

Notes concerning COST 2021 Town meeting

13 January, 2021

Agenda: see attached

Meeting called to order by Matthew Knickerbocker, COST President

Item 1: Election of new officers. Nominating committee put forward Tom Dunn.

Tom Dunn, Mayor of Town of Wolcott. Elected as new COST president.

Item 2: Legislative leaders Panel

Dennis House, WTNH moderated.

Legislators present; see attached Agenda

4 Questions were addressed:

1st Municipal Aid

This was a moving target which all the Leaders agreed was dependent on Federal Aid. The State is required to balance the budget. The Feds can do deficit spending. All Legislators agreed that it was TBD.

2nd Solid Waste Management

MIRA (Materials Innovation and Recovery Authority) will close its plant in 2022. CT's recycling laws will need revision. Leaders agreed the current waste to energy plant needs considerable improvement. It was also mentioned that the current recycling facility is on a major valuable development site. Most attendees expressed dismay and disillusionment that CT waste was trucked out of State for disposal.

More on this when Commissioner Dykes talks about CCSMM, (the Connecticut Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management),

3rd Affordable Housing

Discussion amongst the Legislators was lively. Rep. Ritter suggested it is not a suburban vs urban issue. It was everyone's. An improved "incentive-based" system was suggested. Schools need to be improved. Economic zones in cities must improve. Rep. Candelora suggested that a regional approach was needed. Sen. Kelly suggested that the definition of affordable Housing should be revised.

Some urban areas are already at the 10% threshold and that restrictive definition may be a problem.

4th The Budget/ Budget Extension/ State or Federal help

This question started off unclear and quickly devolved into a rash of questions raised from various participants listening in.

MIRA was mentioned.

Broadband improvement was a concern.

Ventilation in Schools.

Virtual Net-Metering (solar arrays) for Eversource.

Need for a recycling Guru.

Covid -19 vaccinations.

Modernize the bottle bill.

Marijuana legalization.

(Editor's note: might I just add that with all the problems confronting the State that this issue presents a remarkable grasp for priorities)

Obviously nothing was decided upon.

The Keynote Speaker: Governor Lamont, addressed Covid-19. The additional receipt of 50,000 doses from HHS (Federal Health and Human Services). Note that this was dated information.

He mentioned an observable uptick in incoming residents to the State.

The State ended last 30June with a mild budget increase. The Budget Objective is to keep things steady.

Most of what was discussed has been subsequently updated and/or answered by subsequent events, however the discussion and presentation was frank, upbeat and relevant.

U.S. Capital update: Senator Blumenthal spoke about the current relief package working its way through Congress. The emphasis was on Covid relief, small business grants, money for vaccines, State and local funding relief. All of which has been updated or overcome by events. He was upbeat and informative and gave out his cell phone number.

Connecticut Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management (CCSMM)

The last speaker was Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).

Commissioner Dykes leads and advocates for the 75 member Towns that comprise CCSMM.

The concerns of all these Towns and what they have united together to hopefully resolve is the tremendous amount of trash and waste generated by the State, It is in fact unsustainable. One of CCSMM's immediate concerns is what to do with the tragic accumulation of waste and what to do with it, when MIRA goes away. We cannot just send it out of State as we do now.

30% of trash is combustible, 40% can be recycled. Strengthening requirements for diverting Organics, banning PFAS (polyfluoroalkyl substances), and advocating for Unit-based pricing ("pay as you throw") are viable options for going forward with this initiative. CCSMM's website is <https://portal.gov/deep-ccsmm>

I regard Commissioner Dykes presentation as the most significant of the day and the primary issue going forward. If we don't collectively act to re-evaluate this situation and reduce, reuse and recycle; then we are doomed to delete, pollute and render uninhabitable any semblance of a sustainable civilization. *

* (Author's editorializing, room for discussion)

Summary:

The COST conference was over a month ago. Almost all of the topics of discussion and issues raised have been updated, reworked and are still with us in one form or another. The encouraging aspect of listening to it then, gives one an awareness of what's going on now. It attunes one to what topics or priorities have been improved or overcome by events. It was well worth attending (albeit virtually) and.....I scored Senator Blumenthal's cellphone #.

R/S Peter B. Haines

Attachment



**COST's 2021 Connecticut Town Meeting
Conference Agenda**

- 9:00 a.m. Call to Order & Welcome**
Matthew Knickerbocker, First Selectman, Town of Bethel, COST President
- Election & Introduction of Officers**
John Elsesser, Town Manager, Town of Coventry, Nominating Chair
- Incoming President Remarks**
Tom Dunn, Mayor, Town of Wolcott
- 9:15 a.m. Legislative Leaders Panel**
Sen. Martin Looney, Senate President Pro Tempore
Sen. Kevin Kelly, Senate Republican Leader
Rep. Matthew Ritter, House Speaker
Rep. Vincent Candelora, House Republican Leader
Dennis House, WTNH, Moderator
- 10:00 a.m. Keynote Speaker**
The Honorable Governor Ned Lamont
- 10:30 a.m. U.S. Capitol Update**
Sen. Richard Blumenthal
- 10:45 a.m. Sponsor Spotlights**
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- 10:55 a.m. Connecticut Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management (CCSMM)**
Katie Dykes, Commissioner, DEEP
Laura Francis, First Selectman, Town of Durham
Matt Knickerbocker, First Selectman, Town of Bethel
- 11:40 a.m. Sponsor Spotlight**
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- 11:45 a.m. Town Crier Award Presentation**
- 11:55 a.m. 2021 Legislative Platform**
Membership Discussion and Vote