


MEMORANDUM

TO: Town Council

FROM: David E. Cox, Town Manager 

DATE: January 24, 2020

SUBJECT: Town Manager's Report

The following information includes follow up from general items that were discussed at previous Council meetings as well as updates of a general nature from the departments. The items are organized by department and are intended to provide information on activities currently being undertaken by the Town's departments and those matters that are upcoming. Not all departments will be represented in each Report.

Council Meeting Follow Up

- At the last Council meeting, a reappointment was made to the Middle Haddam Historic District Commission. It has been determined that due to a mistake in staff records, the reappointment was not needed. In fact, the individual (Kara Pederson) had been elevated to a regular member from Alternate member in May 2019 with a term ending in 2023. No action is necessary by the Council at this time but we will make a note in the record that the January 14 action is moot and the previous appointment stands. In the future, once an application is received, the Council will be asked to consider appointing a new Alternate.
- The Council indicated a desire to invite the High School Building Committee to an upcoming meeting. With the final approval from the State regarding use of the water at the school, the Committee has indicated its intent to turn the project over to the Town and cease operation. If the Council still desires a visit from a representative, it will still be pursued. However, in the alternative, a financial information document will be prepared outlining the current status of the project and the items remaining under consideration by the State for reimbursement. It is understood that approximately \$900,000 of the original authorization was unspent and that about \$1.5million in reimbursable expenses are being considered by the State.

Assessor

- As the attached memo and material indicates, the 2019 Grand List has been finalized and increased slightly from 2018. This is not the full revaluation being undertaken

currently for the 2020 Grand List but the 2019 Grand List does reflect changes due to construction and other similar changes. The increase is about \$10 million or .87%.

Chatham Health

- Chatham Health District is partnering with State and Federal public health officials to mitigate the potential impact of the novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) spreading mostly in China and having arrived in the United States in Washington this week (1 case so far). Public health response systems include routing all travelers from affected provinces in China to 5 airports, the nearest of which is in New York City. Travelers are screened for fever and interviewed using a questionnaire to help determine their possible exposure to the virus. Currently, only isolation of sick travelers is being done. If the virus begins to spread more rapidly, it is possible that local officials will be asked to implement quarantine and symptom monitoring procedures for travelers who are suspected of having been exposed to the virus, but who are not yet exhibiting symptoms.

Collector

- All taxpayers are reminded that the last day to pay the second installment of real estate and personal property tax as well as supplement motor vehicle bills without penalty is February 3, 2020. Ordinarily, the last day on which to pay bills due on January 1 without penalty is February 1, but when that day falls on a holiday or a weekend the taxpayer is given the next full business day to make payment. Payments that are legibly postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service on or before February 3, 2020 are considered timely regardless of when they are received by the Collector of Revenue. Payments received on or after February 4, 2020, including payments postmarked February 4 and later, are considered past due and are charged the statutory interest rate of 1.5% per month or portion thereof with a minimum interest charge of \$2.

Library

- The Library has posted the Town Council-approved survey, which is available online at: www.easthamptonpubliclibrary.org/survey or on paper at the Library and the Senior Center. Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Department, the School Superintendent, the Chatham Historical Society and the Middle Haddam Library have distributed the survey through their email lists. As of January 22, over 150 people had taken the survey. The Library looks forward to sharing results with community in the coming months. The survey will close on February 10.

- Staff anticipates starting the Ceiling Tile Replacement Project in the next two weeks and is working to minimize service interruptions to the public. Most of the work will take place before the Library opens, however, there will be times when the children's room and/or the community room may be temporarily closed during business hours to allow workers day-time access. The project is anticipated to take two to three weeks, which is somewhat weather dependent because the work of cutting the ceiling tiles must be done outside.
- Borrowing in 2019 was up 28% from 2018. The Library ended 2019 with 92,870 books and other items borrowed. In 2018, 72,617 items were borrowed.

