



Minutes of the November 19, 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	
Franklin	Judi Novosad	Preston	Sandra Allyn-Gauthier
Griswold	Tina Falck	Salem	Ed Chmielewski
Jewett City	Lori Sorder	Sprague	Cheryl Blanchard
City of Groton	Keith Hedrick	Town of Stonington	Bill Middleton
Town of Groton	John Burt	Stonington Borough	Michael Scheffers
Lebanon	Kathleen Smith	Waterford	Rob Brule
Ledyard	Fred Allyn	Windham	Tom 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 Craig Litty, Tori Sparacino, Steve Sadlowski		
Tribal Affiliates:	Mohegan Tribe: - Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation: Chuck Bunnell		

Additional Attendees: SECOG: Amanda Kennedy, Taylor Lussier, Kate Rattan
Office of Sen. Murphy: Erin McBride Office of Rep. Courtney: Noah Carver seCTer: Paul
Whitescarver, R.T. Brown SEAT: Mike Carroll LLHD: Jen Muggeo Eversource: Jaquan
Samuels, Egzon Balidemaj BL Companies: Dominick Celtruda State Comptroller: Sean
Scanlon United Way: Dina Sears-Graves

1) Call to Order:

- a) The meeting was called to order by Cheryl Blanchard at 8:38 am.

2) Roll Call:

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

3) Act on Minutes of the October 15th meeting *Action Item*

*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) MOTION: To approve the October meeting minutes (Passero, Allyn). Motion passed unanimously.

4) Treasurer's Report *Action Item*

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

5) Communications

a) Info Sheets: Gas Cylinder and Tire EPR Disposal Programs: The gas cylinder fact sheet was from the cylinder collective recycling program. The tire fact sheet was put together by staff to provide a snapshot of that program. The tire program allows participants to opt in, after which the program comes and takes the tires away, covering all associated costs beyond accepting them at the transfer facility.

6) Public Comment:

a) Egzon from Eversource, accompanied by colleague Jaquan Samuels, provided updates. Due to the upcoming holidays and recent aggressive wind, they requested that the towns provide a single point of contact for emergency services, especially if personnel are taking vacations. Updates were given on the heating assistance awareness campaign. The program, partly in conjunction with the state, allows folks to qualify for a credit of approximately \$645 to \$650. They offered to meet with towns to discuss promoting the program via social media, websites, or telephone campaigns to help residents as heating bills rise.

7) Speaker: CT Comptroller Sean Scanlon, CT's Property Tax System:

a) Comptroller Sean Scanlon addressed the Council regarding property tax reform, noting this was his ninth and final COG meeting on the topic. He described the issue as complicated and vexing, stating that tackling property tax reform is essential for achieving economic growth and affordability in the state. He found that the problems are universal across the state's 169 towns, suggesting commonality in

experience and frustration.

Comptroller Scanlon is pursuing a dual-track approach to reform:

1. Citizens Assembly: Working with CCM and Yale to conduct an innovative process similar to jury duty, where a representative group of people from across the state will be paid to meet over a few Saturdays in the spring and summer of 2026 to discuss property tax issues.
2. Working Group: His office is convening a group of 16 to 18 volunteer mayors and first selectmen, who will be equally distributed across the state and by party. This group will work through six identified issue areas, including Revaluation (Reval), the future of sustainable state support, and revenue diversification options for cities and towns.

The goal is to develop common-sense proposals (singles and doubles) to move the needle forward, which can then be presented to the legislature in 2027 during the long session, after elections. He is actively seeking volunteers for this working group.

Discussion and Comments:

- County-Wide Taxation: Fred Allyn suggested considering a county-wide tax to address the inequity between "haves" and "have nots," noting that communities with small tax bases often see residents "hammered" while those with robust commercial tax bases have a better situation. Comptroller Scanlon agreed that this is an issue debated at every meeting and stressed the importance of looking at self-sustaining options given the cyclical nature of state funding.
- State Funding of Education: Michael Passero proposed that the state assume the full cost of education, using its more efficient revenue system (income, sales, corporate tax). This would provide instant property tax relief, though the state would need significant revenue adjustments. He noted that in South Carolina, the state funds education, and property taxes are significantly lower. While Scanlon

called this a "home run change," he reaffirmed the strategy of seeking smaller, achievable steps first to gain momentum.

