



Minutes of the March 19, 2025 Meeting
of the Southeastern CT Council of Governments

PRESENT:

Bozrah	Glenn Pianka	New London	Michael Passero
Colchester	Bernie Dennler	North Stonington	Bob Carlson
East Lyme	Dan Cunningham	Norwich	John Salomone
Franklin	Alden Miner	Preston	-
Griswold	-	Salem	-
Jewett City	-	Sprague	Cheryl Blanchard
City of Groton	-	Town of Stonington	Danielle Chesebrough
Town of Groton	-	Stonington Borough	Michael Schefers
Lebanon	-	Waterford	-
Ledyard	Fred Allyn	Windham	Thomas DeVivo
Lisbon	Tom Sparkman	SEAT Rep (MPO)	Tom Sparkman
Montville	Lenny Bunnell	CT DOT Rep (MPO)	Jennifer Pacacha
Military Liaisons:	US Coast Guard Academy: - New London SUBASE: Captain Ken Curtin, Steve Sadlowski		
Tribal Affiliates:	Mohegan Tribe: - Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation: -		

SECOG staff: Amanda Kennedy, Kate Rattan, Lana Melonakos-Harrison, Daniel Robinson. seCTer: RT Brown. SEAT: Mike Carroll. Office of Sen. Blumenthal: Ellen Graham. Office of Rep. Courtney: Noah Carver. Health Districts: Jennifer Muggeo, Patrick McCormack. Eversource: Jaquan Samuels, Egzon Balidemaj, Rebecca Spurrier. Eastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition: Deb Mathiasen. DEMHS: Mike Caplet. BL Companies: Dominick Celtruda. CT Department of Public Health: Lisa Anderson.

1) Call to Order:

- a) Chairman Blanchard called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2) Roll Call:

- a) A quorum was present to vote on all matters.

3) Act on Minutes of the January February 19th meeting:

- a) MOTION: To approve the minutes (Sparkman, DeVivo). Motion passed

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unanimously.

4) Treasurer's Report:

- a) MOTION: To approve the Treasurer's Report (Sparkman, DeVivo). SECOG Treasurer Cunningham spoke to the validity and accuracy of the prepared Treasurer's Report. Motion passed unanimously.

5) Communications

- a) There were no communications.

6) Public Comment:

- a) Mr. Balidemaj thanked emergency management folks for their swift response to the recent windstorms, and instructed municipal officials to let Eversource know when their EMDs are out of town. Mr. Balidemaj stated that Eversource is accepting Community Grant applications for up to \$2,500.

7) Guest Speaker – Lisa Anderson, CT Department of Public Health – Influenza A H5N1 Update (Bird Flu)

- a) Ms. Anderson began with a brief history of Bird Flu, tracking its emergence in Europe in 2020 to its current presence in North America. She clarified that currently humans and cats are dead-end hosts, meaning that, if transmitted, they can not transmit the diseases to other humans/cats respectively. Currently in the US, there have been 70 cases, 1 death, and 2 hospitalizations for humans. There have been no human cases reported in Connecticut or the rest of New England. Ms. Anderson stated that general risk for the public remains low. She likened Influenza A H5N1 symptoms to those of a typical flu, except that conjunctivitis is a common early symptom. She cautioned the Board to avoid contact with dead birds or eating raw/unpasteurized/undercooked/uncooked animal products like milk, beef, poultry, etc. CT DOAG, USDA, and CT DEEP are coordinating the testing of animals, and CT DPH and local health officials will monitor human exposure and administer isolations if necessary.
- b) Mr. Cunningham inquired if seagulls could be carriers of Influenza A H5N1 (yes) Mr. Carlson asked how infections in backyard flocks are detected. Flock owners are calling their vets if they spot symptoms in their poultry, vets then report to the state. If the disease is detected after testing, the entire flock must be culled. She instructed Mr. Carlson to reach out to CT DOAG for more information. She also informed Mr. DeVivo to direct his residents to the CT DPH website for instructions and information. Ms. Kennedy asked about the impact to large egg producers in Southeastern CT, to which Ms. Anderson replied that they are working closely with these producers to reduce risk, and have seen no cases as

of yet – and that they’re hoping to keep it that way.

8) Committee and Liaison Reports:

a) Executive Committee

- i) Ms. Kennedy shared that the minutes of the March Executive Committee meeting are available. She then introduced two items reviewed by the Executive Committee on March 4th, for potential board approval.

(1) SECOG Public Participation Plan

- (a) No comments received on draft. MOTION: For SECOG Board to approve the updated SECOG Public Participation Plan (Sparkman, Carlson). Motion passed unanimously.

(2) 2025 LOTCIP Pre-Applications

- (a) A memo describing the four pre-applications was included in the packet. All projects were eligible projects. MOTION: For SECOG Board to approve the 2025 LOTCIP Pre-Applications (Scheffers, Cunningham). Motion passed unanimously.

- b) Legislative Committee – Mr. Allyn thanked SECOG staff for submitting letters of support for bills related to SECOG’s Legislative Agenda. He then provided an update on notable items from the CGA’s ongoing legislative session, including universal pre-K, absence of fees on credit card tax payments, early voting windows, drones, summer camp regulations, and the veterans’ tax exemption issue. Ms. Kennedy spoke regarding bills that would mandate new COG duties, including building official tasks, housing planning, disconnected youth programs, and stormwater/solid waste management (some items would bring supporting funding). Another bill would require all towns to have fair rent commissions, but allow towns to partner with COGs to administer a regional commission. Mr. Carroll spoke on possible free fare legislation that would negatively affect SEAT’s ability to provide service. Ms. Chesebrough spoke about unfunded mandates and municipalities’ struggle to respond. She requested that a letter be sent as soon as possible from the SECOG region (and possibly other COGs) to highlight the importance of municipal voices, to which Mr. Allyn agreed. Ms. Kennedy stated that she would bring up the issue at the next COG Directors’ Meeting. She asked Ms. Chesebrough to provide narrative for a letter.
- c) Military Community – Captain Curtin thanked SECOG for their work on the OLDCC grant programs. He shared that SECOG grants have supported completion of plans for utility improvements to benefit the base community and that the SUBASE is hopeful that implementation funds will be made available.

