



**SOUTHEASTERN
CONNECTICUT
COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS**

5 Connecticut Avenue

Norwich, CT 06360

(860)889-2324

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

PRESENT:

Bozrah	-	New London	Michael Passero
Colchester	-	North Stonington	Bob Carlson
East Lyme	Dan Cunningham	Norwich	-
Franklin	-	Preston	-
Griswold	Tina Falck	Salem	-
Jewett City		Sprague	Cheryl Blanchard
City of Groton	-	Town of Stonington	-
Town of Groton	John Burt	Stonington Borough	Michael Schefers
Lebanon	Kevin Cwikla	Waterford	Rob Brule
Ledyard	Fred Allyn	Windham	Thomas DeVivo
Lisbon	Tom Sparkman	SEAT Rep (MPO)	Tom Sparkman
Montville	-	CT DOT Rep (MPO)	Jennifer Pacacha
Military Liaisons:	US Coast Guard Academy: Lt. Victoria Sparacino New London SUBASE: Steve Sadlowski		
Tribal Affiliates:	Mohegan Tribe: - Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation: Bob Hayward		
CT DOT	-		

SECOG staff: Amanda Kennedy, Kate Rattan, Daniel Robinson, Debra Pierce. seCTer: Captain Paul Whitescarver. SEAT: Mike Carroll. Office of Sen. Murphy: Erin McBride. Office of Rep. Courtney: Noah Carver. Health District: Jennifer Muggeo. Eversource: Jaquan Samuels, Rebecca Spurrier. Eastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition: Deb Mathiasen. DEMHS: Mike Caplet. TVCCA: Joshua Kelly. BL Companies: Dominick Celtruda. United Way of SE CT: Scott Umbel, Kathleen Hollister.

1. Call to Order:

Chairman Blanchard called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. She then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call:

A quorum was present to vote on all matters.

3. Briefing/Public Hearing: Proposed Amendment to SECOG Public Participation Plan

Ms. Rattan provided a brief summary of SECOG's new Public Participation Plan. She touched upon the 45-day public comment period and the public hearing on

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the date of this meeting. The draft plan will be presented to the Board for potential adoption at the March 19th meeting. She concluded that, if adopted, April 1st will be the FHWA filing date.

4. Act on Minutes of the January 15th meeting:

MOTION: To approve the minutes (Brule, Allyn). Motion passed unanimously.

5. Treasurer's Report:

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

SECOG Treasurer Cunningham spoke to the validity and accuracy of the prepared Treasurer's Report.

6. Communications

There were no communications.

7. Public Comment:

Mr. Samuels, of Eversource, introduced a new employee, Rebecca Spurrier. She spoke of Eversource's success in restoring power after recent storm events.

8. Guest Speaker – Scott Umbel and Kathleen Hollister, United Way of Southeastern Connecticut Childcare Collaborative

Mr. Umbel and Ms. Hollister provided a presentation on the need for greater childcare accessibility in Southeastern Connecticut. They explored the gaps between demand and capacity, and also highlighted the lack of affordability and childcare staff. Additionally, Mr. Umbel and Ms. Hollister stressed that the northern part of the SECOG region is a "childcare desert" and has uniquely challenging circumstances. The team concluded their presentation by explaining the downstream negative economic effects of this lack of childcare and shedding light on possible solutions. They also shared upcoming workshop events for regional learning and development of solutions.

Mr. Schefers asked the team if they had childcare data on individual towns, to which Mr. Umbel responded in the affirmative. Mr. Whitescarver spoke positively about UWSECT's Childcare Collaborative and highlighted seCTer's involvement in the matter. Mr. Allyn inquired about the figure of needed childcare seats and if they were based on future projections of populations/demographics, Mr. Umbel replied that the figures were accurate to present-day conditions.

9. Committee and Liaison Reports:

a. Executive Committee

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

1. FY 2026 Budget – Ms. Kennedy briefed the board on the proposed budget. She stated that the SECOG budget is

balanced, and that \$20,000 is projected to reserve. She also stated that she is requesting an increase in municipal dues from 55 cents per capita to 58 cents per capita. She stated that dues have not increased since 2013 despite an increase in local match funding for transportation planning. She also mentioned that the proposed budget includes a 3% increase to all full-time staff salaries at the start of the new fiscal year.

