



**COUNCIL of GOVERNMENTS  
CENTRAL NAUGATUCK VALLEY**

49 Leavenworth Street, Suite 303, Waterbury, CT 06702 • 203-757-0535 • cogcnv.org

**MINUTES**

**Special Meeting**

**Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley**

COGCV Conference Room

49 Leavenworth Street, Suite 303

Waterbury, CT 06702

12:00 Noon, Monday, December 9, 2013

**COG Members:** Chris Bielik, First Selectman, Dominick Sorrentino, Alternate, Beacon Falls; David Deakin, Alternate, Bethlehem; Michael Milone, Town Manager, Jerry Sitko, Alternate, Cheshire; Ed St. John, First Selectman, Middlebury; Bob Mezzo, Mayor, Naugatuck; Joanne Pelton (by phone), Alternate, Oxford; Bob Chatfield (by phone), Mayor, Tom Galvin, Alternate, Prospect; Ed Edelson, First Selectman, Southbury; Ed Mone, First Selectman, Thomaston; Neal O'Leary, Mayor, Kevin DelGobbo, Alternate, Waterbury; Ray Primini, Town Council Chairman, Watertown; Tom Dunn, Mayor, Wolcott; Bill Butterly, First Selectman, Woodbury.

**Speakers and Guests:** David LeVasseur, Acting Under Secretary, Office of Policy and Management, Carl Stephani, Executive Director, CCRPA; Garrett Casey; Barbara Kalosky, Joe Spina, North East Transportation; Joel Serota, Woodbury RPC Member; John DiCarlo, Waterbury Regional Chamber.

**Staff:** Samuel Gold, Acting Executive Director; Joe Perrelli, Senior Planner; Pat Gallagher, Regional Planner; Glenda Prentiss, GIS Coordinator; Aaron Budris, Regional Planner/GIS Specialist; Lauren Rizzo, Administrative Assistant.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call, Public Comment**

Chairman Ed Edelson called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance and the roll was called. There was no public comment.

**2. Minutes of the November 22, 2013 Special Meeting**

On a motion by Tom Dunn, seconded by Ed St. John, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the November 22, 2013 Special Meeting.

**3. Election of COGCV Secretary**

On a motion by Ed Edelson, seconded by Ed Mone, it was unanimously

VOTED: To elect Tom Dunn to the position of COGCV Secretary.

**4. Regional Planning Organization Consolidation**

Chairman Ed Edelson provided an overview of COGCV's consolidation efforts over the past several months. He explained that OPM Acting Under Secretary David LeVasseur had been asked to this special meeting to answer questions, provide clarification, and provide an update on OPM's position as COGCV goes forward with making its decision.

David LeVasseur said OPM released a preliminary report on October 1 that presented a Scenario A and a Scenario B. He noted that COGCV had endorsed Scenario A (the merger of COGCV and Valley COG), while Valley COG had proposed a three way merger comprised of COGCV, Valley COG, and Greater Bridgeport (Scenario B). Greater Bridgeport has

expressed a desire not to merge with Valley and COGCVN, and is actively seeking a merger with Housatonic Valley and Southwestern CT. Housatonic Valley and Southwestern have recently voluntarily merged. Additionally, there have been discussions and votes in three communities (Plainville, Southington, and Berlin) in the Central Connecticut region to join with Capitol Region. He expects, as this would leave New Britain "land locked," that New Britain would also eventually join Capitol Region. Carl Stephani said that Plymouth, Bristol, and Burlington have expressed a desire to remain with CCRPA. Mr. LeVasseur said OPM's intention, as shown in their preliminary report, was to merge CCRPA with Capitol Region.

Mr. LeVasseur stated that with the way things are currently going, Scenario A is most likely to be the OPM recommendation if there is no voluntary agreement between COGCVN and any of its neighbors. He also gave an explanation of CCRPA's organizational composition and said he found no unanimity within it. Their board, because it is an RPA, is not represented directly by chief elected officials, but rather by appointees of the various communities. He felt it was clear from the votes that occurred in Berlin, Plainville, and Southington that they are not of like mind with their board members, and ultimately there may not be a CCRPA to merge with, if a number of its towns petition to go elsewhere.

Acting Executive Director Samuel Gold said that two COGCVN towns have petitioned to leave. Bob Mezzo said the burgesses of Naugatuck had voted to leave COGCVN provided only if the municipality was excluded from being with the seven town Valley corridor, regardless of central city. He said Naugatuck would be happy if COGCVN merges with Valley COG.

Mr. Gold inquired how the hold harmless provision of the statute would come into play with the scenarios. Mr. LeVasseur said it really wouldn't except for the fact that once committed to, if Scenario A becomes the predominant one, and potentially a few additional bordering towns also join, the new boundaries would be inviolate for 20 years, unless the region, or the municipalities in the region opted to do something different. Mr. LeVasseur also said that OPM would respect voluntary mergers, i.e., that of Housatonic Valley and Southwestern, and that if they decide not to allow Greater Bridgeport to join then, there was a possibility that the Greater Bridgeport region could end up existing on its own.