Parks and Recreation

- The lock at Sears Park will be changed out and will now be a digital lock that unlocks using a finger print or with an app on a smart phone. This change will allow the staff to track who has access to the park and who does not. In the past, many keys that were distributed were never returned, which is not only costly but also left the Town vulnerable to unauthorized access to the park. Additionally, staff has had trouble with locks freezing up and keys breaking inside the locks during the winter months. This new lock will allow for use temperatures down to minus 14 degrees (-14°F).

Police

- The Department is participating in the CTDMV and Connecticut Police Chiefs Association Blue Envelope program. Through the program, drivers on the autism spectrum are encouraged to utilize the program-provided blue envelope to contain their insurance information, vehicle registration, Driver's License and a contact information card. If they are stopped by Police, they are instructed to notify the Officer that they have the "Blue Envelope" and to provide it to the Officer. The envelope provides instructions and reminders to the driver and the Officer as to what to expect and how to act during the contact in order to prevent injuries or other problems. The Department has started reaching out to the community to implement the program including contacting Youth and Family Services and the local schools to identify potential users.

Public Works

- East Hampton is now a registered collection point for the Mattress Recycling Council. This program offers mattress recycling to municipalities free of charge. Recycling of the mattresses and box springs taken in at the transfer station will represent a significant

cost savings to the Town by eliminating the majority of these from our bulky waste flow. Beginning this Saturday, January 25 mattresses will be accepted into the recycling program in accordance with the attached the collection guidelines.

- Despite the fact that winter seems to be pretty mild right now, staff continues to be prepared to respond to snow and ice events. Most recently, staff responded to the storm event on Saturday, January 18 at approximately 3:00 pm. Snow removal operations continued until the next morning. By 4:00 am Sunday, all roads and town-maintained sidewalks and facilities had been cleared.
- Town Staff is working with the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (River COG) and its consultant to update East Hampton's Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan as part of a regional effort. This update is required by FEMA every five years. The first meeting of the local team was held on January 23 and is the first of several expected meetings at which our vulnerabilities to natural disaster are explored and mitigation steps are identified. The goal is to have the plan update complete and submitted for review in the later part of 2020. Staff on this project include the Planning and Zoning Official, Emergency Management Director, Health Director and Police Chief with the Public Works Director leading the effort.

Senior Center

- Energy applications continue to be processed at the senior center. People coming in now are usually new to the program and in need of fuel.
- The AARP tax assistance program, which offers free tax preparation assistance, will begin February 10 and continue Mondays by appointment through the end of March. The concern this year is whether there will be enough IRS-certified volunteers to service the demand. As of today, the program has three AARP Tax Counsellors, which is down one from last year.
- Higgins Electric began installation of the magnetic door holders for the café doors yesterday and that work should be completed within the next few days.
- The Town Manager met with the Senior Advocacy Group this week to hear their thoughts and concerns for East Hampton's older adult population. Dialogue was clear and informative and will be considered as budgets are prepared and future planning is undertaken.

Town Clerk

- Staff has determined to implement new records management system from Info Quick Solutions, Inc (IQS) of New York to address concerns and shortcomings of the existing system. The new system, which is expected to be ready in March, will come with expanded capabilities and improved options for access including greater ability for research of Town records remotely through online access. It will also integrate other activities of the Town Clerk's office such as dog license issuance and will communicate directly with the Town's financial software eliminating data entry previously done by hand.

WPCA

- The carbon filter system at the Memorial School well for the Royal Oaks Water System has been tested and received final approval from the State yesterday. That well and those filters will be put in service immediately. As a reminder, there are two large carbon filters designed to operate in sequence with water running through one filter then the other (lead/lag). Water is sampled quarterly between the filters and as soon as a contaminant is detected in a sample, the flow is changed to enter the other filter (former lag filter) first and the spent filter (former lead filter) is bedded with new carbon. The system is designed so contaminant removal is accomplished by one filter with the other serving as backup.

