



## **MINUTES**

### **Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments Regional Planning Commission**

6:30 p.m., Tuesday, December 5, 2023

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#### **1. Commencement of Meeting**

Chairman David White called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was held via Zoom. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance and the roll was called. There was no public comment.

Present: David White, Bristol; Gino DiGiovanni, Jr., Derby; Curtis Bosco, Middlebury; Lori Rotella, Naugatuck; Gil Graveline, Prospect; Ginny Harger, Shelton; Kim McNeil, Southbury; Bob Nerney, Waterbury.

NVCOG Staff: Savannah-Nicole Villalba, Molly Johnson, Pheobe Ploof, Emely Ricci.

Chairman White noted that a quorum was present.

There were no members of the public present to address the Commission.

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#### **2. Administrative Items**

##### Approval of June 6, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Bob Nerney MOVED to approve the minutes of the June 6, 2023 RPC meeting; SECONDED by Gino DiGiovanni. The motion carried unanimously with Ginny Harger abstaining.

Ginny Harger MOVED to approve the minutes of the October 3, 2023 RPC meeting; SECONDED by Kim McNeill. The motion carried unanimously.

##### Retroactive Referrals Report

There was no discussion regarding the Retroactive Referrals Report for the period of 9/26 – 11/21/2023.

##### Correspondence

None presented.

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#### **3. Regional Planning Commission Discussion (continued from 10/3/2023 meeting)**

This discussion continued from the last meeting.

Savannah-Nicole reiterated that the RPC continuing to meet like this may not be the best model moving forward. NVCOG recommends a new model for Commissioners that has specific events and programming. She explained that this recommendation will be more effective for everyone and supports the direction the

organization is moving in. Land Use Commissioners would no longer have to attend multiple meetings that often do not have a quorum. She recommended that NVCOG sponsor different 2-hour events throughout the region, such as Pizza and Planning gatherings and Municipal Tours/Highlights, coupled with an hour of training with time for questions and answers in a roundtable manner. She feels these venues could pull the commissioners together in a really good model.

She suggested the same for Land Use Staff, who spend their days enforcing and helping community members, a new model that has specific events and programming. She wants to bring them together to ensure that our land use policies are implementable on the local level and align across departments. NVCOG can come forth with proposals that align with whatever comprehensive policies that we're putting forth regionally, while providing what each town needs. We will support and work in concert with your Land Use staff, so they have whatever they need for informed decision making. We can also help with grants and studies that your staff are involved in.

NVCOG will continue to conduct fall land use training every 4 years. Staff will also continue attending various commission meetings as necessary (Planning, Zoning, Planning & Zoning, Inland-Wetlands, Zoning Board of Appeals, etc.) She stressed that NVCOG is, and will continue to be, a resource for town staff. If there is a particular subject the towns would like us to present on, you can always call on us. Community Planning has grown to a four-person team that's very committed to helping municipalities. She explained that she hopes to conduct the first Pizza and Planning event in the first quarter of 2024.

Regarding Land Use Training, Savannah-Nicole provided the Commissioners with links to 8 hours of Land Use Training that are posted on the NVCOG website. She explained that if someone hasn't been able to meet the training requirement, they can view our training online. NVCOG works hard to get the state partners to be part of our land use training and takes a long time to put them together. Regardless of whether RPC continues or not, she will announce any planned training sessions in early 2024.

Land Use staff look for very specific support – professional development opportunities that align for us as practitioners. If we can get AICP credit – that is a goal. Continuing education credits. We are really looking wholistically to ensure that everybody has the best information they can to advance the goals for the region. In addition, we always put our training on our YouTube channel – she encourages everyone to look there every so often.

Savannah-Nicole reminded the commissioners that even if the decision is for the RPC not to continue in this way, they may call her at any point and we'll come with coffee and chat.

Emely Ricci explained the new Referrals Report Webpage on the NVCOG website.

Each community will still get referrals emailed to them for the time being. No decision has been made about the RPC, so this will continue until a decision is made. The referrals are here on the webpage.

