

M.O.R.E.
Regional Entities Subcommittee
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 24, 2015

Those Present:

Rep. Peggy Sayers, Carl Amento, Brian Anderson, Susan Bransfield, Jeff Bridges, John Elsesser, John Filchak, Carl P. Fortuna Jr., Betsy Gara, Scott Gaul, Rep. Bob Godfrey, Sam Gold, Rep. John Hampton, Deb Hinchey, Richard Ives, Matthew Kickerbocker, Robert Labanara, Pat Llodra, Sheila McKay, Steve McKeever, Leo Paul, Lisa Pellegrini, Bonnie A. Reemsnyder, Christine Ruman, Melissa Schlag, Donald Stein, Daniel Steward, Lyle Wray, Steve Vavrek
Jim Vigue

Those Absent:

Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, Sen. Steve Cassano, Rep. Theresa Conroy, Rep. Mike Demicco, William W. Fritz Jr., Rep. Gail Lavielle, Cynthia Mangini, Robert Namnoum, Lena Rodriguez, Rep. Jason Rojas, Rep. Christopher Rosario, Joyce Stille, Stephen Woods, Rep. Tami Zawistowski

Meeting called to order by Rep. Peggy Sayers at 12:10pm

Lyle Wray and Dan Salazar gave a presentation on the Nutmeg Network, explaining its goals and benefits.

Melissa Schlag expressed her excitement for this program and asked if Nutmeg would allow people to scan documents.

Lyle Wray responded by stating that Nutmeg currently does not support document scanning, but they would like the program to feature document scanning in the future.

Rep. Peggy Sayers invited Jen March-Wackers to come up to the table with Lyle Wray and Dan Salazar.

Carl Fortuna stated that he currently uses 10-year-old financial software and asks how the people at Nutmeg know that they have chosen the right software for them.

Lyle Wray answered by saying that Nutmeg recommends a program called Enterprise Resource Planning and that there is a FRP available.

Jen added to the conversation by saying that they could only choose 5 programs to implement immediately, but the programs could be changed in the future.

Lyle Wray reiterated the FRP's availability and elaborated on the possibilities offered by ERP systems for the purposes of conducting payroll and other functions.

Betsy Gara stated that the proposed budget will stop the funding for the Nutmeg project and asked how that will affect projects going forward if the budget does pass.

Lyle Wray responded by saying that it would be a very poor outcome. However, he doesn't believe that the Speaker of the House and the Senate President will let this happen. He stated that the 3.2-3.3 million for funding would easily be made up for inefficiencies.

John Elsesser asked if Nutmeg could be used for agencies like human services and other state agencies for the purpose of creating one portal access.

Dan Salazar answered this by saying that Nutmeg can be used by different agencies for various reasons. He explained that the issues of technology barriers are fading. There are still social barriers between agencies, but there would need to be a push for that to stop.

Rep. Peggy Sayers asked if fiber optics would have to be installed or if they're something already in place.

Dan Salazar responded by saying that some fiber optic cables have been around for 13 years, and some cables are newer. Some public institutes have installed their own fiber optic networks throughout the towns.

Lyle Wray added that many places have fiber optic cables, but they do not connect all the town buildings. He further commented that not all of the necessary work to implement fiber optic cables has been done.

Rep. Peggy Sayers inquired to the lifespan of fiber optic cables.

Lyle Wray answered that the CRCOG contract fiber optics are lease-to-own which means that after the lease the town would own the fiber optic networks. This is relatively cheap, costing 3.2-3.3 million dollars.

Dan Salazar stated the average life of fiber optic is 20 years and can be expanded. You can change a 10GB network to a 20+GB network. It can have more speed and a longer life without adding more fiber.

Lyle Wray stated that technology is improving and the ability to fit more into a small space is increasing.

Rep. Peggy Sayers asked the group what people think they need in their town in order to want to become part of the Nutmeg System.

John Elsesser believes that it's the nerve to go forward. The demonstration town has a tough job, even if a system is proven elsewhere. He further stated that his town is currently unable to afford streaming on their own, but due to more people leaving the cable world, he hopes that his town can be a part of the project.

Don Stein stated that the Nutmeg Network costs them more today than a commercial network system, but they gambled that they would make up the difference in efficiency. His concern is that if the cost goes up it would be a major setback to program. He reiterated the fact that the program has to stay cost effective for it to continue.

Rep. Peggy Sayers agreed with Don Stein's comment regarding cost effectiveness.

Leo Paul said that the reason why he has missed registration for the Nutmeg System is because he missed the previous deadlines. Additionally, he stated that OPM needs to release the funds so that new applicants can move forward.

