



## Minutes of the January 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	Alden Miner	Preston	-
Griswold	-	Salem	-
Jewett City	Laurie Sorder	Sprague	-
City of Groton	-	Town of Stonington	-
Town of Groton	-	Stonington Borough	Michael Schefers
Lebanon	Kevin Cwikla	Waterford	Rob Brule
Ledyard	Fred Allyn	Windham	Thomas DeVivo
Lisbon	-	SEAT Rep (MPO)	-
Montville	-		
Military Liaisons:	US Coast Guard Academy: - New London SUBASE -		
Tribal Affiliates:	Mohegan Tribe: - Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation: -		
CT DOT	-		

SCCOG staff: Amanda Kennedy, Kate Rattan, Helen Zincavage, Daniel Robinson. seCTer: Captain Paul Whitescarver. SEAT: Mike Carroll. Office of Sen. Blumenthal: Ellen Graham. Office of Rep. Courtney: Noah Carver. Health District: Patrick McCormack. Eversource: Egzon Balidemaj, Jaquan Samuels. Eastern Connecticut Conservation District: Dan Mullins. Eastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition: Wendy Vincent.

1. Call to Order:  
Vice Chairman Carlson called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. He then led the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Roll Call:  
A quorum was present to vote on all matters except the budget, which requires a majority of members to be present..
3. Act on Minutes of the December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting:  
MOTION: To approve the minutes (Brule, Cwikla). Motion passed unanimously.
4. Treasurer's Report:

*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.*

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

5. Communications

There were no communications.

6. Public Comment:

Mr. Balidemaj, of Eversource, asked members to inform him of any ongoing school construction activities. Eversource has funds available to assist in certain energy-related matters. Additionally, he shared that Eversource would be hosting a webinar on controlled outages.

7. Guest Speaker – Dan Mullins: Executive Director of the Eastern Connecticut

Conservation District, Helen Zincavage: Director of Regional Planning at SECOG

Mr. Mullins began by reminding the board of the Regional Stormwater Collaborative that existed several years ago, ending in 2021. He urged that it is important to re-establish the collective to increase regional strength and resiliency, help towns with MS4 requirements, provide technical assistance, and purchase regional stormwater equipment. He stressed that a long-term leadership structure is necessary and hopes that municipalities will pay into the system. He also reminded everyone of Governor Lamont's bill that lets municipalities develop their own stormwater utilities, allowing for fee collection based on impervious surface amounts. He concluded by pointing out a successful example of a regional stormwater collaborative in central Massachusetts and stressed that a local formation is essential for clean water, recreation, flood mitigation, and more. Ms. Zincavage passed around a form, asking members to fill out information regarding their municipal points of contact and interest in participating in the regional effort. She added that with more funding, there will be greater functionality and increased grant application possibilities – as well as the chance of bringing expert analysts in. Ms. Kennedy stated that the addition of MS4-qualifying towns in the past led to the original creation of the stormwater collaborative.

8. Committee and Liaison Reports:

a. Executive Committee

i. Ms. Kennedy introduced three items reviewed by the Executive Committee on January 8<sup>th</sup>, for potential board approval.

1. Personnel Policies – Ms. Kennedy provided a brief update on the proposed changes, including updates to family medical leave, parental leave, work from home, job descriptions, salary schedules, sexual harassment, and religious accommodations.

a. MOTION: For SECOG Board to approve Personnel Policies (Scheffers, Brule). Motion passed

unanimously.

2. FY 2026 Budget – Ms. Kennedy briefed the board on the proposed budget despite the lack of a quorum sufficient to vote on this item. She stated that the SECOG budget is balanced, with a small surplus. She shared that there is an increase in insurance costs. Regarding staff, Ms. Nicole Haggerty left while two consultants are being retained to continue municipal planning services. To make up for the loss in knowledge, Ms. Kennedy spoke of training a new hiree to be well-versed in municipal planning. 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 increased for 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.
3. Meeting Schedule – Ms. Kennedy provided a brief explanation of the meeting calendar, highlighting a couple shifted dates.
  - a. MOTION: For SECOG Board to approve the 2025 Meeting Schedule (Cwikla, Brule). Motion passed unanimously.
  - b. Legislative Committee – Mr. Allyn reminded the board to leverage their personal connections to state legislators to advocate for the SECOG legislative agenda, especially now that the session has begun. Members discussed special education and veterans property tax exemption issues.
  - c. Congressional Office Report – Mr. Carver, of Representative Courtney's Office, reminded attendees that his office is available to assist with grants. Ms. Graham, of Sen. Blumenthal's office, noted that the next Columbia-class submarine (delivery in 2032) will be named the USS Groton and will be sponsored by Cynthia Blumenthal. Ms. Kennedy read information sent by Eric McBride of Senator Murphy's office, including information regarding farmers emergency funds, and the Social Security Fairness Act.
  - d. seCTer – Mr. Whitescarver briefed attendees regarding a January 14<sup>th</sup> meeting on childcare. United Way of SECT is creating a childcare collective. He added that there is a 41% gap between demand and capacity when it comes to childcare in sect. He asked towns to look at their zoning regulations on in-home care as a possible solution to close this gap.