Town Manager/Other

- In support of February as "Heart Month" and the Ambulance Association's public education campaign related to heart health, I have indicated a willingness to temporarily place magnetic hearts on many Town vehicles. The hearts, which are being funded by the East Hampton Rotary, will be in place during February on squads, trucks and cars to serve as visual reminders to passersby to pay attention to their own health. They also will serve to remind readers about articles and other public information pieces that the Association and others will be publishing during the month.
- At recent meetings of the River COG and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), these organizations, of which East Hampton is a member, adopted their legislative advocacy agendas. The legislative agendas are included with this report. The agendas are intended to focus on broad matters impacting Connecticut municipalities and, in the case of the River COG, matters of regional importance.
- Also, at the River COG meeting, notice was received the State DOT is anticipating projects in the upcoming months to replace the traffic signal equipment at two

intersections in East Hampton. The signals at Rt 66 and Maple Street and at Hurd Park Road and Hog Hill Road will be reworked. Specific time frame is not known at this time.

- As a matter of interesting information, the Town has hired 11 new staff members during the first half or so of the fiscal year. Most of these positions are replacements for staff who terminated their employment with the Town and many are part time positions including staff at the Library, Senior Center, Parks and Recreation and Youth and Family Services. Full time positions were replaced in the Police Department, Public Works and Youth and Family Services. Recently, a new full-time employee was hired in Public Works for the facilities maintenance function that is an additional position previously included in the FY2020 budget. Paul Tayles joined the staff as a Building Maintainer and began his tenure this week. Also, this week, Joyce Biondi began her service to East Hampton as a Deputy Registrar. The Police Department is currently in the hiring process for the additional officer that was included in its budget.

DC

Attachments

cc: Management Staff



TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON

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assessor@easthamptonct.gov

MEMO

To: David Cox, Town Manager

From: Gail Gwiazdowski, Assessor 

Date: 1/22/2020

Re: 2019 Grand List

The October 1, 2019 Grand List has been finalized. The increase was 0.73% higher than the October 1, 2018 grand list as filed January 30, 2019 and 0.87% higher than the M-13 as filed April 8, 2019.

As a reminder, the M-13 is the grand list as filed with the State of Connecticut after all lawful corrections made by the Board of Assessment Appeals and the Assessor.

Per CGS 12-55, assessment increase notices must be sent to taxpayers. The notice must include a statement regarding the taxpayer's avenue of appeal. On Tuesday, January 28, 2020, these increase notices will be mailed. From the 2019 grand list, 487 personal property accounts and 172 real estate accounts all increased. An increase notice is not a bill.

	2019 GRAND LIST TOTAL	2018 GRAND LIST TOTAL *	DIFFERENCE	% INCREASE/DECREASE
REAL ESTATE	\$ 1,012,719,154.00	\$ 1,007,053,461.00	\$ 5,665,693.00	0.56%
PERSONAL PROPERTY	\$ 37,106,750.00	\$ 36,359,880.00	\$ 746,870.00	2.05%
MOTOR VEHICLE	\$ 108,003,675.00	\$ 104,394,767.00	\$ 3,608,908.00	3.46%
	\$ 1,157,829,579.00	\$ 1,147,808,108.00	\$ 10,021,471.00	0.87%

* BASED ON THE M-13 AS FILED APRIL 8, 2019 AFTER ALL BAA CHANGES AND LAWFUL CORRECTIONS

Handwritten signature and date: 4/11/19

	2019 GRAND LIST TOTAL	2018 GRAND LIST TOTAL	DIFFERENCE	% INCREASE/DECREASE
REAL ESTATE	\$ 1,012,719,154.00	\$ 1,007,726,926.00	\$ 4,992,228.00	0.50%
PERSONAL PROPERTY	\$ 37,106,750.00	\$ 36,754,960.00	\$ 351,790.00	0.96%
MOTOR VEHICLE	\$ 108,003,675.00	\$ 104,989,030.00	\$ 3,014,645.00	2.87%
	\$ 1,157,829,579.00	\$ 1,149,470,916.00	\$ 8,358,663.00	0.73%

