



**SOUTHEASTERN
CONNECTICUT
COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS**

5 Connecticut Avenue
Norwich, CT 06360
(860)889-2324
secogct.gov

Representing 22 towns, cities, and
boroughs in Southeastern
Connecticut.

Minutes of the October 15, 2025, Meeting of the Southeastern CT Council of Governments

Present:

Bozrah	Glenn Pianka	New London	Michael Passero
Colchester	-	North Stonington	Bob Carlson
East Lyme	-	Norwich	
Franklin	-	Preston	Sandra Allyn-Gauthier
Griswold	-	Salem	Ed Chmielewski
Jewett City	Lori Sorder	Sprague	Cheryl Blanchard
City of Groton	Keith Hedrick	Town of Stonington	Danielle Chesebrough
Town of Groton	John Burt	Stonington Borough	
Lebanon	Kevin Cwikla	Waterford	Rob Brule
Ledyard	Fred Allyn	Windham	Tom Devivo
Lisbon	Tom Sparkman	SEAT Rep (MPO)	Tom Sparkman
Montville		CT DOT Rep (MPO)	-Jennifer Pacacha
Military Liasons:	US Coast Guard Academy: - New London SUBASE: Captain Craig Litty, Cece Sangello		
Tribal Affiliates:	Mohegan Tribe: - Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation:		

Additional attendees: SECOG: Amanda Kennedy, Taylor Lussier, Kate Rattan, David Cook. Electric Boat: Ross Gionfriddo. Senator Murphy's Office: Erin McBride. Rep. Courtney's Office: Noah Carver. Eversource: Rebecca Spurrier and Jaquan Samuels. seCTer: Paul Whitescarver. UNCAS: Patrick McCormack.

1) Call to Order:

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

2) Roll Call:

*If disability or language assistance is needed, please contact SECOG at 860-889-2324,
office@secogct.gov.*

Si necesita asistencia lingüística, por favor comuníquese a SECOG.

如果需要残障或语言帮助, 请联系 SECOG.

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

3) Act on Minutes of the September 17th meeting *Action Item:*

a) MOTION: To approve the September meeting minutes (Brule, Cwikla). Motion passed unanimously.

4) Treasurer's Report *Action Item:*

a) MOTION: To approve the Treasurer's Report (Sparkman, Cwikla). Motion passed unanimously.

5) Communications:

a) Liz Burdick, Mobile Home Financing: An email was included in the packet from Liz Burdick, who is on the mobile manufactured home state committee, sharing information about a CHFA program for low-interest loans for mobile manufactured homes.

6) Public Comment:

- a) Josh Kelly (TVCCA): All TVCCA programs currently have funding but may close in a staggered manner depending on the length of the shutdown. The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LiHEAP) is funded through December 31st, and constituents should be aware of potential closures approaching that date. Programs like Head Start appear to be drawing down funding fine. WIC is currently state-funded, but the agency only has about five days of operating expenses if that funding stops. TVCCA employs 400 people and serves 25,000 residents in the SECOG area through programs ranging from the Family Bridge program to Meals on Wheels.
- b) Departing Members: Two members, Kevin Cwikla and Keith Hedrick, announced they are not seeking re-election, stating it has been a sincere honor and privilege to serve with the group.
- c) Eversource Update: Rebecca Spurrier reported on prep and response to the recent weekend storm. Crews unblocked 145 roads. Restoration statistics were

strong, including restoring 98% of customers in one town in under nine hours. A reminder was issued to notify the community relations specialist of any change to the single point of contact following elections. The annual ERP meeting will be held on November 6th in Berlin.

