

Commission on Economic Competitiveness

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 7, 2016

10:30 AM IN ROOM 2D OF THE LOB

I. CONVENE MEETING:

The meeting was called to order at 10:35 AM by Chairman Rep. Tong.

The following commission members were present:

Rep. William Tong, Joseph McGee, Commissioner Kevin Sullivan, Commissioner Catherine Smith, Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey, Joseph Brennan, Jeffrey Hyde, Ellen Shemitz, Seth Ruzi, Matthew McCooe, Sen. Joan Hartley, Rep. Fred Camillo, Sen. Scott Frantz, Rep. Chris Davis, Rep. Jeffrey Berger, Jennifer Berigan for Lori Pelletier

Absent were:

Heather Somers, Rodney Williams, Steven Glazer, Rep. Chris Perone, Sen. John Fonfara, Henry Teskey

II. REMARKS BY THE CHAIRS:

The co-chairs explained that today's commission meeting will consist of presentations from 4 of the 9 COGs (Council of Governments) that currently exist in the state of Connecticut regarding the past and current work they have put into developing their regions comprehensive economic development strategies (the Northeastern Connecticut Council could not attend today as originally scheduled). The chairs explained that it is their plan to have the remaining 5 COGs present at the next meeting. The co-chairs expressed hope that the presentations by the COGs will provide the commission with a better understanding of the work and planning that is being done on a regional level to address the issue of economic competitiveness and that these presentations should help provide members of the commission with a solid foundation upon which the commission can build their agenda and initiatives.

Rep. Tong also pointed out that the commission has a new member, Henry Teskey, and that Mr. Ruzzi will now serve as Sen. Frantz's designee.

Rep. Tong also acknowledged the need for the commission to meet on a more regular basis going forward which he thinks will be achievable given that the summer months are over and generally people's schedules may be more flexible.

III. PRESENTATIONS FROM COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (COGs) REGARDING THEIR REGIONS COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:

1. CAPITOL REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

The presentation was given by Lyle D. Wray, PhD, Executive Director of the Capitol Region Council of Governments.

A copy of this presentation can be found on the commission's website by clicking on the link entitled "CAPITOL REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies)" under the September 7, 2016 meeting tab or by using the following link:

[https://www.cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20150904_Commission%20on%20Economic%20Competitiveness/20160907/CAPITOL%20REGION%20COUNCIL%20OF%20GOVERNMENTS%20\(Comprehensive%20Economic%20Development%20Strategies\).pdf](https://www.cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20150904_Commission%20on%20Economic%20Competitiveness/20160907/CAPITOL%20REGION%20COUNCIL%20OF%20GOVERNMENTS%20(Comprehensive%20Economic%20Development%20Strategies).pdf)

Mr. Wray began his presentation by explaining that since 2014 CRCOG has expanded to 38 cities and towns serving nearly 1 million residents. He further explained that regarding Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), prior to 2014 four CRCOG municipalities were part of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency's CEDS; four municipalities were part of the Windham/Northeast Connecticut CEDS; and the Metro Hartford Alliance oversaw the CRCOG region CEDS. Following the 2014 consolidation, CRCOG and the Metro Hartford Alliance agreed to a pass off of the CEDS for the expanded region with the next CEDS tentatively being developed in 2017.

A conversation ensued regarding why CRCOG should be a CEDS Coordinator. Mr. Wray explained that the Alliance membership covers about half of the towns in CRCOG. Much of CRCOG's existing work has significant economic development impacts. As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region extensive work is done on transportation planning (CTfastrak, New Haven – Hartford – Springfield Rail, next Hartford Springfield Boston rail service). CRCOG has a regional responsibility for land-use planning Plan of Conservation and Development with a lot of work in Transit-Oriented Development going back a decade. He further noted that it makes sense to integrate transportation, land-use, hazard mitigation, municipal services, and economic development in one agency to have input to a single plan.

Mr. Wray moved on to explain that the elements of the current CEDS are:

Part 1: Initiatives including vision: Why implement this CEDS, regional Initiatives; industry cluster Initiative, workforce and Education Initiative, infrastructure Initiative, downtown Hartford Initiative, cross-Cutting Initiatives and implementation.

