

Council of Governments Q & A

Q: What are we voting about?

A: The Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials (CRVCEO) voted on July 27, 2011 to become a Council of Governments. We are voting to ratify that vote.

Q: Why are we voting?

A: Connecticut law requires any agreement among towns to be voted on by the legislative body of each of the affected towns.

Q: What is CRVCEO?

A: CRVCEO is a group of First Selectmen, Mayors and Town Council members and Town Managers from Chester, Clinton, Cromwell, Deep River, Durham, East Haddam, East Hampton, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth, Lyme, Middlefield, Middletown, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Portland and Westbrook. It was formed between 2001 and 2004 when a vote was held in each of the 17 towns to form this group.

Q: Why was CRVCEO formed?

A: It was formed for several reasons: first, because the towns of this region have much more in common with each other than the areas surrounding us which include larger cities like Hartford, New Haven, Norwich or New London; second, it was felt that by bringing these 17 towns together, our area would have a stronger voice in dealing with the State of Connecticut and the federal government; finally, its monthly meetings are really the only forum for the towns to come together and discuss matters that affect all 17 towns.

Q: What is a Council of Governments (COG) and how is it different from a Council of Elected Officials (CEO)?

A: While they are similar, Councils of Governments can more easily and rapidly take positions on issues that affect its member towns and it gives the towns a more formal say in issues that affect the whole region.

Q: Why form a Council of Governments now?

A: Actually, the 17 town leaders have been discussing this for many years. However, over the last several years there has been much discussion in the legislature about reducing the number of regions and regional planning organizations in Connecticut to a number less than the current number of 15. Some proposals have suggested as few as 5 or as many as 10. For the next two years the State of Connecticut has provided funding to help defray the costs for regions that decide to voluntarily consolidate and are willing to form a COG. While this funding is important, the real reason for doing this now is that the 17 towns in this region identify better among each other than with the regions that surround these towns, which include larger cities like New Haven, Hartford, Norwich and New London.

Q: What guarantee do we have that once we form this group, the State of Connecticut won't come in and change it?

A: While there are no guarantees, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) has been tasked by the legislature with looking at the number of regions and they have indicated that they will recommend no changes to any regions that do this voluntarily now. OPM will not have to look at these boundaries again for 20 years (in 2032).

Q: How will this affect me?

A: It really won't. What it will do is allow our towns more local control over their own destinies.

Q: Will there be any savings to the towns?

A: It is anticipated that there will be savings as two offices will be consolidated into one and some employees have indicated they will be retiring.

Q: Where will the offices be located?

A: While a formal location has not yet been decided upon, the plan is to locate it centrally in the lower Connecticut River Valley.

Q: What about the structure of the new group and its duties and responsibilities?

A: Actual formal transition planning hasn't begun because until this new COG has been formed and this vote conducted, state statutes don't really allow for serious transition planning (Sect 4-124l of the Ct. General Statutes). However, any transition plans will assure that no town receives fewer services than they currently do.

Draft Ratification Resolution

Resolved, That the _____ Town Meeting/Council/etc(legislative body) of the Town/City of _____, hereby ratifies the vote of the Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials to become a council of governments at their meeting of July 27, 2011, and towards that end, the Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials, hereby formally adopted Sections 4-124i to 4-124p, inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes, in accordance with the procedures set forth in Section 4-124j of the Connecticut General Statutes, and, that this newly established council of governments be called the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments.

“Regional Performance Incentive Account” (PA 11-6, Sect 95 & PA 11-61, Sect 5) [RPIP]

Contact person: Sandra Huber: (860) 418-6293 or sandra.huber@ct.gov

- Designed to provide funding for old Regional Performance Incentive Grant Program
- Open to RPO’s, multiple municipalities and Economic Development Districts
- Made up with funding from the Hotel Tax (6.7%) & the Rental Car Tax (10.7%)
- Deposits made to this account by DRS quarterly
- Fully funded by August 2012
- Applications due by Dec. 31, 2011
- Funds will be released on a “rolling basis”

“Municipal Revenue Sharing Account” (PA 11-6, Sect 96) [MRSA]

Contact person: Shirley Corona: (860) 418-6221 or shirley.corona@ct.gov

- Designed to replace (at least in part) the old Manufacturing Machinery & Equipment and Commercial Motor Vehicle Grant (MM&E) program
- Made up with funding from the Conveyance Tax; a portion of the Sales Tax (1.57%) and a portion of the Luxury Tax (1.43%)
- Towns will be paid what they received under old MM&E program in FY 2011 (minus audit adjustments for over-payments) [See payment list under PA 11-61 Sect. 44]
- Deposits made to this account by DRS quarterly
- Payments made November 15th, February 15th, May 15th, August 15th
- Each payment will equal ¼ of the annual total
- If funding is left in the account, balance will be split into two equal pools:
 - ½ distributed to municipalities based on a per capita basis
 - ½ distributed to municipalities based on a portion of the formula for the Pequot grant

“Inter-town Capital Equipment Purchasing Incentive Program” (PA 11-57, Sect 75) [ICEPIP]

Contact person: To be determined

- Made up of \$ 10 million of Bond funds
- For acquisition/lease of equipment and/or vehicles required to conduct municipal functions
- Must not have less than a 5 year life and can include:
 - Data processing equipment (unit price of less than \$ 1,000 per unit)
 - Maintenance vehicle, pick-up truck, tractor, truck tractor or utility truck or any other kind of vehicle
- Secretary Barnes wants to place an emphasis on three areas:
 - Energy efficient vehicles
 - E-government infrastructure

➤ **Emergency Management investments**

- State funds will be used with a local match split will be 70% local funds/30% state funds (50%/50% for distressed/targeted investment/public investment communities)
- Funds will be released once bond commission allots the funding

Regional Planning Organization (RPO) Consolidation Bonus Pool (PA 11-48, Sect 50)

Contact person: Dan Morley: (860) 418-6343 or daniel.morley@ct.gov

- \$ 300,000 currently available in FY 2012 & FY 2013
- Available to offset costs of voluntary combination of 2 or more RPOs
- Available on a first-come first serve basis

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Pilot Program (PA 07-7, Sect 67 June Spec. Session)

Contact person: Dan Morley: (860) 418-6343 or daniel.morley@ct.gov

- \$ 5,000,000 of bond money
- Money was allotted on Feb. 24, 2011
- Municipalities are eligible for both planning and facilitation grants
- Minimum grant = \$ 250,000; Maximum grant = \$ 1,000,000
- Must be “transit oriented” (See Sect 13b-79kk of the CGS)
- Deadline for submission of formal written proposals was August 4th
- Completion of selection process and announcement of grant awards around mid-October

Housing for Economic Growth (HomeCT) Program (Sect 8 – 13 (m – x) of the CGS)

Contact person: Dimple Desai: (860) 418-6412 or dimple.desai@ct.gov

- 3 phases to this grant program: Technical Assistance (TA); Zone Adoption (ZA); and Permitting Phase (PP)
- To date, \$ 1.95 million has been allocated for the TA phase. 50 municipalities have been approved to receive funding. No new applications are currently being accepted for this phase of the program
- \$ 300,000 of the remaining program funding has been earmarked for the Zone Adoption phase of the program. Details on the funding parameters and application process are being finalized and will be distributed shortly
- \$ 700,000 of the remaining program funding has been reserved for the Permitting Phase of the program. Details on the funding parameters and application process are being finalized and will be distributed shortly