* BASED ON THE 2018 GL AS FILED JANUARY 30, 2019

[Handwritten signature]
 1/21/2020

2019 GRAND LIST COMBINED TOP 10 TAXPAYER		
	NET ASSESSMENT	% OF 19GL NET ASMT
CONNECTICUT LIGHT & POWER CO	\$ 18,297,490.00	1.58%
LANDMARK EAST HAMPTON LLC	\$ 7,521,320.00	0.65%
HAMPTON 66 LLC	\$ 3,500,000.00	0.30%
CONNECTICUT LIGHT AND POWER CO	\$ 3,441,250.00	0.30%
CONNECTICUT NATURAL GAS CORP	\$ 3,274,090.00	0.28%
GLOBAL SELF STORAGE LLC	\$ 2,514,680.00	0.22%
EAST HIGH ST REALTY LLC	\$ 2,387,472.00	0.21%
AMERICAN EQUITIES I LLC	\$ 2,184,420.00	0.19%
EDGEWATER HILL PROPERTIES LLC	\$ 2,170,680.00	0.19%
PAULS & SANDYS TOO INC	\$ 2,070,760.00	0.18%
TOTAL TOP 10 NET ASSESSMENT	\$ 47,362,162.00	4.09%
		TOTAL TOP TEN % OF 19GL

AM
12/1/2020

Important Papers!

Sponsored By



Driver on the autism spectrum:

- Keep your hands on the steering wheel until otherwise directed, even if the officer is not at your car.
- Remember the officer may shine a flashlight in your car, may have a radio and may have flashing lights on their car.
- When the officer gets to your car say "I have a blue envelope".
- Answer the officer's questions and ask the officer before moving any parts of your body.
- When the officer tells you, slowly get the blue envelope that has your license, registration and insurance card and hand the envelope to the officer.
- The officer will go back to their cruiser, you will need to wait for the officer until he/she comes back.
- When the officer comes back to your car, they will explain the end of the stop to you and will tell you when to leave.

For more information:

portal.ct.gov/DMV-Blue-Envelope

FRONT ↑



Contents:
Driver's License
DMV Auto Registration
Current Auto Insurance Card

REAR ↓

Police Officer:

1. Individuals may display repetitive body movements or fidgeting and may have unusual eye contact.
2. Driver may exhibit signs of high anxiety especially due to brights lights and noises like your radio.
3. Allow driver extra time to respond, driver may need more time to formulate their response.
4. Use the most simplistic explanations possible, speak clearly and limit unnecessary details or jargon.
5. Please clearly tell the driver when the stop is over and that they may leave.
6. If the driver becomes upset, ask and/or consider contacting the person listed on the contact card.



CCM 2020 STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Proposals Adopted As of December 4, 2019 –General Policy

Below are legislative proposals adopted by the CCM Legislative Committee as part of CCM's 2020 State Legislative Program, as of 12/04/19. They are grouped according to the CCM issue-area committee in which they originated.

EDUCATION

1. **Provide municipalities stability and predictability in budgeting for special education** by:
 - a. Requiring that special education funding follows the student until such fiscal year concludes when such student changes school districts during the fiscal year,
 - b. Establishing a legislative task force to examine (1) potential regional opportunities for the provision of special education services, and (2) potential opportunities to increase the involvement of Regional Education Service Centers for the provision of special education services, and
 - c. Allowing a town to reduce their MBR in an amount that reflects costs associated with special education students once those students leave the district.

2. **Provide regional school districts with increased predictability and stability in budgeting** by requiring:
 - a. Regional school districts to use a 3-5 year moving average to identify and establish operating costs, and
 - b. The establishment of regional boards of finance to provide oversight to such regional boards of education. Such regional boards of finance shall have the same authorities as a local board of finance and shall be comprised of representative membership identical to the regional board of education in the regional school district in which they are located.

