



SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Planning for Our Region's Future

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

Carl J. Amento, Executive Director

TO: **SCRCOG Board Members**
FROM: **Mayor Lauren Garrett, *Secretary***
DATE: **April 17, 2024**
SUBJECT: **SCRCOG Board Meeting Minutes of March 27, 2024**

Present:

Bethany First Selectwoman Paula Cofrancesco, ***Chair***
East Haven Mayor Joseph Carfora
Guilford First Selectman Matthew Hoey
Hamden Mayor Lauren Garrett, ***Secretary***
Madison First Selectwoman Peggy Lyons, ***Vice Chair***
Meriden Acting City Manager Emily Holland
North Branford Town Manager Michael Downes
North Haven First Selectman Michael Freda
Orange First Selectman James Zeoli, ***Immediate Past Chair***
West Haven Mayor Dorinda Borer, ***Treasurer***
Woodbridge First Selectman Mica Cardozo

SCRCOG Staff Carl Amento, Laura Francis, Christopher Rappa, James Rode, Stephanie Camp, Gabriel Filer, Tatum Thomas, Joan Paglinco, Amealia Maynard

Guests:

Ginny Kozlowski, *REX Development*; Jen Pacacha, *CT Department of Transportation*; Mario Marrero, *Greater New Haven Transit District*; Al Carbone and Mike Anderson, *Avangrid*; Pamela Roach, *SCRCOG Solid Waste & Recycling Consultant*, Nicole Velardi, *DEMHS*; Mike Muszynski, *CCM*; Cori Haas, *Town of Wallingford*; David Fink, *SCRCOG Housing Consultant*; Sarah Bromley, *All In For Milford*; Betsy Gara, *COST*; Joseline Tlacomulco, *City of New Haven*

NOTE: The March SCRCOG Board meeting was a hybrid meeting

1. Call to order and Introductions

Chair Cofrancesco called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. All present introduced themselves.

2. Adopt Minutes of February 28, 2024 SCRCOG Meeting (motion)

Chair Cofrancesco referred to the minutes of the SCRCOG Meeting February 28, 2024, which were included in the agenda packet. Mayor Garrett moved for approval and the motion was seconded by First Selectwoman Lyons. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Treasurer's Report for month ending February 29, 2024 (acceptance)

First Selectwoman Lyons reported that there is \$2.72 million in total assets of which \$1.4 million is in cash and investments. There is \$321,000 due from the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) and \$60,000 due from the Connecticut Division of Emergency Management and Homeland

Security (DEMHS). All expenses appear to be appropriate for a one-month period. Mayor Garrett made a motion to approve. First Selectman Hoey seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Presentation: “Our Housing Problems – What We Must Do to Solve Them – David Fink, SCRCOG Housing Consultant**

David Fink gave a presentation on four areas of the affordable housing issue: how the recent housing effort began, what has been done since its commencement, the current housing situation, and what will be done in the upcoming year. David referred to a handout, “Housing in Connecticut: The Basics”. There were recent tours of mixed income housing in four different locations. David shared a video that showed different housing configurations. Furthermore, a tour was provided to agencies in the region that offered services to homeless individuals and families. David advised that Connecticut has the sixth highest median housing cost in the nation. In the past year, home prices have increased 60%, rental prices increased 20%, and homelessness has increased by 13%. David told the Board there will be Working Group meetings continuing with presentations by and discussions with planners and CEOs. Deputy Director Francis noted that the Connecticut Commissioner of Housing has pledged technical assistance to towns who have interest in creating affordable housing. David Fink advised there are two major housing bills under consideration in the legislature. The first bill gives municipalities priority funding of state discretionary grants if they create higher density housing within ½ mile of a rail station. The second bill provides tax credits for developers who convert commercial properties into housing. Both bills are expected to pass.