Part 2: Trend Analyses

Part 3: Industry Analyses including the New CEDS for the Capital Region, moving away from focus on industrial parks and incentive packages, shifting focus to drivers of economic development.

Mr. Wray exclaimed that CRCOG is looking to develop a “next generation” CEDS. According to him the general principles are well expressed in the Regional Economic Strategy for the Central Puget Sound Region:

- Ensuring residents have access to **family wage jobs** and employers have access to **world class talent**.
- Fostering a regional **business climate** that supports high quality investment and job creation.
- Harnessing the **entrepreneurship and technology innovation** assets in the region.
- Advancing the region’s **infrastructure** to meet the demands of a **globally connected** modern economy.
- Ensuring a healthy and beautiful environment, vibrant and thriving communities and a **high quality of life** for all the region’s residents.

Mr. Wray also explained to the commission that the next CEDS **talent including innovation and infrastructure** are seen as key drivers. To this end CRCOG and the CRCOG Foundation have sponsored a series of conferences on topics likely to be in the next CEDS.

- **Advanced manufacturing** on Price Waterhouse six factors for New England to remain competitive in manufacturing – 10 billion dollar exports just for the capital region
- **Innovation and entrepreneurship** best practices – Brookings and Hartford Health Works
- **Anchor institutions** and economic development – Penn expert. Two studies will follow up on the anchor institution TOD nexus.

Also noted during the presentation was that the next two conference in the series are on:

- **Millennials.** Strategies for mid-sized communities to attract and retain skilled millennial workers
- **Advanced Manufacturing.** German concept of Industry 4.0 and internet of things with the Boston German Consulate

In terms of the status of the next CRCOG CEDS process, Mr. Wray explained that CRCOG is working with CT OPM and CT DECD seeking state designation as the Regional Economic Development District with the 38 town boundary, CRCOG will apply for federal grant funding to develop the new CEDS and based on the results of the CEDS and may seek federal Economic Development District status.

2. NAUGATUCK VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

The presentation was given by James E. Ryan from the Shelton Economic Development Corporation and Rick Dunne-Executive Director of the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments.

A copy of this presentation can be found on the commission's website by clicking on the link entitled "NAUGATUCK VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies)" under the September 7, 2016 meeting tab or by using the following link:

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During and following the presentation conversation between the commission and the presenters focused on the many economic growth opportunities that the region possesses as well as the challenges that the region faces in developing and acting upon an effective economic strategy. One such opportunity that was discussed at length was the large amount of land available for investment throughout the region due to the success of the brownfield remediation programs. Mr. Dunne explained that although there are opportunities for growth in the region they are not at the level that they should be due to the inefficient system of "county" government that the region has inherited through no fault of their own. Mr. Dunne particularly expressed his opinion that the CEDs process be developed and administered by the NVCG which it is currently not. Conversation also revolved around the need for increased private investments in the infrastructure of the region and the importance of coordinating those investments between the technology, transportation, and development sectors of the area. Again as an example it was pointed out that while the region has a great deal of land that is available for use the investment from the private sector is lacking. It is the presenter's belief that among other things the region needs to focus on what attracts the millennials to the region and the investment will follow.

Discussion also took place as the presenters emphasized the importance of expanding transportation, in particular mass transportation for the region, to connect private investment into the area. Mr. Ryan and Mr. Dunne gave the example of Shelton as the most successful town in the region to redevelop, despite their higher number of brownfields, due to their location in lower Fairfield County. According to the presenters this location provides Shelton the advantage of being closest to Fairfield/NYC which makes it easier to attract private investment. The presenters conclude that connecting the region (e.g. Waterbury) to Hartford and lower Fairfield/NYC would be beneficial in attracting private investment/industry/millennials.

Mr. Ryan and Mr. Dunne also emphasized the importance of developing advanced manufacturing industries as a key aspect of improving economic competitiveness for the region.

3. LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

The presentation was given by Samuel S. Gold-Executive Director of the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments.