- e. SEAT – Mr. Carroll said ridership rates were high considering the harsh weather in December. He included an update on the construction of the new SEAT Facility in Preston, sharing that they are breaking ground in 2026. Expansion of service is being delayed due to a shortage of bus operators.
  - f. Human Services – Ms. Kennedy noted that RHSCC meetings are on hold until staff can be reassigned to support this group.
  - g. Cultural Coalition – Ms. Vincent shared that nominations are open until March 15<sup>th</sup> for the Connecticut State Poet Laureate and State Troubadour, with the awards being announced on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - h. Health Districts – Mr. McCormack shared that Uncas Health District is providing radon testing in homes, as well as providing Covid test kits. He expressed concern on suicides and ODs in the region and shared a map that provides where they are taking place, with the implication that preventative measures could be installed in high-risk areas. Next, he reminded the board of the continuing challenge of court proceedings involving lead-impacted homes. He urged towns to be proactive when it comes to relocation funding and procedures in the event of residents needing assistance. Mr. Carlson and Mr. Allyn spoke about troubles towns can experience in relation to housing relocation, solutions to provide the right funding, and relevant legislation. Mr. McCormack suggested the idea of holding a regional meeting on housing relocation issues specifically.
  - i. Solid Waste Committee – Mr. Allyn spoke about the recent January meeting that took place virtually. He shared that Ms. Emily Bigl sent out an email on the vision for the committee going forward and what level of support SECOG staff will provide.
9. Executive Director's Report:  
Ms. Kennedy summarized key updates from her report. SECOG's rebranding process is nearing completion and that the website will be live soon. She reminded the board that the LOTCIP deadline is January 17<sup>th</sup>, stressing that there is up to \$13 million in available funds this round. Ms. Kennedy also spoke of the DEEP MMI Grant and EPA Community CHANGE grants that are awaiting approval and that the region's BikePed Microgrant funding has been renewed. She added that a discussion was recently had with DOT on the Route 2A bridge. Mr. Allyn stated that they had not heard from the DOT on this matter and inquired about a SECOG letter reaching out to DOT in the last few years. Ms. Kennedy replied that Ms. Sandra Gauthier had written one, but not SECOG. She added that the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation has not done a traffic evaluation procedure of the Great Wolf Lodge development, as they are not

required to do one as sovereign nation. She expressed a desire to hold more meetings with all parties involved. Mr. Whitescarver suggested that Ms. Kennedy talk to Mr. Bob Ross about the existing bridge's need for defense purposes and the impacts a new one will have on the SUBASE. Mr. Allyn expressed a desire for a second bridge span, but admitted that this process will take an exorbitant amount of time. Ms. Kennedy also stated that OPM will be providing all of the COGs with funds for CAMA/GIS data enhancement to bring about more consistency among the towns. Mr. Whitescarver provided testimony on the difficulties of towns reporting CAMA data to the state. Ms. Kennedy shared that SECOG's Yantic River Flood Mitigation Project received media attention in the Norwich Bulletin and on television on WFSB.

**10. Old Business**

There was no old business to report on.

**11. New Business**

MOTION: To approve the TIP amendments as of January 2025 (Carlson, Brule). Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: To approve Resolution No. 25-5: Relating to Bank Resolutions (Brule, Cwikla). Motion passed unanimously.

**12. Next Meeting**

Vice Chairman Carlson stated that the next Board Meeting will take place on February 19<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 AM, located at the SECOG Office.

**13. Adjournment**

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting (Scheffers, Brule). Motion passed unanimously.