5. **MPO Business**

a. **Resolution to Approve FY 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Thirty-Four (motion)**

Deputy Director Francis referred to the resolution found in the agenda packet. First Selectman Hoey made a motion on behalf of Transportation Committee Chair Cosgrove. First Selectman Cardozo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Francis also mentioned the collapse of the Francis Scott Key bridge in Baltimore and noted that it should serve as a reminder of how important our work at SCRCOG is.

b. **Deputy Director/Director of Transportation Report**

Deputy Director Francis referred to the Transportation Studies Status Report of all town and regional studies underway. Francis also mentioned there will be solicitations to serve on the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee. Gabriel Filer will be distributing to the member municipalities grant applications for the Active Transportation Micro grant.

c. **Transportation Staff Report**

Gabriel Filer announced that he will be resigning as Transportation Project Manager from SCRCOG on April 19. He thanked the Board for allowing him to serve the region and felt honored to have worked for SCRCOG. Principal Transportation Planner Jim Rode reported on the LOTCIP program noting that at the end of the 3rd quarter several projects have been received and are underway. Jim also announced that the draft Transportation Improvement Program FY 2025-2028 has been published on the SCRCOG website. There will be a public comment meeting regarding the TIP program on April 10th. GIS/Data Manager Tatum Thomas delivered a Lunch-N-Learn to the SCRCOG staff on data literacy. Tatum will also be sending out a survey to create a stormwater asset mapping and inventory for the region.

d. Greater New Haven Transit District Report

Mario Marrero reported that 26 new buses, 2 of which will be electric, will be arriving between April and May. There will be a new driver class starting next week. Last week, National Transit Employees Day was celebrated. Mario also reminded everyone that the Section 5310 vehicle applications are due in early April. Last week, Mario received the state matching grant applications and they will be sent out to all the towns. You will need to fill out the entire application this year. The applications are due on May 25th.

6. COG Business

a. FY 2023-24 Regional Services Grant (RSG) Spending Plan Revision #4 (motion)

Executive Director Amento reviewed the line items of the attached RSG Spending Plan amendment #4. Amento also advised there was an increase in the grant from \$547,000 to \$940,000 for the next five years. Ginny Kozlowski advised REX Development will offer free on-call economic development services under the Municipal Services Program. First Selectman Zeoli requested a report of the services of the Municipal Services Consultants Program. A motion to approve was made by First Selectman Hoey and was seconded by Mayor Garrett. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Resolution Authorizing the Executive Director to enter into an agreement for Replica Data Platform Subscription (motion)

Deputy Director Francis explained the Replica Data Platform Subscription which will provide SCRCOG with timely data for use in future regional planning and transportation planning processes and projects. A motion made by First Selectman Hoey and seconded by Mayor Garrett. The motion passed unanimously.

c. FY 2023-24 Budget Revision #5 (motion)

Finance Director Christopher Rappa explained that the proposed revision aligns the FY 2023-24 budget with the amended Regional Services Grant Spending Plan by adding \$25,000 to the Spending Plan and removing \$25,000 of fund balance for purchase of furniture and equipment. The motion to approve was made by First Selectman Cardozo and seconded by Mayor Garrett. The motion passed unanimously.

d. Resolution Authorizing the Executive Director to Negotiate and Sign a Consultant Agreement with RKG Associates, Inc. regarding the Regional Affordable Housing Plan Update (motion)

Executive Director Amento explained that this resolution will fund an update and enhancement of last year's draft Regional Affordable Housing Plan. The Plan Update will include an Action Plan to assist member municipalities with the implementation of their 8-30j Affordable Housing Plans. A motion to approve was made by First Selectman Freda and seconded by First Selectman Cardozo. The motion passed unanimously.

e. Resolution Authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement for a U.S. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Implementation Grant to fund Solar on Public Housing (motion)

Senior Regional Planner Stephanie Camp explained that SCRCOG seeks to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) to apply for CPRG implementation funding to install solar energy on public housing projects. Five

other COGs are also entering into MOUs with CRCOG. A motion was made by First Selectman Hoey and seconded by Mayor Garrett. The motion passed unanimously.

f. Resolution Authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement for a U.S. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Implementation Grant to fund Climate-friendly Regulations and Processes (motion)