A copy of this presentation can be found on the commission's website by clicking on the link entitled "LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies)" under the September 7, 2016 meeting tab or by using the following link:

[https://www.cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20150904_Commission%20on%20Economic%20Competitiveness/20160907/LOWER%20CONNECTICUT%20RIVER%20VALLEY%20COUNCIL%20OF%20GOVERNMENTS%20\(Comprehensive%20Economic%20Development%20Strategies\).pdf](https://www.cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20150904_Commission%20on%20Economic%20Competitiveness/20160907/LOWER%20CONNECTICUT%20RIVER%20VALLEY%20COUNCIL%20OF%20GOVERNMENTS%20(Comprehensive%20Economic%20Development%20Strategies).pdf)

Mr. Gold began the presentation by explaining that none of the seventeen municipalities in the region meet the Federal "distressed" criteria and that the region is ineligible for classification as a Federal Economic Development District. However, he did add that the RiverCOG is still moving forward on economic development planning with the intent of creating a full CEDs.

Questioning and conversation between Mr. Gold and commission members focused on several important aspects which currently affect the region including: changing demographics, small business potential, workforce development, tourism potential, and quality of life. A great deal of discussion took place concerning the demographic shifts of the area in which the cost of living, particularly housing was cited as a key factor. Mr. Gold explained that citizens and businesses in the area have noted the need to look at how state investment, local infrastructure (or lack thereof) and local land use policies affect where future development can go. Discussion also centered on the quality of life in the area which is a major factor in the attractiveness of the region. It was discussed that the quality of life has been largely protected by land use policies however without a change in the approach to growth many communities will not be able to sustain themselves as they are now.

Mr. Gold also pointed out several economic development strategies that the region intends to focus on in the future to increase competitiveness and growth in the area. These strategies include creating a balanced development consistent with the typologies and character of the regions' communities; building on the region's existing economic assets and attractiveness as a lifestyle option; and managing the future to the extent possible, by creating some capacity to hedge the uncertainty that exists in today's rapidly changing economic environment.

4. NORTHWEST HILLS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

The presentation was given by Jocelyn Ayer-Community & Economic Development Director of the Northwest Hills Council of Governments and Doug Parker- President of the Northwest CT Economic Development Corporation.

A copy of this presentation can be found on the commission's website by clicking on the link entitled "NORTHWEST HILLS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (Comprehensive Economic

Development Strategies)” under the September 7, 2016 meeting tab or by using the following link:

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After discussing and informing the commission on the “landscape” of the NHCOC, Ms. Ayers and Mr. Parker focused their presentation on the CEDS strategy and their region’s plans for growth going into the future. Integral parts of their strategy include: growing jobs in agriculture, marketing and redeveloping vacant industrial sites, former mills, and brownfields, marketing regional arts/culture/tourism, increasing career oriented education and workforce training, expanding advanced manufacturing, and increasing small business support for the region.

There was also discussion on particular areas the region needs to improve on in order to boost their economic development including the need to increase the number of skilled advanced manufacturing workers in the region. Ms. Ayers explained that many of the manufacturing companies in the area have job’s open yet they have failed to fill them due to a lack of trained applicants. She further explained that there are initiatives between the manufacturer’s coalition in the region and the employers in the area to improve this situation. The presenters also explained that the NHCOC does not have the necessary capacity for implementing their CEDS plan due to a lack of paid staff. As a result the council has struggled to move forward with many of their plans within their CEDs.

Following the presentation several commission members commented on the great opportunities that exist in the region especially given its close proximity to a major market such as New York. Rep. Tong pointed out that the region has a unique product in their culture, tourism, and connectivity to other areas in the state and beyond state borders which he encouraged the NHCOC to continue to focus on when developing their strategies. He specifically encouraged the region to continue to grow and advertise the artisanal local grown agriculture aspect within their economic development plans.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The co-chairs explained that it is their intention to send out a doodle poll soon in order to maximize attendance at future meetings. The chairs also explained that it is their plan to have the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston present to the commission regarding their BEST practices for growing urban economies at a future meeting.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 2:02 PM by Chairman Rep. Tong.

Tom Spinella

Administrator