3. **Provide municipalities predictability and stability in budgeting for education** by:
 - a. Requiring local governments to provide non-education related services included in board of education budgets and removing collective bargaining impediments to establishing service sharing arrangements between boards of education and local governments,
 - b. **Requiring boards of education to accept proposed adjustments for non-education related services made by boards of finance to board of education budgets** and allowing for boards of education to establish a “contingency” line item to fund unanticipated expenditures. Such board of education shall retain line item control over the board of education budget and shall be allowed to allocate funding as they deem appropriate, and

- c. **Establishing a cap on the per pupil tuition endowed academies and magnet schools are allowed to charge local governments** for provision of education and special education services, and establish a state funding mechanism to subsidize such tuition charged to local governments.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND ENERGY

1. **Eliminate the Virtual Net Metering Credit Cap (CGS 16-244u).** Such change should include the requirement that electric distribution companies allow “unassigned” VNM credits to be applied to future bills on a month-to-month basis, known as “banking,” as expressed in CGS 16-244u(c). The Legislature expanded the cap to \$20 million during the 2019 session.
2. **Amend and expedite the process for approving Alternative Wastewater Treatment Systems.**
3. **Expand and strengthen penalties for existing anti-baiting laws for bears** to include:
 - a. The intentional feeding of bears in residential areas.
 - b. Ban efforts to promote and develop bear tourism consistent with the first amendment.
 - c. Clarify a municipality’s ability to impose a fine for baiting or feeding bears by ordinance.

LAND USE, HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. Add reason and clarity to assessment appeal proceedings by:
 - a. **Prohibiting contingency fee arrangements and/or agreements,**
 - b. Amend CGS Section 12-117a and Section 12-119 to **require persons representing property owners or lessors in certain appeals concerning real property assessments to be either attorneys, certified public accountants, or certified or provisionally licensed real estate appraisers** and to prohibit them from entering into contingency fee agreements in such appeals, and
 - c. Amend CGS Section 12-117a to **require that within ninety days of filing an appeal, the plaintiffs shall file an appraisal of the subject property completed by a person or a firm licensed to perform appraisals in the State of Connecticut.** Failure to file such an appraisal within such time period shall be grounds for dismissal of the appeal.
2. Require that CGS 47a-42 and 49-22 **be amended to make evicted tenants and foreclosed property owners responsible for all costs of the removal and storage of their property and to require the landlord of such property be responsible if such tenant or owner does not comply.**

In addition, require that the property of deceased tenants, as outlined in CGS 47a-11d, be the responsibility of the landlord.

MUNICIPAL LABOR RELATIONS

1. **Revise the binding arbitration system to realize increased efficiencies for the benefit of employees and municipal employers** by requiring binding arbitration proceedings to conclude within one year from the date at which the State Board of Mediation and Arbitration provides notice to the involved parties of pending binding arbitration proceedings.
 - a. Timelines may be waived for appointing arbiters. However, the binding arbitration proceedings shall still be required to conclude within one year.

2. **Allow for towns and cities to more efficiently allocate resources and enter into service sharing agreements by:**
 - a. Exempting the establishment of such service sharing arrangements from the definition of “change in working conditions” for purposes of collective bargaining, and
 - b. Requiring coalition bargaining for employees covered by such bargaining agreements, and all municipal and board of education employees for pensions and healthcare.

3. **Help prevent unreasonably contested workers’ compensation claims by:**
 - a. Allowing municipal employers a 45 day period to review workers’ compensation claims from the date at which the municipal employer receives notice of such claim being filed, and
 - b. Allowing a municipal employer to maintain the ability to appeal a workers’ compensation claim if such claim is not denied within the 45 day period following notice that such claim has been filed.