Rep. Peggy Sayers gave her thanks to Dan and Lyle for the presentation. She stated that the committee can reexamine the topic in the future and then she discussed scheduling the next meeting for next Tuesday at noon. The next presentation will be from the Department of Public Health regarding Public Health Districts and their 10 duties. The second half of the presentation will be on chronically mentally ill individuals who frequently go to emergency rooms for various reasons and how these issues will be addressed.

Leo Paul inquired if there is a chance there can be a discussion on prioritizing the meeting topics.

Rep. Peggy Sayers said that she took notes on people's preferences, which led to the current list of priority subjects. She stated that their discussion would help clarify the topics of interest.

Leo Paul added that the issues his small group is interested in are the peace app, regional services, and SB-1.

Rep. Peggy Sayers thanked Leo Paul for his request and asked if anyone else had one.

John Elsesser stated that a lot of towns are concerned about storm water management and watershed borders.

Peggy Sayers stated that they already have regional water management on the agenda and asked if storm water management is part of that.

John Elsesser stated that he believes regional water management is about drinking water. He further clarified that the three types of water management issues are waste water treatment, drinking water, and storm water.

Betsy Gara confirmed that the regional water issues are a mix of the three.

Deb Hinchey said that she would also like to see regional water treatment on the agenda.

Don Stein stated that the North East and North West sectors of the state already have collaborated and he mentioned that the commission should make sure not to undo positive actions by creating new ones.

Rep. Peggy Sayers asked Don Stein if the three water management agenda would affect Barkhamsted.

Don Stein answered by saying that every house in Barkhamsted has a well and a septic system so municipal system treatment doesn't apply. However, storm water management would affect them and he doesn't want his town being forced into any molds it would not fit.

Rep. Peggy Sayers stated that they will have to look over their agenda and plan for what they'll be doing during the summer and fall since the items on their agenda will last until the end of session.

Steve Vavrek expressed his concerns regarding regional tax collectors.

Rep. Peggy Sayers responded by saying some of these requests are based on past requests and tax collectors are an issue with regionalizing. They don't know what's going to happen in regards to tax collectors because it will lead to town charters having to be changed.

Steve Vavrek asked if there's any push from the state to implement regional tax collectors.

Rep. Peggy Sayers stated it's there because it was mentioned in the past, but she further stated it may not be a big issue.

Leo Paul stated that Litchfield's budget is being harmed because of a new formula that is based on population and amount of calls. He also agreed with Don Stein's comment regarding do no harm. He then asked if there will be a consensus vote after a certain amount of meetings.

Rep. Peggy Sayers stated that they can make recommendations to the Legislature, but they don't decide if something will become law in committee. She added by saying that not all towns will be happy, but the commission wants to do what's in the best interest of all of our towns.

Leo Paul added in by saying that regional school districts are another concern he and other communities have.

Rep. Peggy Sayers confirmed that regionalizing school districts is going to be a difficult issue and that they'll do what they can to resolve those problems.

Sheila McKay recommended that regionalization of school districts should be further down the list because the school districts are not widely represented on the committee.

Rep. Peggy Sayers responded by saying that they would invite speakers to come in to provide information so the commission can come up with the best solution to the issue at hand.

John Filchak suggested the addition of regional assessor and property re-evaluation to the list. He asked how state agencies would deliver different services to the nine cogs.

Rep. Peggy Sayers responded by stating that it would be something worth more discussion and it will be added to the list. She then goes over the list saying that after next week the list for meetings starts with regional 911 dispatch, then service sharing, storm water management, SB-1, then regional school districts. We'll stop the list there and can revisit the list as we go father down the road.

Rep. John Hampton asked if people could give testimony to the commission.

Rep. Peggy Sayers said that in the past they have invited speakers from different towns to testify. She elaborated further by saying that they haven't had public hearings in the past, but will invite representatives from towns to hear their input.

Rep. John Hampton stated that it would be nice to see something on the website to allow other people to share their opinions for more transparency.

Rep. Peggy Sayers responded by saying she doesn't know if that's possible, and asked Jonathan Ferrigno if it is.

Jonathan Ferrigno answered by saying they can ask upstairs if they can add that function to the website.

Steve McKeever asked if the commission could set up an organized method to address issues regarding regional school districts.

Rep. Peggy Sayers stated that they can and people may send in their opinions on regional entities once the date of the meeting approaches so they can find the appropriate speakers.

Steve McKeever agreed with Rep. Peggy Sayers' idea.

Robert Labanara asked if they could push back the meeting for next week for people in both committees.

Rep. Peggy Sayers responded by saying the plan is to have the first meeting end before the second.

Melissa Schlag asked if there would be an issue with duplicating topics between committee meetings, which happened today.

Rep. Peggy Sayers answered this by saying that they knew it would happen today, but will meet with staff to avoid duplication in the future and organize accordingly. However, it can be difficult at times because issues can affect both municipalities and regions.

Rep. Peggy Sayers adjourned the meeting at 1:21pm.