

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Honorable Town Council Members

FROM: Karl F. Kilduff, Town Manager

DATE: February 17, 2021

Please find my report concerning various items of interest to the Town Council and community.

1. Council Business:

- a) FY21-22 Budget: As I noted previously via email, the Governor's budget (released on February 10, 2021) provides for level funding in State grants-in-aid which, most significantly, levels out the Education Cost Sharing grant. This adjustment in the budget is a reversal of regular reductions in ECS awarded to the Town and helps provide a further reduction in the mill rate. Without the additional State aid, the property tax is required to cover revenue shortfalls.

One point of concern within the good news on State grants-in-aid however. The State budget is reliant on federal pandemic support. Further, most of the municipal grant programs are funded by bonding. When the federal funds are gone, there will be renewed pressure on the state budget. As State bonding has been a point of concern in the past, delays in approving bonding packages in turn hurt towns as we wait for LOCIP and Town Aid Road to be approved by the Bond Commission.

CCM staff also reported on pending legislation in Washington which would allow for pandemic relief funding that was designated for counties to flow to Connecticut municipalities (passing through the State government). Pandemic relief funds were originally established to support all levels of government. Connecticut did not receive funding which would have been available to counties.

2. CCM:

CCM held is Legislative Committee meeting on February 11, 2021. The featured speaker was Keith Phaneuf, budget reporter for the CT mirror. He gave his impressions and insights into the Governor's budget. Discussion continued around the assumptions built into the budget, used of federal pandemic relief (for education) and other proposed revenues including sports betting and legalization of cannabis.

3. River COG:

The Council of Governments will meet on February 24, 2021. I have attached to this report a letter that was sent from the COG seeking a county-equivalency designation for Connecticut councils of government since the state does not have county-level government. The designation would open new sources of federal funding to Connecticut which are solely designated for counties.

4. Estuary Transit Board:

The Transit District Board will meet again on February 19, 2021.

5. Miscellaneous:

- Kelseytown Road Bridge – As reported previously, this project was put out for bid and, in concert with the DOT, the contract was awarded to Dayton Construction. We are moving forward with the process to sign a contract with Dayton to allow the work to move forward.
- C-PACE Program Amendment – Clinton joined the C-PACE (Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy) Program offered by the Connecticut Green Bank a number of years ago. The program positions the Town tax collection process to also be the debt collection process for Green Bank loans that are given to businesses that install clean energy. The Green Bank is now looking to take on the servicing of these loans and will release participating towns of the obligation to collect their debt. The rest of the program remains intact, only the collection of debt is changing. A release document needs to be signed with the Green Bank to remove the Town from the process. Clinton has 4 businesses that took advantage of the program and they are current on their C-PACE loans.
- Library – For the Council’s awareness, the Library will re-open to the public on February 16 with some limitations. The approach to operations will be similar to this summer before rising COVID rates triggered a closure of the building with “drive-up” service.



Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

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February 5, 2021

Dr. Ron Jarmin, Acting Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

RE: Federal Register Docket Number 201105–0290 *Change to County Equivalent in the State of Connecticut*

Dear Acting Director Jarmin:

The Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) strongly supports the Census Bureau's proposal to consider Connecticut's nine regional planning regions as county equivalents for statistical purposes. RiverCOG's seventeen municipal chief elected officials (CEOs) voted unanimously to support this proposal at its January 24, 2018 board of directors meeting. We are grateful to the Census Bureau for consideration of this proposal.

If this proposal is implemented, Connecticut will have access to a wealth of Census Bureau data sets by planning region, with which COGs, municipalities and state agencies will be able to effectively use in planning and provision of regional services. Today in Connecticut most county data sets are not used because there are no state, regional, or local government services organized around historic counties. The proposal to recognize the planning regions as county equivalents will transform the data landscape in Connecticut. An example of a dataset that the COGs will put to good use is County Business Patterns. The COGs will use CBP in their economic development planning districts because for the first time the data will be tabulated along relevant geographies.

As you may know, the state of Connecticut abolished county government in 1959. In the 1960s the state established planning regions to serve the municipalities of the state. Today the entire state is divided up into nine planning regions. Each planning region is served by a Regional Council of Governments (COG) that was created by the municipalities within the planning region. All of the state's 169 municipalities are members of a COG. The COGs are governed by the CEOs of their member municipalities, with each municipal CEO serving on the COG board of directors.

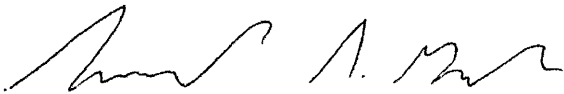
RiverCOG is excited about other benefits of federal county equivalency. The Connecticut General Statutes already authorize COGs to receive grants that would otherwise go to county governments. Other existing state statutes enable COGs to provide a host of services for their planning regions, all of which are commonly provided by county governments elsewhere in the country. Over the last decade the state of Connecticut has encouraged the expansion of regional government services through the COGs for their planning regions. Federal recognition of county equivalency will support this effort and allow municipalities to work through their COGs on more federal programs and grants.

RiverCOG

In conclusion, RiverCOG strongly supports the recognition of Connecticut's planning regions as county equivalents for Census Bureau statistical purposes. This proposal will provide census data starting in 2023 that will be much more useful for Connecticut and will facilitate better planning and public policy. Finally, Census Bureau recognition of planning regions will eventually lead to greater municipal cooperation in the joint participation of municipalities in federal programs through their COGs.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding RiverCOG's support for this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Samuel S. Gold', written in a cursive style.

Samuel S. Gold, ACIP
Executive Director