7) Speaker: Steven Perry & Kim Bradley, CT DEEP re: Trails and Open Space Grants:

- a) Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA): This program is for municipalities, land trusts, and water companies to acquire ecologically or recreationally valuable land, which is protected in perpetuity with a conservation easement recorded by DEEP. The maximum award is 65% of the property's fair market value, or 75% if the property is located in an EJ community, distressed municipality, or targeted investment community. Incidental costs can also be reimbursed for projects in those communities. Applications require a "yellowbook appraisal" and a confirmatory appraisal. Applications are due November 3rd, but due to the 90- to 120-day lead time for appraisers, attendees were encouraged to start the process now for next year's round. OSWA is DEEP's main vehicle for partner land acquisitions, having provided nearly \$200 million since 1998 to protect approximately 50,000 acres. Connecticut has a goal to acquire 21% of the land area as open space. This definition includes farmland if it has legal protection and golf courses. OSWA is strictly for the acquisition of land, not acquisition of development rights.
- b) Urban Green Community Garden Grant Program (UGCG): This is an improvement-based (not acquisition-based) grant. It is open to municipalities and nonprofits for projects in distressed municipalities, EJ census tracts, and targeted investment communities. UGCG is reimbursement-based with no maximum request, although approximately \$2.5 million is available in total. Applications are due December 17th. Fundable items include native plantings, trees, walking paths, picnic tables, minor structures (like sheds), and professional

services. It will not fund large infrastructure (sewer/electrical connections) but will fund green infrastructure. The application requires demonstrating a 50% matching funds commitment. Match requirements are flexible and may include volunteer labor (assigned a value of approximately \$30 per hour), municipal funds, salary for public works employees, and dollars supportive of green space maintenance.

- c) Connecticut Recreational Trail Grant Program: This program is state bond funded (established 2015) and supports trail improvement, creation, maintenance, and restoration, with a focus on accessibility. The program can fund acquisition and land easements specifically for trail corridors. Open to municipalities, nonprofits, state departments, and tribal governments. Requests are recommended to be around a maximum of \$500,000. The due date is December 18th. An in-depth overview webinar is scheduled for Thursday, October 16th at 1 PM. The required match is 20% of the full project budget. Match requirements are flexible, including in-kind volunteer and municipal labor. The program has future allocations of \$10 million in 2025 and \$10 million in both 2026 and 2027.
- d) Ms. Kennedy noted that SECOG's regional open space plan from last year found the region was at 22% regional overall open space, with 13% formally protected.

8) Committee and Liaison Reports:

- a) Executive Committee

- i) [Minutes 10/7/25](#)

- ii) In Memoriam: Passing of [Richard B. Erickson](#): Jim Butler, former Executive Director, spoke about Richard B. Erickson, the inaugural executive director of the Regional Planning Agency and SECOG, who served for over 30 years. Mr. Erickson was recognized for inviting the two federally recognized tribal nations, the United States Coast Guard Academy, and the Naval Submarine Base to the table as non-voting members. The board observed a moment of

- silence. Chairman Blanchard stated that the boardroom will be named the Richard B. Erickson Memorial Boardroom.
- iii) Adoption of Safety Performance Targets [\(Resolution\)](#) [\(Targets\)](#):
Proposed Motion: SECOG MPO Board adoption of Resolution 26-3 endorsing targets for safety performance measures established by CT DOT
MOTION: (Brule, Hedrick) Motion passed unanimously.
- iv) LOTCIP: Endorse Stonington Route 1 Application [\(Memo\)](#)
Proposed Motion: Endorse Application for Stonington Bicycle Facility – US Route 1 for LOTCIP funding
MOTION: (Sparkman, Pianka) Motion passed unanimously.
- b) Legislative Committee: At its most recent meeting, the committee redrafted legislative priorities, including seeking to reduce early voting to seven days; suggesting any new unfunded mandate be offset by the removal of two existing mandates; fast-tracking permitting for Lisbon and New Britain solid waste burners; requiring annual certification and income limitation for the veterans exemption; adjusting the SPED cost multiplier and allowing funds to follow the pupil; and implementing a 1% local sales tax split. The need for legislative changes to help control the unruly use of minibikes, motorcycles, and quads (due to enforcement limitations under the Police Accountability Act) was requested for inclusion in the legislative agenda. The committee will meet via Zoom on Wednesday, October 29th at 9:00 AM to polish the priorities. Members raised serious concerns about unfunded mandates, citing the high cost of mandatory newspaper publication for charter revisions (even with low circulation) and the expense of running separate voting districts (e.g., Eastern Connecticut State University, costing about \$10,000). A significant concern was raised that the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) is requiring three towns (Waterford, Southington, and Guilford) to conduct a second revaluation within three years,

despite stating no municipality would be required to do so. The average cost of a revaluation is approximately \$280,000.