- **Special Education:** Kathleen Smith suggested fully funding special education (SPED) at 100% as a starting point. Scanlon confirmed SPED is a working group topic. He mentioned the concept of turning special education into a risk insurance product (a statewide risk pool) to prevent catastrophic budget increases when children with high needs move into a town.
- **Unfunded Mandates and State Commitments:** Another point of discussion was fully funding existing commitments the state has made. Scanlon noted that in Massachusetts, the State Auditor has the power to deem a mandate unfunded, potentially freeing a town from implementing it.
- **Revaluation Issues:** Michael Passero discussed how revaluations, driven by the housing crisis and inflation, are skewing state formulas, noting New London dropped drastically in distressed municipality rankings without true economic change. Reval was characterized as a tax on unrealized gains. Scanlon confirmed Reval is a working group topic, mentioning ideas such as canceling revaluations during turbulent economic conditions.

8) Committee and Liaison Reports

a) Executive Committee

i) Minutes 11/3/25:

a) MOTION: to approve the November Executive Committee Minutes (DeVivo, Sparkman) Motion passed unanimously.

ii) LOTICIP Application for Funding- Waterford- Niantic River Road (Memo)

Proposed Motion: Endorse Application for Waterford Niantic River Road Improvements for LOTICIP funding

a) MOTION: to endorse the application for Waterford Niantic River Road Improvements for LOTICIP (DeVivo, Brule) Motion passed unanimously.

b) Legislative Committee – [Draft Legislative Agenda 2026:](#)

a) MOTION: to adopt the legislative agenda as proposed (DeVivo, Passero)

Motion passed unanimously.

c) Tribal Liaison Representatives: The Mohegan tribe has found potential sources of federal money for a bridge that is adjacent to or impacting the tribe. The state is considering this significant funding opportunity. The Mohegan Tribal Council has set aside funds to assist community members struggling throughout the year, not just during the holidays. Efforts are underway to improve communication and coordination among federal, state, tribal, and local enforcement following an incident at Foxwoods. Regarding the WNBA team, the possibility of the State of Connecticut buying part of the team is elusive, as the league did not show interest in having games in Hartford.

d) Military Command Representatives:

a) Coast Guard: Furloughed employees are back and receiving pay. OCS graduation is scheduled for tomorrow, and the next class reports in January. A ceremonial wreath laying ceremony honoring POWs and MIAs will be held on December 5th at 10:00 AM.

b) Naval Submarine Base: The government shutdown is over, and federal funding is rolling again, including funds for base operations service contracts. They recently hosted nearly 100 veterans for a retired activity Service Office day. The USS Newport News has returned from her final deployment and is anticipated to depart in January for decommissioning. They are wrapping up Impact Aid calculations (funding for school districts impacted by military housing) this month. Community engagement will increase in December.

e) Congressional Office Report: The Continuing Resolution lasts until January 30, though Agriculture, the Legislative Branch, Military Construction, and VA have

received full year funding. The Department of Education may be transferring a large part of its grant portfolio (including Title One and Impact Aid) to the Department of Labor and other agencies; this shift is likely to be challenged. HUD is looking at reconfiguring the continuum of care housing program, which impacts local homelessness programs. Changes to SNAP eligibility and certification, related to the One Meeting People Bill Act, will begin in December, potentially impacting over 9,000 people in Connecticut. Congressional staff encouraged directing constituents seeking federal assistance (e.g., Social Security) to their office.