The USS Iowa will be commissioned on April 5th and will be a big event for the SUBASE, drawing attendees from across the government. Ms. Kennedy shared that she and Ms. Zincavage will soon be attending a conference in Washington, D.C. to gain information on the stability of the defense community programs going forward.

- d) Congressional Office Report – Ms. Graham, of Senator Blumenthal’s Office, shared that there will be an increase to defense spending in the recently approved Continuing Resolution bill in Congress. Mr. Carver, of Representative Courtney’s Office, shared that Rep. Courtney is currently in CT and talking to various communities. He concluded by talking about the uncertainty around federal impacts to FAFSA and other student aid programs, as well as an update on significant job losses within the IRS.
- e) seCTer – Mr. Brown asked the Board to contribute information for seCTer’s upcoming update to their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). He asked that projects that align with the CEDS be documented via an online form, which will be hosted until Memorial Day. The form can be filled out by municipalities, developers, non-profits, etc. He will send out the form once it’s ready.
- f) SEAT – Mr. Carroll informed the Board that SEAT’s ridership decreased in February, but was not unanticipated (i.e. shorter month, rougher weather). SEAT also is working with 40% less staff as 3 operators are currently off-the-job. SEAT is working to enable credit card payments on buses soon.
- g) Emergency Planning – Mr. Caplet instructed the Board to check their emails for info on a seminar flood awareness for businesses and individuals on March 26th at UCONN Avery Point.
- h) Human Services – Ms. Kennedy noted that RHSCC meetings are on hold until staff can be reassigned to support this group.
- i) Cultural Coalition – Ms. Mathiasen expressed her gratitude for SECOG meetings as a resource to connect with others in the region. She shared that the CT Arts Awards will be on April 2nd, which will be honoring some people from Southeastern CT. She also spoke about Make Music Day, taking place on June 21st. She stated that the registration window for artist performances is in April. She concluded that there will be a Zoom meeting on April 10th for more information.
- j) Health Districts – Mr. McCormack spoke about the high number of childhood lead cases reported so far in 2025, outpacing previous years as the threshold for acceptable lead has decreased. He stated that the financial relief to the health

districts to deal with the increased cases is nonexistent. Mr. McCormack explained that Uncas Health District has had to pull funds internally, with the alternative of asking the municipalities for larger contributions. He expects that in the wake of a pattern of unfunded mandates, municipalities will have to pitch in more. Additionally, Mr. McCormack spoke on the lack of funding for landlords to remediate properties, while tenants are reluctant to let health officials in out of a fear of eviction, coupled with a lack of alternative housing. Ms. Muggeo stated that the state legislature is taking action to allow Naloxone boxes again.

- k) Solid Waste Committee – Mr. Allyn spoke about the upcoming in-person meeting on April 22nd at 8:30 AM and bus tour May 8th.

9) Executive Director's Report:

- a) Ms. Kennedy summarized key updates from her report. She announced that SECOG had been awarded \$475,000 under CT DEEP's Materials Management Infrastructure Grant program. SECOG will be partnering with Windham to add a composter at their transfer station and to secure totes, specialized trucks, and collection points around town. SECOG also received a Strategic Partnership Award from the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut.

Ms. Kennedy informed the Board of the upcoming submission deadline for the Active Transportation Microgrant Program on March 20th. Additionally, the CTDOT Section 5310 Grant program is currently accepting applications through SECOG and CTDOT. Ms. Kennedy also stated that CT DEEP Land and Water Conservation Fund applications are due April 1st for park acquisition and improvement projects. She then spoke about SECOG's upcoming submission of an application to the FEMA BRIC program for the ongoing Resilient Yantic River project. Next, Ms. Kennedy spoke about SECOG's work on an application for extreme heat mitigation in New London.

The Regional Stormwater Collaborative will hold its initial meeting on March 27th at 8:30 AM at the SECOG Office. Ms. Kennedy also spoke about a survey of municipal cell tower leases and instructed those interested to talk to her for more information. She then shared that she is engaged with OPM on the Fair Share affordable housing study on the methodology of their findings, and she plans to attend OPM's upcoming meeting on the matter to learn about Phase 2 work.

10) Old Business

- a) There was no old business to report on.

11) New Business

- a) MOTION: To approve the TIP amendments as of March 2025 (Allyn, Sparkman).

- i) **0052-0094** NHS Replace BR 00935 (Bridge on Route 32, Franklin)
o/NECRRR (New England Central Railroad)
- ii) **0170-3640** Service Plaza Mainline Sign and Support Replacement
(Windham)
- iii) **0170-5026** Replace highway signs and supports
- b) Discussion: Mr. Miner raised concerns about project 0052-0094.
- c) Vote: Approve: Cheryl Blanchard, Tom Sparkman, Glenn Pianka, Bob Carlson,
Tom DeVivo, Bernie Dennler, John Salomone, Danielle Chesebrough, Michael
Scheffers, Michael Passero, Fred Allyn, Lenny Bunnell. Oppose: Alden Miner.
Motion passes.

12)Next Meeting

- a) Chairman Blanchard stated that the next Board Meeting will take place on April
16th at 8:30 AM at SECOG's Office.

13)Adjournment

- a) MOTION: To adjourn the meeting (Scheffers, Carlson). Motion passed
unanimously.