Chairman Edelson wanted to know if it would provide protection to COGCVN if a motion was made and passed to merge with CCRPA, with the understanding that COGCVN is still open to a merger with Valley. Mr. LeVasseur replied that the issue is that so much of CCRPA is going to other regions, that an economic benefit would not be gained. With getting less than 50% of a region, OPM would not consider that to be a true merger of two regions. He said that in OPM's viewpoint, they need to have some guidance from the regions no later than Friday (December 13, 2013). Chairman Edelson said the dilemma is that the only organization COGCVN can merge with is CCRPA, as it is the legal entity that exists right now. Yet, as Mr. LeVasseur pointed out, COGCVN would eventually be working with that region's CEOs, despite its current configuration. Mr. LeVasseur provided an example of how Southwestern had handled a similar situation. He said their CEOs got together periodically as an MPO. Once unanimity was achieved among the CEOs meeting as an MPO, they

endorsed the union. In this way, the CEOs and the regional planning board were on the same page. The problem he sees in this situation is that several of the towns in CCRPA have already voiced where they wish to be from a CEO perspective, and the CEOs will ultimately be the representatives when each entity becomes a council of governments. Without the buy-in of the CEOs in a region, he thought it would be hard pressed to call it a voluntary merger. He also said that any financial incentive would most likely only be granted by OPM on the COGCNV end, because too many of CCRPA's towns would have gone elsewhere.

Mr. LeVasseur also said there would be no appeal rights for regions, only for municipalities. He reiterated that if COGCNV ended up voluntarily merging with another region, there is always the possibility of picking up some "orphan" towns. Under Scenario A, which he said was the most likely to happen, he felt there was a probability that two or three CCRPA towns might be categorized as "orphans."

Mr. Edelson asked whether or not Mr. LeVasseur had spoken with Valley COG. He replied that he had not had a lot of recent contact with them. Mr. LeVasseur said it might be time for him to contact them and fill them in on where things stand, because, obviously, the option they wish to see is not going to happen. Mr. Edelson thought that if Mr. LeVasseur contacted Valley and made this clear to them, it might be possible that a voluntary merger could be arranged prior to the December 13 deadline, thus putting an end to any uncertainty. Asked for his opinion, Mayor Mezzo thought that Valley COG was receptive to a merger with COGCNV but that certain segments of the region still have ties to the Bridgeport area, and thought that combining in a three way merger would be in everyone's best interest. He said that Valley had never brought COGCNV's offer to a vote, but had stood by their original three way merger offer. He did not feel there was any animosity towards COGCNV.

Mayor O'Leary said that he believed the state had decided to reorganize the regional planning organizations in order to increase efficiency and develop economic opportunities. With the new federal designations for economic development areas, with the natural ties to the valley, and with the rail line, he felt it made sense to merge with the valley towns. From an economic development perspective, he did not think it would be prudent to pursue a merger with CCRPA.

Mayor Mezzo noted that he thought connecting the entire Route 8 corridor made the most sense to Valley COG, but that their refusal to take COGCNV up on its merger proposal was not a negative reflection towards the greater Waterbury region. Tom Galvin inquired as to whether Valley towns might be inclined to petition to merge with the Bridgeport region, presenting a scenario similar to that currently encountered with a CCRPA merger. Mayor Mezzo said it was only his opinion, but he felt only Shelton might be inclined to do so, with the caveat being that there are two new mayors. The consensus was that when Valley COG learns that OPM will not approve a merger between them and Greater Bridgeport, they will be much more open to a merger with just COGCNV. Joanne Pelton said that two Valley CEOs were just sworn in over the weekend, and that they should be given time to have a meeting. Mayor Dunn reiterated that COGCNV was standing by the resolutions it had

passed in October to merge with Valley COG and to also welcome neighboring municipalities.

Carl Stephani of CCRPA said Burlington voted to agree to move with CCRPA to COGCNV and that the new mayors of Bristol and Plymouth indicated that they would do the same. Mr. Stephani said he had told the mayor of New Britain that if no action was taken, the municipality would be considered part of CCRPA and if CCRPA merged with COGCNV, so would New Britain, but he believes now that this might have been a misrepresentation. In his last conversation with New Britain, the municipality was not planning on joining CRCOG. Mr. Stephani said in conversation with Dan Morley of OPM, he had inquired as to what would happen if New Britain was landlocked by other towns with regard to which regional planning organization it wished to be a part of. Mr. Morley replied that it had not been decided. Mr. Stephani said four of the seven towns have indicated their desire to stay with CCRPA and merge with COGCNV. He wanted this all stated so that the CEOs of CCRPA would have their positions clearly explained.

Mr. LeVasseur stated that OPM's October 1 preliminary report showed CCRPA merging with CRCOG. He said that unless a municipality indicates it wishes to go somewhere else, that is what is going to happen.

Chairman Edelson asked Mr. LeVasseur if there was any assurance he could give about OPM encouraging Valley to accept COGCNV's offer, to preclude anything happening before Friday, or if COGCNV should just leave it to OPM to make good on what Mr. LeVasseur had represented at this meeting. Mr. LeVasseur said he would contact Valley COG upon his return to his office, but declined to "play matchmaker." He also asked Samuel Gold to reach out to Valley COG again. Mr. LeVasseur stated he would contact Valley COG and basically tell them that a three way merger with Greater Bridgeport was "dead."

Samuel Gold asked questions regarding OPM's role in facilitating organizational mergers. Mr. LeVasseur said OPM did not have a stance on this, and each item would have to be handled by the parties themselves. He did say that formally, whenever a COG is formed, there is still an existence for a year of the predecessor organization(s), if any, in order to wrap up business.

Chairman Edelson noted that COGCNV is putting its faith in Mr. LeVasseur to let Valley COG know what was heard at this meeting and to let them know that COGCNV's offer is still good. Mr. LeVasseur also noted that if any border town notifies him of its desire to become part of another region prior to January 1, its request will be honored when OPM redraws the borders. He also encouraged COGCNV to contact potential new member municipalities, with whom they may have ties, and advise them that a formalized vote is necessary, not necessarily the legislative body, but a vote from a town council or board of selectmen telling OPM where they would like to end up.

**5. Adjournment**

At 1 p.m., on a motion by Tom Dunn, seconded by Ed Mone, it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by  
Lauren Rizzo  
Administrative Assistant  
for  
Tom Dunn  
Secretary