Motion: (Chmielewski, Allyn) to amend the agenda to include a discussion of the assessment cycle in Waterford and Stonington. Motion passed unanimously.

- i) Reappointment of Legislative Committee: Ms. Kennedy noted the existing legislative committee membership, and asked for any new volunteers, stating that reappointments officially occur at the December Meeting.
- c) Tribal Liaison Representatives: Not Present.
- d) Military Command Representatives: CAPT Litty reported that the mission at Subase New London continues despite the federal lapse in appropriations. The sub base put the Albany into the floating dry dock on October 2nd, the first time in four years, bringing an additional 300 naval shipyard workers. The pier replacement project remains on track, with the next step being to award the design contract. A veteran's activity is being hosted on the base this Saturday to provide information on veteran's benefits.
- e) Congressional Office Report: Mr. Carver and Ms. McBride provided a status update. Congressional offices are fully staffed by excepted staff (working unpaid) to assist constituents during the shutdown, though agencies are slow to respond. SNAP benefits are covered for 30 days following the start of the shutdown. Some grants, especially EPA and FEMA grants, are being canceled.
- f) seCTer: Mr. Whitescarver report that the annual meeting is December 10th at the Norwich Inn and Spa, featuring Ray Gabriel, Vice President from Electric Boat. seCTer is also sponsoring an AI workshop this Thursday.
- g) Eastern CT Tourism District: Not present
- h) SEAT: The SEAT meeting for the morning was cancelled.
- i) Regional Water Committee: No comment
- j) Regional Emergency Planning Team: Mr. Sparkman reminded members that

MOAs for REPT are due from eight remaining SECOG towns.

- k) Regional Human Services Coordinating Council: The first meeting in almost a year is this Friday, where members will hear from Senior Resources about available services for seniors. Ms. Kennedy asked for additional CEOs to participate.
 - l) Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition: Not present
 - m) Health Districts: Vaccines for the uninsured are available through funding from the Edward and Mary Ward Foundation. The district is seeing cases of wells going dry. There is a shortage of well drillers in the region, leading to potential six-month delays for new wells. The new lead poisoning level of 5 for children under six has led to about 50 active cases, many now in smaller rural towns. There is currently no funding available to assist small towns with remediation costs. The health district is actively following four active tuberculosis cases, requiring directly observed therapy. The speaker noted that federal funding cuts to organizations like TVCCA (WIC, Meals on Wheels) will indirectly impact the local health district and towns.
 - n) Solid Waste Committee: The committee will meet next Tuesday at 8:30 AM to hear speakers on tire recycling and gas cylinder recycling.
- 9) Executive Director's Report:
- a) LOTCIP Solicitation: An information session for new LOTCIP projects is scheduled for this afternoon at 2:30 PM (Teams). Preliminary applications are due November 14th.
 - b) Staffing: Taylor Lussier joined as Municipal Programs Specialist. Lana Harrison departed, and SECOG is seeking candidates for an Assistant Transportation Planner.
 - c) EWIB: Mayor Peter Nestrom is not seeking re-election, leaving an opening for a representative on the EWIB CEO Council.
 - d) Yantic River Flooding: A grant application was submitted for a FEMA-funded

\$300,000 program in partnership with Norwich to remove the upper falls dam, although the status of the grant round is currently unclear.

10) Old Business: None

11) New Business:

a) Nominating Committee: Ed Chmielewski is leaving, and a volunteer is needed for the Nominating Committee.

i) b) Revaluation Letter: MOTION (Blanchard/ Brule) to write a letter to OPM regarding the three-year revaluation cycle concern. Motion passed unanimously.

12) Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 19th. Speaker: CT Comptroller Sean Scanlon

13) Adjournment: MOTION to adjourn (Allyn, Chmielewski). Motion passed unanimously.