4. **Increase the thresholds that trigger the prevailing wage** mandate for remodeling, refinishing, refurbishing, rehabilitation, alteration or repair of any public works project from \$100,000 to \$500,000.

MUNICIPAL LAW, LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

1. Reduce municipal liability through:
 - a. **Limit the scope of the “reckless disregard” exception to municipal immunity statute found in CGS §52-557n(b)(8).** Recent Supreme Court decision in *Williams v. Housing Auth. of the City of Bridgeport, et al.* broadened the scope of reckless disregard. This would be accomplished through either:
 1. Deleting “under all the relevant circumstances” from the end of 52-557n(b)(8), or
 2. Add the following sentence to the end of 52-557n(b): “For purposes of this subsection, a person acts with reckless disregard when he is aware of and consciously disregards a substantial and unjustifiable risk that an act or omission will harm an identifiable person or property.” This would tie the statute into the “identifiable person/imminent harm” exception for negligent acts by a municipal official.

- b. **Enact an “assumption of risk” defense to limit liability in municipal recreational areas**, including, but not limited to, bike, skateboard, dog and water parks. Such “assumption of risk” was created for ski areas and can be modeled for similar municipal provisions.
2. **Amend CGS 8-2 to remove the word “advertising” from the type of signs that a municipal zoning commissions may regulate.** As a result of a recent State Supreme Court decision in *Kuchta v. Arisian*, zoning commissions, under that statute, cannot regulate signs that merely express a personal opinion because the statute specifically references advertising signs.
3. **Provide towns and cities the authority to collect fees from for-profit companies filing requests for local information that they will then sell** (*commonly referred to as “data mining”*). Prior to the information being provided, entities must affirmatively assert whether or not such data will be used for profit. Such fees shall be based on the municipality’s assessment of actual costs for the data retrieval. Exemptions from such collection fees shall be provided to media outlets using such information to inform the public. The authority of a municipality to collect, at local option, such fees under these circumstances shall not impede or interfere with the decisions of the Freedom of Information Commission.
4. **Allow municipalities that are self-insured the right of full recovery under current subrogation law against a tortfeasor and reduce the subrogation thresholds**, consistent with the Workers’ Compensation Act.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

1. **Enhance efforts to combat the State’s opioid epidemic by designating a state ombudsman for drug abuse and control policy** tasked with coordinating efforts to enhance and examine sustainable funding streams to support substance abuse prevention, education and recovery efforts.

PUBLIC SAFETY

1. **Develop a sustainable funding stream to support the annual operational expenses of Connecticut Regional Fire Schools by establishing a surcharge on homeowner, renters and/or business insurance premiums.** In recent years, the funding levels for these schools has been highly unstable.
 - a. In addition, **evaluate the amount of regional fire schools** and consider reorganizing them based on DEMHS regions.
2. **Maintain the current state reimbursement program for the purchase of police body cameras.** The current program provides a 50% reimbursement for the purchase and storage costs associated with body cameras. To provide a sustainable funding stream to continue the program, the State should explore continuation of the program through additional utilization of federal (i.e. JAG funds) or funding from the asset forfeiture program.

3. **Allow (a) career/paid fire departments to be reimbursed by another career/paid department, and (b) volunteer fire departments to be reimbursed by another career/paid department, for the initial recruit training costs of a firefighter,** who has been employed with the department for less than two years, and decides to transfer to another department. This would be similar to the reimbursement that is allowed for police officer training. This would not include the costs of any equipment or uniforms the officer returns, as well would not affect any agreement between a police officer, collective bargaining unit, or department currently in existence.

