

## **Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments: Questions & Answers**

“Resolved, That this Town Meeting hereby ratifies, under the provisions set forth in Section 4-124j of the Connecticut General Statutes, the resolution adopted on July 27, 2011 by the Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials, of which the Town of Old Lyme is a member, to establish a council of governments called the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments and to formally adopt Section 4-124i through 4-124p of said General Statutes.”

### **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 ratifying that vote. Connecticut law requires any agreement among towns to be confirmed by the legislative body of each town.

### **Q: What is CRVCEO?**

**A:** CRVCEO is a group of the chief executives of 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 about ten years ago, when a vote was held in each of these towns to form this group. The group includes two state regions, the Connecticut River Estuary Region and the Midstate Region. It facilitates collaborative agreements on such matters as cooperative purchasing and mutual aid, joint grant applications, and information sharing.

### **Q: Why was CRVCEO formed?**

**A:** It was formed for several reasons: first, the towns of this region have much more in common with each other than with the areas surrounding us, which include larger cities such as Hartford, New Haven, and New London; second, these 17 towns, acting together, give our area a stronger voice in dealing with the state and the federal government than they would have individually; finally, the town leaders wanted a forum in which to discuss matters that affect our area.

### **Q: What is a Council of Governments (COG)?**

**A:** A Council of Governments incorporates the functions of the regional planning agencies and the councils of elected officials. Federal and state transportation funding will flow through the COG; the COG will perform regional planning and provide services from mapping to Household Hazardous Waste collection; and it will give us a powerful voice at the state level.

**Q: Why form a Council of Governments now?**

**A:** The 17 town leaders have been discussing this option for many years. In the last few years, however, the state legislature has considered several measures that would reduce the number of regions and regional planning organizations in Connecticut to fewer than the current 15. Some proposals have suggested as few as five regions. Under such plans, the 17 towns would be separated and folded into districts centered on much larger cities. The members of CRVCEO decided to take the proactive step of establishing our 17-town COG to protect our regional identity and organization.

For the next two years, the state will provide funding to help defray costs for regions that decide to voluntarily consolidate and form a COG. As the first region to take this step, we expect to be awarded funds that will help significantly to defray the costs of the transition.

**Q: What guarantee do we have that once we form this group, the state won't change it?**

**A:** While there are no guarantees, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) has been tasked by the legislature with recommending a regional structure for the state, and OPM has indicated that it will recommend no changes to any regions that voluntarily consolidate now. OPM will not have to look at these boundaries again for 20 years (that is, until 2032).

**Q: Will there be any savings to the towns?**

**A:** The towns currently make a per capita contribution annually to support our Regional Planning Agencies, the administrative arms of CRVCEO. We anticipate 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:** A formal location has not yet been selected, but the plan is to locate CRVCOG centrally in the lower Connecticut River Valley. Since the CRERPA offices are currently in Old Saybrook, the new location will likely be closer to East Haddam.

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

**A:** Formal transition planning hasn't begun, because until formation of this new COG has been ratified by the towns, state statutes don't really allow for serious transition planning (Sect 4-124I of the Ct. General Statutes). However, no town will receive fewer services than it does now.

**Q: How will this change affect me?**

**A:** It will have little direct effect on individual citizens. What it will do is give our towns more local control over our own destinies. Of course, the cost savings will benefit the town budget and tax rate.

**“Regional Performance Incentive Account” (PA 11-6, Sect 95)**

- 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)**

- 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 15<sup>th</sup>, February 15<sup>th</sup>, May 15<sup>th</sup>, August 15<sup>th</sup>
- 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)**

- 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