, he doesn't think a group would have it. Rick Dunne then asked if there was a cost to join the Consortium. Mike Guarco said there was not. Various town halls assist them in producing their materials. He said there is a draft resolution in the information packet. However, a simple resolution endorsing and supporting the efforts of this group would be helpful. The Chairman said he prefers to table this at this time and have the Executive Director prepare a resolution for the next meeting for the VCOG to act on.

Motion: By Anthony Staffieri – To table this item until the April meeting; Second: James Della Volpe; Vote: Unanimous

Resolution of Support for Derby to Seek State Assistance for Downtown Infrastructure/ Transit-Oriented Development – This item was discussed at the January meeting, at which time Mayor Lauretti indicated he would like more information on what he is supporting. After a few comments on the proposed resolution of support, Mayor Lauretti said he was satisfied.

Motion: By James Della Volpe – To approve and endorse the Resolution ; Second: Mark Lauretti; Vote: Unanimous

Approval of VCOG Resolutions – Rick Dunne said that these resolutions need to be executed every year. They are for FTA, SGIA and ConnDOT, which is our main source of operating funds.

Motion: By Mark Lauretti – To approve all three resolutions; Second: James Della Volpe;
Vote: Unanimous

Discussion of ConnDOT Application to FHWA re: Congestion Pricing Pilot Program – Rick said that ConnDOT is applying to the Federal government for a pilot program. There is a draft resolution in the packet of information before the Mayors; however, we are not acting on it this month. The board can decide if they want it on the agenda next month. David Elder then went on to explain that this is a preliminary value pricing feasibility study regarding the use of fees as an incentive to use mass transportation or a disincentive to use the highways. DOT will run the project. The two areas of the state applying for this project are SWRPA and CRCOG. The total cost of the project is \$5 million—80% federal, 20% state funds. There is no cost to the towns or regions. Rick indicated he has been seeing requests for comments on this in the last year. We have not commented as yet. Neither has Bridgeport. The Southwest and the Capitol Regions have been advocating for this, and we are satisfied with their comments to ConnDOT. The basic concept is that they are going to use some type of EZ-Pass system not involving toll plazas to charge people for being on busy highways during certain times of the day.

Chairman Koskelowski said his preference would be to reinstitute the (gateway) tolls. He does not support a study to charge CT residents to use their highways. He could support these types of tolls because they would bring in out-of-state money. Mayor Staffieri agreed saying many states charge border tolls. He said it was ludicrous to charge CT residents to use our highways. Mr. Koskelowski continued, saying that our highways cannot handle the volume of traffic. Out-of-state people help clog our highways and drive through without spending a cent.

Rick then informed the Mayors that if they want to get on the record as a board on this issue, they need to do it at the April meeting. This will also come up before the MPO. The Chairman asked that this item be put on the April agenda.

Discussion and Possible Action on Designation of Lake Housatonic Authority for Marine Events – Mayor Lauretti said he asked to have this on the agenda. He noted that his first reaction is to say no to this designation. The state creates these initiatives and then puts it on the local municipalities. The way he reads it is that the enforcement will be on the four municipalities. When you do that, it usually costs the towns money. He thinks this is the state's responsibility. If we accept this, we accept everything that goes along with it. Rick asked if this request only deals with above the dam and Mayor Lauretti said, yes, just Lake Housatonic. Currently, the towns of Derby, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton fund the Lake Housatonic Authority. He said this problem has grown in the area of enforcement because of the popularity of the River which is a good thing, but all the state's regulations cost money.

Rick said he would ask Attorney Welch to look into the requirements of the current statute to see who is responsible for what. He will also ask to be on the next LHA agenda, after which he will report back to the COG next month. The Mayors agreed with this.

Discussion and Possible Action on Request for Assistance of a Loan/Grant from the VCOG Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund to the City of Shelton/Primrose Co. – Rick Dunne said Jim Ryan is here to help discuss this issue, but Arthur Bogen is at an NESEA Seminar in Boston today. He went on to say that we have had the RLF since 1999 and have not made a loan from it. We then did a transition of the loan fund with EPA a year ago. We have an application from the City of Shelton, Primrose Company regarding a project proposal there. In our update, you can see we have \$332,000 available for COG and \$475,000 for Danbury. There is an agreement between the two regions to loan each other funds. We are pursuing that with Danbury. EPA will talk to us about additional funds to make the loan available. These are only for cleanups. The application is through SEDC. We need the COG approval to proceed with the documentation for a proposed loan/grant. It will be a proposal to loan Primrose money to clean up environmental contamination on Canal Street and to grant funds to Shelton to clean up the greenway and Riverwalk activities. We will grant those funds out of the pool. We need the approval from this board. Then there will be a series of public hearings after which we will return to the COG for final execution of the agreement.

Jim Ryan from SEDC then spoke briefly saying the City of Shelton has been working since the '90s on this area. He showed a map of the area and indicated the area in question along the river. He indicated they have a bona fide developer, and the planning and zoning is in place. Municipal comments have been received on the infrastructure and this project is ready to go. EPA needs to sign off on this as well. The proposal will be put together by Arthur, and we will submit it to Primrose and Shelton. Primrose has to pay the legal costs associated with the loan.

Motion: By James Della Volpe – To authorize the staff to proceed with the underwriting activities and loan documentation for the Shelton-Primrose application, subject to the federal process; Second: Anthony Staffieri; Vote: Unanimous

Monthly Reports – Rick wanted to point out two items in the Brownfields monthly report. Regarding the Cook Industrial project in Ansonia, we have had a difficult deal with the buyer and seller. DEP is considering a commitment of funds to a scope of activities. We think that they will invest another \$50,000 in the site. We are hopeful we can get this site up to full productive reuse.

Regarding O'Sullivan's Island, this goes back to the fire training school on the island. We are going to the federal government in this session on behalf of the more than twenty municipalities who share liability on this site. We are looking for the federal government to approve approximately \$3 million to rid this site of contamination. We are working with Rep. DeLauro, Rep. Shays, Sen. Lieberman and Sen. Dodd. We will do this as VCOG since the City of Derby may have "responsible Party" issues at the site.

Lastly, the Town of Plymouth will be engaging us on a fee-basis to run a Brownfields assessment project for them.

Executive Session—Valley Transit District: Mayor Lauretti indicated he does not think we need an Executive Session on this. He asked to make a few comments. He wanted to thank the CEOs for participating financially in this fiscal year. It is a huge statement to the state and our region and that needed to be done. Mayor Lauretti then asked the other CEOs if they could consider a contribution in the amount of \$10,000 each for the next fiscal year, with Shelton

contributing \$15,000. He said VTD is continuing to work with the state for a plan to pay back debt. They are documenting all of their loans which are in the neighborhood of \$320,000. They have identified sources of \$140,000 to help reduce the debt. There is talk about VTD applying for a matching grant through VCOG. In his discussions with DOT, Mayor Lauretti said he is dissuaded from doing that for the upcoming year. He said they are not out of the woods yet but he hopes to identify a plan that DOT will buy into and one that is palatable for the municipalities. He continued that VTD has reached a tentative agreement for a new contract and it will be discussed at the next meeting. It is a fair contract for employees and the agency. It is important in terms of showing a commitment to the employees that we will solidify their employment and honor contract agreements. This will also protect employee and employer in terms of a working agreement and provide a clear direction for all.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark A. Lauretti,
Secretary