TAXES AND FINANCE

1. **Allow municipalities the option to establish and assess user fees for public services provided to properties qualifying for a tax exemption under CGS 12-81 and not reimbursed by existing PILOT programs.**
2. **Allow any town or city to establish a Stormwater Authority** to offset costs of implementing the current MS4 General Permit.
3. **Enact legislation to identify motor vehicles that are owned by Connecticut residents and illegally registered out-of-state** and implement policies to limit opportunities that allow for these out-of-state registrations.
4. **MERS: Provide municipalities enrolled in MERS with the ability to create new tiers similar to the way the State has created new tiers for SERS.**
These new tiers would:
 - a. Exclude overtime from retirement benefit calculations;
 - b. Increase the retirement age to 62;
 - c. Limit cost-of-living increases to between 0 and 4%; and
 - d. Allow municipally negotiated employee contributions.

TRANSPORTION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

1. **Support efforts to develop and implement a bi-partisan plan to address identified transportation infrastructure needs and enhance all areas of the existing transportation network in order to promote economic growth throughout the state.** This plan must identify and allocate appropriate resources which may include the establishment of limited tolling and will enable the state to leverage all available federal funding resources.
2. **Maintain funding for key municipal transportation and infrastructure grants, such as TAR, LoCIP and LOTSIP.**
 - a. Reauthorize STEAP funding and release existing grant authorizations.
3. **Require transit systems to publish on their website and through annual reports operational statistics** like on-time performance, mean travel distance between failures or crashes, safety mechanisms, customer service.

4. **Develop a pilot program allow identified municipalities to utilize photographic traffic enforcement technology.** To accomplish this, amend state statutes to include various traffic infractions to the list of registered owner - presumed operator violations, and provide that revenues collected from such enforcement be allocated directly to municipalities. Current law in Connecticut does not enable law enforcement officials to effectively use such technology to apprehend these specific traffic violators, and ultimately make roadways safer.



Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

145 Dennison Road Essex, CT 06426 | +1 860 581 8554 | www.rivercog.org

MEMORANDUM 01212020

From: Samuel Gold, AICP, Executive Director
To: RiverCOG Members
Date: January 21, 2020
Re: *Draft 2020 Legislative Agenda*

The RiverCOG Executive Committee met and identified three major issues for the 2020 RiverCOG Legislative Agenda.

- **Trees** – Lower Connecticut River Valley municipalities are being overwhelmed by unprecedented numbers of dead and dying trees. New invasive species like the Emerald Ash Borer, reoccurring Gypsy Moth infestations, and droughts are killing trees faster than towns can afford to take them down. Dead and dying trees present serious public safety and legal threats to municipalities, and state support and coordination is needed to address the issue. Challenges include a shortage of tree crews, inadequate municipal resources to pay for tree removal, and a lack of disposal sites for felled material. The state could be a catalyst for a coordinated response by acquiring and deploying modern lumber equipment that can quickly remove trees at lower cost. The state can also assist with not only identifying disposal sites for the dead trees, but finding and encouraging the use for these materials (wood pellets or lumber) to help recoup costs. Finally, legislation to limit municipal liability is necessary to protect towns who take proactive steps to identify problem trees.
- **Trash** – Lower Connecticut River Valley municipalities cannot afford to pay the projected cost of upgrading MIRA's Hartford waste-to-energy plant. The estimated tipping fee of approximately \$140 per ton of garbage is not competitive with shipping garbage out of state by truck. However, we all agree that trucking garbage out of state will provide no long-term certainty for our municipalities, remove money from the state's economy, and worsen the condition of our highways. State action needs to be taken to help us solve this issue. Also, future business plans need to consider the implementation of pay-as-your-throw and new product stewardship efforts that will reduce trash volumes and tipping revenues.
- **Tolls** – We all agree that our transportation infrastructure requires additional revenue to keep the Special Transportation Fund solvent and support our economy, however there is a lack of trust. The fear is that tolls will be used to supplant existing state transportation spending and overall investment in infrastructure will not increase by a commensurate amount. The transportation lock box can only protect money deposited within it and cannot prevent money from being diverted. Sufficient oversight is necessary to build trust. Part of building trust would be giving municipal CEOs, through their COGs, a role in approving the programming toll revenues, just like they currently do with federal highway spending and state LoTCIP. Finally,

RiverCOG

new toll revenues should be invested in all components of the state transportation system, including in our regional transit districts.