- f) seCTer: seCTer staff provided information about their data services, including Jobs EQ (useful for grants and economic development) and Placer AI. Digital SEDS data is available on the website. The annual meeting will be held on December 10th at 10:30 AM at the Norwich Inn and Spa, featuring Ray Gabriel, Vice President at Electric Boat, as the keynote speaker.
- g) Eastern CT Tourism District
- h) SEAT: SEAT recorded about 100,000 warnings last month (97% on fixed route service). They are working with CT D.O.T. on a new facility in Preston, with 60% final design expected by the end of next month. The state has ordered two heavy-duty battery electric buses to replace aging fleet members, expected in about a year.
- i) Regional Water Committee
- j) Regional Emergency Planning Team: Following up on towns that have not submitted their MOAs. They are still waiting on clarification regarding funding availability for a grant, which may necessitate reconvening to approve a budget.
- k) Regional Human Services Coordinating Council: Dina Sears – Graves highlighted that resources for seniors are a common question, and they recommended the organization Senior Resources on Aging, which provides service navigators to

help callers find appropriate area programs. Alison Dvorak from Senior Resources on Aging is anticipated to speak on senior resources early in the new year.

l) Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition

m) Health Districts: Jen Muggeo reported that top-of-mind issues include:

a) Food Insecurity: Heightened by the government shutdown and confusion over SNAP eligibility/recertification. Efforts are underway to help community members maintain their SNAP benefits.

b) Housing: Concerns related to the unsheltered population as winter approaches, and a growing number of complaints regarding lack of services (e.g., heat, hot water).

c) An increasing burden on staff due to the concentration of aging housing stock. Current mandates require issuing orders to homeowners to remediate properties (costing \$50,000 to \$60,000), but there are no resources available for homeowners, exacerbating the housing crisis and creating an unfunded mandate.

n) Solid Waste Committee: The committee last met on October 21. The new Tire EPR program (Public Act from this year, starting March 2026) allows towns to sign up with the approved company, which will provide shipping containers at the transfer station and remove the tires at no charge. A similar program is available for collecting gas grill-type and one-pound Propane Cylinders at transfer stations. The committee plans to move to quarterly meetings starting in 2026.

9) Executive Director's Report: Amanda Kennedy provided the following updates:

a) Animal Shelter Program: Several communities (Griswold, Windham, Sprague, Lebanon, and Lisbon) that use the NECCOG animal shelter program are being told to find alternative solutions starting July 1. Montville expressed a desire to help more but is currently maxed out. SECOG will facilitate a conversation among the affected communities.

b) New Member Orientation: An orientation program is scheduled for December 11th (remotely), followed by one-on-one meetings with the new Chief Elected Officials.

c) Nominating Committee: Ed Chmielewski resigned; a volunteer is needed for the nominating committee to assist with the nomination of the executive committee within the next 30 days.

d) Staffing: SECOG continues to experience turnover, including the departure of Environmental Planner Emily Bigl to the DECD Brownfields program. SECOG is hiring an additional person for the Regional Planning Program and two new transportation planners (due to Deborah Pierce's departure to Mashantucket).

e) HB 8002: This bill funds two additional COG positions: one focused on storm water management and one focused on housing.

f) Housing Growth Plans (HB 8002): SECOG is responsible for assisting towns (on an opt-in basis) in developing regional housing growth plans. OPM will release housing targets by region at the end of 2026, and SECOG is responsible for developing a housing needs assessment and local allocations by June 2027. The actual regional housing growth plan is due in 2029. A conversation with municipal planners is scheduled for December 3.

g) Quarter Study Implementation: Implementation is underway for three projects proposed by quarter studies in Norwich, New London, and East Lyme. Funding is also being sought to move the design forward for the Yantic river flooding project.

h) Building Official Coverage: Efforts are underway to find alternatives for after-hours emergency coverage for the building official during holidays and vacations.

10)Old Business

11)New Business

a) 2025-2028 [TIP Amendments](#)

Proposed Motion: to recommend that SECOG MPO Board endorse TIP amendments.

0058-0350	GROTON – BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS
0113-0114	POQUETANUCK HERITAGE TRAIL
0058-0340	SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS & PAVEMENT REHAB - EXIT 89 TO RI STATE LINE - B/O of 58-307
0058-0307	SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS & PAVEMENT REHAB – EXIT 89 TO RI STATE LINE

MOTION: to recommend that SECOG MPO Board endorse TIP amendments (Allyn, DeVivo) Motion passed unanimously.

12)Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 Annual Holiday Meeting @ Flanders Fish (tent.)

13)Adjournment: MOTION: to adjourn the meeting at 9:44 AM (DeVivo, Blanchard) Motion passed unanimously.