Senior Regional Planner Stephanie Camp explained SCRCOG would enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Western Connecticut Council of Government (West COG) to apply for CPRG implementation funding to provide technical assistance to local governments to decarbonize local regulations and processes. Five other COGs are also joining the application through MOUs. A motion was made by Mayor Garrett and seconded by First Selectman Hoey. The motion passed unanimously.

g. Executive Directors Report

Executive Director Amento summarized recent activity on the projects funded by the RSG Spending Plan. Those projects include Housing, Cyber Security, Solid Waste and Recycling, Food waste diversion and composting, Purchasing, Economic Development, Grants Assistance, and Green Energy. Work is continuing on three recent grants received by SCRCOG: the \$1 million EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant, a \$2.2 million OPM Regional Performance Incentive Grant for the Regional Cybersecurity Assessment and Protection Initiative, and a \$353,000 DEEP grant for investigating the feasibility of creating a Regional Solid Waste Authority. In addition, SCRCOG expects to receive an extension of time to utilize \$63,000 from DEEP to continue work on food waste and Unit-Based Pricing programs in the region.

h. Regional Planning Staff Report

Senior Regional Planner Camp advised applications for the two Memorandums of Agreement for U.S. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Implementation Grants are due by Monday, April 1st.

i. Regional Planning Commission March Action Table

Chair Cofrancesco advised that the March Action Table was included in the packet for review.

j. Sustainable CT Update

Deputy Director Francis noted that several candidates have applied to replace Lynn Stoddard as Executive Director of Sustainable CT. Francis also advised of interviews being conducted next week for Sustainable CT fellowships.

k. REX Development Report

Ginny Kozlowski reported that REX is updating the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. There are currently 90,000 open job positions in the state. Ginny also advised that the Conference for Tourism is being held today at The Bushnell. The State of Connecticut introduced a new map replacing the CT DOT map. Manufacturer CT will be presenting at the REDFO meeting tomorrow at SCRCOG at noon.

l. Congressional Reports

No report was presented since no representatives were present.

m. State Legislative Reports – CCM, COST

Mike Muszyunski from CCM referred to the CCM Legislative Report containing updates on all important bills affecting municipalities, which was distributed at the meeting. Muszyunski stated that these are the top issues CCM will be focusing on for the rest of the legislative session and that there are no problematic bills that CCM was concerned with.

Betsy Gara from COST referred to COST's Legislative Report which was distributed at the meeting. She advised that the committees have met their deadlines. The bills that were before the GAE committee were approved and will be sent out today. The Finance Committee has a bill before it which would phase out the car tax and increase the assessed value of homes. Betsy stressed the importance of reaching out to CCM and COST with any concerns.

n. DEMHS Report

Nicole Velardi reminded SCRCOG members of the CCM Emergency Management Symposium being held on April 23rd in Niantic. Region 2 is putting together a Migrant Response Workshop on April 5th from 9am to 12 noon in Hamden. Velardi noted that an email was sent to all CEOs regarding the 2023 Homeland Security Grant Program MOAs. They need to be submitted by June 30th for the grant program. She also stressed that Proxy Letters need to be submitted for the next REPT meeting which will be held on Friday, May 17th in Bethany. Velardi also reminded SCRCOG members that, if your town participates in the Emergency Management Grant Program, all applications for open years are due by March 31st. DEMHS has started the REPT by-law revision process and she noted that the main issue to be addressed is the inability to meet a quorum. A suggestion was made that, instead of the CEOs, the REPT would be better served by the EMD as municipal representatives. A survey will be sent out to the municipalities for their feedback.

7. Regional Cooperation/Other Business

Executive Director Amento announced his retirement from SCRCOG as Executive Director effective on June 30, 2024. Amento has served as SCRCOG's Executive Director since January of 2010.

8. Adjournment

First Selectman Hoey made a motion to adjourn. First Selectman Cardozo seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:47 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor Lauren Garrett, *Secretary*