- a. MOTION: For SECOG Board to approve the FY 2026 Budget (Cwikla, Schefers). Motion passed unanimously.
- b. Legislative Committee – Mr. Allyn informed the board of the Connecticut General Assembly public hearings taking place today. Topics such as school construction reimbursements, tax delinquency rates, food waste/composting funding, solar/wind power, and veterans' tax exemption were covered.
- c. Tribal Representatives – Mr. Hayward, of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, shared some recent successes at Foxwoods. The construction of the new Great Wolf Lodge resort has created many new jobs, new restaurants are opening up, hotel renovations are underway, and new infrastructure projects have been funded.
- d. Military Community – Lt. Sparacino introduced herself as the new Government Affairs Officer for CGA. She shared that flu season has been rough at the Coast Guard Academy, and that infrastructure renovations are happening on campus (with involvement from the preservation society). She invited CEOs to attend the upcoming billet ceremony for the graduating class. Mr. Carlson inquired about the speaker for the Academy's graduation. Lt. Sparacino responded that the usual rotational schedule would have the President attending in 2025. Mr. Sadlowski, of SUBASE New London, shared that the SUBASE recently completed their annual security exercise. He also provided an announcement on the new Columbia Class submarine, to be christened the USS Groton.
- e. Congressional Office Report – Ms. McBride, of Senator Murphy's Office, stated that her team is keeping an eye on freezes to federal funding. She shared that Senator Murphy is fighting for CT residents to keep funds flowing. Sen. Murphy recently held a town hall to discuss these matters. Ms. McBride concluded with a notice that the Federal Government's Continuing Resolution ends on March 14th, and a reminder to keep an eye on awarded funds and to reach out to their office if problems arise.

Mr. Carver, of Representative Courtney's Office, shared that his team was also keeping tabs on federal implications to local matters. He warned that CPF projects are in limbo, and if revived, the application process will be very quick. He concluded by saying that his office is a resource to recently fired federal employees and that their rights are important to protect.

- f. seCTer – Mr. Whitescarver briefed the board that seCTer's grants have not been impacted as they are an extension of the Department of Defense. He added that seCTer has scheduled a presentation by Placer.ai for towns.
 - g. SEAT – Mr. Carroll informed the board that there were roughly 90k boardings in the month of January. The colder weather in February has been a challenge, but service has been maintained as best as possible. Mr. Carrol re-emphasized the need for more operators. He concluded that SEAT will keep an eye on Executive Branch impacts on the federal dollars that the service relies upon.
 - 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 shared that she will be monitoring any changes to the National Endowment for the Arts grants, as they are federally funded. She added that Make Music Day is on June 21st and could be a great opportunity for municipalities to host events outside their town halls.
 - j. Health Districts – Ms. Muggeo, of Ledge Light Health District, shared that she is keeping an eye on federal impacts to their funding. Her health district was anticipating a decrease in public health funds for future fiscal years but was not expecting more immediate actions that have come to pass. She added that Ledge Light will be advocating for greater funding for public health matters in Governor Lamont's budget. She concluded by covering the challenges of the current flu season.
 - k. Solid Waste Committee – Mr. Allyn spoke about the upcoming in-person meeting on April 22nd.
10. Executive Director's Report:
- Ms. Kennedy summarized key updates from her report. SECOG's new website is now live and can be found at secogct.gov. To pair with the new website, the staff has received new emails with ".gov" endings. She recognized Mr. David Cook for his help in the matter. Ms. Kennedy then spoke of the federal funding implications of recent Executive Orders and their effect to SECOG's functionality. She explained that SECOG will be able to continue its current projects, though some project scopes might have to change. Ms. Kennedy then informed the board of the Taugwonk Rd LOTCIP application receiving a commitment to fund,

the availability of additional Active Transportation Microgrant funds, and new funding for CTDOT's Community Connectivity and 5310 programs respectively. Next, she gave an update on the survey of member municipalities' budget processes. The results showed that separate education budgets are more prevalent in the region than combined municipal budgets. Ms. Kennedy then shared news on Governor Lamont's proposed budget line item of \$250,000 to each Council of Governments for stormwater/solid waste positions/work. She concluded by reminding the board of the ARPA funds being utilized for the betterment of CAMA and parcel data in the region. Mr. Allyn inquired about SECOG's fiber optic internet, to which Ms. Kennedy provided clarification on the future installation and costs.

11. Old Business

There was no old business to report on.

12. New Business

MOTION: To approve the TIP amendments as of February 2025 (Allyn, Sparkman). Motion passed unanimously.

13. Next Meeting

Chairman Blanchard stated that the next Board Meeting will take place on March 19th at 8:30 AM, located at the SECOG Office.

14. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting (Cwikla, Sparkman). Motion passed unanimously.