



Minutes of the September 17, 2025, Meeting of the Southeastern CT Council of Governments

Present:

Bozrah	Glenn Pianka	New London	Michael Passero
Colchester	-	North Stonington	Bob Carlson
East Lyme	Dan Cunningham	Norwich	John Salomone
Franklin	Alden Miner	Preston	Sandra Allyn-Gauthier
Griswold	-	Salem	Ed Chmielewski
Jewett City	-	Sprague	Cheryl Blanchard
City of Groton	-	Town of Stonington	Danielle Chesebrough
Town of Groton	John Burt	Stonington Borough	Michael Schefers
Lebanon	Kevin Cwikla	Waterford	Rob Brule
Ledyard	Fred Allyn	Windham	
Lisbon	-	SEAT Rep (MPO)	-
Montville	Lenny Bunnell	CT DOT Rep (MPO)	-
Military Liasons:	US Coast Guard Academy: - Lt. Victoria Sparacino, ADD New London SUBASE: Captain Ken Curtin, ADD		
Tribal Affiliates:	Mohegan Tribe: - Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation: Bob Hayward		

Additional attendees: SECOG: Amanda Kennedy, Taylor Lussier, Dominic Anziano. Electric Boat: Ross Gionfriddo. Senator Murphy's Office: Erin McBride. Senator Blumenthal's Office: Ellen Graham. Rep. Courtney's Office: Noah Carver. Eversource: Egzon Balidemaj, Rebecca Spurrier, Jaquan Samuels. New London Parking Authority: Carey Redd. SEAT: Mike Carroll. BL Companies: Dominick Celtruda. SERAC: Mark Irons. seCTer: Paul Whitescarver.

1. Call to Order:

- a. The meeting was called to order by Cheryl Blanchard, Chairman at 8:30 AM.

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Si necesita asistencia lingüística, por favor comuníquese a SECOG.

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2. Roll Call:

- a. Ms. Kennedy determined that a quorum was present.

3. Act on Minutes of the July 16th meeting

- a. MOTION: To approve the July meeting minutes (Allyn, Brule). Motion passed unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Report:

- a. MOTION: To approve the Treasurer's Report (Brule, Allyn). Mr. Cunningham stated that he reviewed checks, and all seemed to be in order. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Communications:

- a. No communications were reported

6. Public Comment

- a. Eversource (Egzon Balidemaj): Mr. Balidemajo spoke about winter discount rates/hardship programs, emergency response planning, and the rate 115 change.
- b. Gene Birch, Campground Zoning Issues: Mr. Birch, a campground site owner, raised concerns about new zoning interpretations requiring the removal of in-ground irrigation systems. He stated these systems were installed prior to current regulations and meet health department standards, requesting a quick resolution from the town of Preston to prevent freezing and avoid legal action. Ms. Kennedy stated that she is aware of this issue.
- c. Mark Irons:, Executive Director of CRA Southeastern Region Action Council, introduced his nonprofit, which focuses on substance abuse, gambling, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention. Services are free and cover all 41 towns in Eastern Connecticut. He highlighted Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and the 988 national crisis line.

7. Speaker: SECOG Director of Regional Planning Helen Zincavage - 2027 Regional Plan of Conservation and Development.
- a. Overall Objective: The plan aims to promote coordinated development of the region and the general welfare and prosperity of its people, considering land use, transportation, economic development, and regional characteristics. It will articulate 10-year goals, necessary actions, and a work program.
 - b. Key Audiences: Identified audiences include SECOG members/affiliates/staff, the public, and partner/stakeholder groups, with an emphasis on obtaining feedback for technical assistance improvement.
 - c. Planning Process: The process involves three main tasks:
 - i) Data Gathering and Synthesis: Analysis of local, state, and federal data.
 - ii) Regional Buildout Analysis: A unique GIS exercise to map the current development potential based on town zoning. This will aid in planning, infrastructure placement, climate impact mitigation, and public communication.
 - iii) Engagement Process: Methods include regular local check-ins, a speaker series, partner conversations, pop-up tabling, social media, and an online hub.
 - d. Digital Tools: Development of digital tools to assist local decision-making, grant applications, and public communications.
 - e. Local Point of Contact Framework: To replace the previous steering committee, a local point of contact framework is proposed, where each member and affiliate designates a liaison for the RPC process.

- f. Speaker Series: Envisioned as an "evolved lunch and learn" featuring subject matter experts, offering AICP credits, with a budget for approximately six events.
 - g. Expected Outcomes: The plan document, advanced digital tools (especially the buildout analysis), and a clear work plan.
 - h. Timeline: 2025 for engagement strategy design and data compilation; 2026 for focused engagement; 2027 for draft plan completion by June and adoption by November.
 - i. Next Steps: Designate municipal RPC point of contact within six months, consider participating in the digital tools working group, and suggest speaker series topics. Mr. Pianka asked if SECOG would review the effectiveness of the last plan. Ms. Zinavage replied yes. Mr. Pianka asked about regional participation last time. Ms. Kennedy stated good turnout at some workshops (~60 people) but that outreach for 2017 was very traditional.
8. Committee and Liaison Reports:
- a. Executive Committee: [Minutes from September 2, 2025](#), were distributed in the meeting package. No action items were recommended.
 - b. Legislative Committee: A meeting will be held immediately after this to gather ideas for the upcoming short legislative session. Ideas can also be emailed by October 8th. A special session is anticipated around October 23rd to address House Bill 50002, the omnibus affordable housing bill. SECOG's 2025 summary of legislation has been finalized and is available in hard copy and online. Feedback on corrections is welcomed.
 - c. Tribal Liaison Representatives: Bob Haward (Mashantucket Pequot): The tribe approved a 10,000 square-foot health facility. This facility will benefit

the region, offering mental health services and a pharmacy, and will be centrally located near the museum and public works.