Other Regional Legislative Issues

Ensure Accountability Between the State's Governments and Agencies

Increase accountability between government entities (state agencies to legislators and legislators to local elected officials). There needs to be wide recognition that we are all on the same team.

Empower Municipalities to Dissolve Independent Taxing Districts

At a time when the state is encouraging regionalism and sharing across town boundaries, the state should empower municipalities to dissolve sub-local governments / independent taxing districts. Municipalities should have the power to determine how municipal services are delivered within their own municipal boundaries. If a municipality determines that a service provided by a special taxing district should be provided on a municipal or regional level, the municipality should unilaterally be able to implement such a change. Hundred of these sub-municipal governments persist because of historic reasons, with current statutes providing municipalities no feasible path for the districts' dissolution.

Lift Limits on Property Tax Abatements for Municipal First Responders

Increase Federal Transfers to Connecticut

Connecticut is a net contributor to the federal budget. The state should maximize transfers of federal dollars to Connecticut to keep more of our money local. One simple way would be making COGs the county equivalent for Connecticut for federal grant purposes.

Enable Regionalism

There are statutory and contractual impediments to shared and regional services. Enabling legislation that allows municipalities to pursue cheaper ways of providing municipal services is necessary to realize any real savings and movement in this area.

The seventeen-member municipalities of RiverCOG support regional services and actively cooperate and participates in a multitude of regional shared services (ex. Regional schools and regional health districts). In every instance, the regional services that RiverCOG municipalities share save money, provide quality services, and were created via voluntary municipal action. Imposition of regional services from above could create more problems and increased costs, and will lack the local input and buy-in necessary for success. Municipalities must be empowered to work together and take on vested interests that keep them from working together.

- Exempt regional services from collective bargaining agreements
 - Regional shared services that could save municipalities are thwarted by the individual collective bargaining agreements and units in each municipality

- Regionalism requires study and a transparent, inclusive, and bottom-up process where Chief Elected Officials and COGs are involved in shaping proposals and just because a service is provided regionally does not mean it saves money.
- Recognize regional school supervision districts as the LEA for their towns
- Analyze the CT General Statutes, such as Title VII, for mandates and outdated language that impedes municipalities from cooperating or sharing staff and departments

Allow Participation in a Regional Shared Service to Fulfill Statute Mandates on Municipalities

- For example, participation in a shared building inspector or assessor program would meet statutory requirements that each municipality have a building inspector and assessor.
- Enable regional wetlands commissions

Adequately Fund COGs through Dependable and Predictable Regional Services Grants

- Regional Service Grants, funded via the Region Performance Incentive Account, make regional planning and regional services work possible. RiverCOG has raised dues, but municipal dues cannot replace state support.

Devolve Administration of More State Grants to the COGs Along the Lines of LOTCIP

- On many topics, COGs, overseen by CEOs, maybe be able to more efficiently and effectively program funds than state agencies.
- A comprehensive study of state grants and programs would be required to identify the best opportunities

Mandate Relief

To assist municipalities that are being asked to do more with less state support, there needs to be thoughtful and significant relief from unfunded mandates. Cuts in support to municipalities or the imposition of new unfunded mandates result in increases in property taxes.

Infrastructure

- Municipalities and utilities on their own are not providing the infrastructures that are needed for economic growth
- State needs to assist the expansion of public water and sewer, fiber optic and 5G cellular data, and energy (natural gas, solar, and car charging stations)

Other Priorities

- The budget implementer bill should not include anything but the budget
- Pursue efforts to keep Connecticut college graduates in the state, to address state's demographic challenges
- Create a pilot program to allow municipalities in the Lower Connecticut River Valley Region to enact a local property transfer fee for municipal conservation