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#### **4. Roundtable – Discussion of local activities and municipal land use processes**

David – Bristol's Regulations will be posted online with the hyperlinks. They had a request in the form of a referral to identify unified residential developments in the BT zone. We're looking at allowing adjacent

properties to combine in order to develop housing that may not fit in a single lot. It's contentious because the lawyers want to open the entire BT zone for unified residential development. The town would rather see targeted unified residential developments in the BT zone. It's on next weeks' agenda.

Curtis – Middlebury has a full slate, the busiest meeting in his 16-year history with the commission. They have the distribution center “warehousing” 3 applications. They have an application for luxury apartments on the border of Waterbury, along Straits Turnpike. It's getting mixed reviews. Luxury apartments seem to be a vibrant new thing in the state. There are 3 subdivision applications.

Gino – Derby didn't meet last month and has no new applications. Route 34 is switched over to the northbound side, the southbound side has opened up to traffic. The new fuel cell is open. Things have been slow on the Planning & Zoning side, but it's expected to pick up when the expected development along the finished Route 34 project begins. The water tower is complete; he's not sure if it's filled/tested, but the site looks really good.

Lori – Naugatuck is finishing up it's POCD. The public hearing will be held Monday and then it will be ready to adopt. She is excited for the changes and is hoping they all go through.

Gil – Prospect will be working on gas station separations/distances. He noted the regulations for day care homes is confusing. Savannah-Nicole will resend the information to the RPC and attach our Land Use Brief, which explains it pretty well. Prospect is also working on its POCD. He asked which way Cheshire is going regarding Chesprocott. There was nobody there from Cheshire to answer.

Ginny – Shelton has two new Alternates to the Planning & Zoning Commission. Fountain Square is coming along; things are easing out. Many retail venues are opening. The Commission came to a consensus and directed staff to provide an unfavorable resolution to a proposed 145 apartment complex that was not part of the original planned development district. They understand that the applicant will now file a 30g application.

Another unfavorable resolution was for a condo complex previously approved for 36 units but they came back to expand for another 28 units. On River Road there was an approval for 152 units in four buildings. In the corporate park area off of Commerce Drive, an application for a prepared foods operation was received. The food would come into the Shelton facility and then be put on vans for personal home deliveries. That is a special exception on next week's agenda.

There is a 19-unit apartment building proposed for the former site of a small manufacturing building downtown. It will be a major improvement for that site. There was an application for a zone change in the residential area off of Constitution Boulevard next year. They approved an expansion to a LI building. A 52-unit apartment building was approved in the south Shelton/Nichols area.

Shelton is working on recodifying its Zoning regulations to put them in conformity with the public act regarding group and family child day care homes in residential zones.

Kim McNeil - Southbury is reviewing the same regulations update for group and family day care homes. The Economic Development Director is working to increase the efficiency of commercial apps. There are many activities wrapping up Southbury's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.

Bob Nerney – Waterbury is busy working on the department budget. They will be funding an update to their POCD, which is set to sunset in September of 2026. They'll be putting together the RFP in the months to come. There are several subdivisions and projects from past years that the approvals have been extended and are coming back. One, off Highland Avenue, is a project that was partially completed, then stalled, and is now coming back.

Waterbury has a new Mayor. He is the former president of the Board of Aldermen, and is a good leader, intelligent, supports smart growth and economic development.

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## 5. NVCOG Updates

Savannah-Nicole explained that we just published our Community Planning newsletter and will share it with the RPC. We are proud of the work that happened in our newsletter. We publish this newsletter quarterly.

She asked the Commissioners to think about the question, “Does the commission want to see the RPC continue?” She again stated that she’s not sure this is the best model. In our quarterly newsletter, we can include blurbs about what has gone on regionally during the last quarter. If the commission determines you are interested in the way we propose, it doesn’t end RPC immediately. If you support us moving in that direction, we will hold one more meeting in February – maybe in person – to enjoy one meal to see this to its finality. NVCOG has made our case over the last two meetings. We will leave it on the agenda to see where you would like to go.

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## 6. Adjournment

Chairman White adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia M. Bruder  
Executive Administrative Clerk