- d. Military Command Representatives: Lt. Sparacino, Coast Guard Academy: Parents Weekend was last weekend, and Homecoming is this coming weekend. The ship "Eagle" returns to New London tomorrow afternoon. Community Day is scheduled for October 25th, and the Secretaries Cup football game against the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (KP) will be held at Fenway Park on November 15th, with flyers available for ticket information. Commander Lyman was introduced as the new external affairs officer. Capt. Curtin, SUBASE New London: The National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) conference is concluding today. A \$96 million contract was awarded for waterfront recapitalization to support next-generation Virginia-class submarines, with ground/water breaking expected late this year. Capt. Curtin announced his departure, thanking the community for its support of subbase personnel and families, and introduced his relief, Captain Craig Litty, whose change of command is next Friday, September 26th.
- e. Congressional Office Report: Noah Carver (Office of Rep. Courtney): A Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund the government until November 21st has been introduced. Three of 12 appropriations bills have passed, including the NDAA, which includes an amendment for two more submarines. Increased issues with constituents accessing the Social Security Administration and IRS were noted, with congressional offices offering assistance. Ellen Graham (Office of Sen. Blumenthal): Confirmed monitoring the NDAA in the Senate and the CR, offering assistance for any issues.

- f. seCTer: Paul Whitescarver reported that the Defense Community Partnership with Electric Boat is progressing. Loans and grants are available for small businesses. The River Heritage Park tour season was robust. A pitch competition is scheduled for October 8th in Norwich. The use of Placer AI for event analysis was highlighted by Ms. Allyn-Gauthier, who reported that it provided valuable data on attendance (over 9,900 people for a carnival event), visitor origins, and economic spillover, proving useful for event planning and securing sponsorships. The annual meeting will be held on December 10th at the Norwood Inn and Spa, with Electric Boat's VP of Strategy and Communications as speaker.
- g. SEAT: Mike Carroll reported that ridership remains robust, with almost 100,000 boardings last month. New Sunday service has started on regional routes, but local Sunday service expansion is constrained by a tight labor market, including an opening for a finance manager. A provisional agreement with CT DOT will continue the Smart Ride microtransit service in New London, with some fare and service changes. The bus stop implementation program will begin this fall, moving to designated bus stops from a flag-down system. It was announced that a 2018 diesel bus was lost due to a fire approximately two hours prior to the meeting, with no injuries reported.
- h. Health Districts: Jennifer Muggeo of LLHD stated that as we are heading into respiratory virus season, urging the public to get COVID and flu vaccinations. Health departments can help locate COVID vaccines and are administering flu vaccines. Mr. Carlson commented that municipalities have opioid funds to distribute and asked the health districts to request funding to support their work.

- i. Solid Waste Committee: Mayor Allyn announced that the next solid waste meeting is October 21st at 8:30 AM at SECOG. Thanks were extended to Captain Curtain and his team for their successful sponsorship of the USS Indiana event.
- 9. Executive Director's Report: Ms. Kennedy highlighted the following from her submitted report:
 - a. HB5002 & Buildout Analysis: If HB5002 passes, requiring municipal land inventories, SECOG's regional buildout analysis will provide valuable support. A Zoom meeting for municipal planners will be convened to coordinate resources.
 - b. Groton Utilities Grant: Tentative approval was received for a \$5.8 million implementation grant from the Office of Local Defense Community Collaboration for Groton Utilities to improve water infrastructure serving the SUBASE and its communities.
 - c. New SECOG Staff: Dominic Anziano joined as Planner 1, specializing in environmental engineering, involved in transportation and brownfields projects. Taylor Lussier joined as Planner 1/Municipal Programs Specialist, with a background in municipal land use planning. She will focus on municipal regulatory matters, liaison activities, SECOG board support, and interpreting regulations for the buildout analysis, also assisting towns with local plans of conservation development.
 - d. LOTCIP Program: A solicitation for new projects is expected in the next one to two months.
 - e. Human Services Coordinating Council: This group, dormant for a year, will resume meeting on October 17th, seeking input on its most useful functions.

- f. Municipal Services: SECOG staff (Taylor Lussier and David Cook) are assisting Bozrah and Preston with permitting software setup, aiming for increased efficiency and exploring broader collaboration.
- g. Corridor Study Copies: Ms. Kennedy confirmed that SECOG always welcomes digital copies of any studies undertaken by municipalities.

10. Old Business:

- a. No old business was discussed.

11. New Business:

- a. No new business was discussed.

12. Next Meeting:

- a. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 15th. The speakers will be Steven Perry and Kim Bradley, discussing DEEP Grant Programs.

13. Adjournment:

- a. MOTION: to adjourn (Cwikla, Chmielecki). Motion passed unanimously.