

Capitol Region Council of Governments

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CRCOG FOUNDATION ANNUAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MEMBERS MEETING

CRCOG, 241 Main Street, Hartford
Friday, June 23, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

Attendees

John Adams
Chip Beckett
Lisa Heavner
Bill Austin
John Carson
David Kilbon
Steve Cassano
Matt Hart (by phone)
Robert E. Lee (by phone)
Diane Smith (by phone)
Lyle Wray

CRCOG Staff and Invited Guests

Doe Hentschel
Scott Gaul
Patrick McGloin
Oz Griebel
Brendan Sharkey
Jason Rojas
Jon Colman
Elliot Ginsberg
Hedy Ayers
Cheryl Assis
Pauline Yoder
Mary Ellen Kowalewski
Tim Malone

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. by President Cassano.

Adoption of Minutes: September 7, 2016

John Adams made and Dave Kilbon seconded a motion to accept the September 7, 2016 meeting minutes as presented. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote (Chip Beckett abstained).

Election of Directors

John Carson made and Chip Beckett seconded a motion to:

1. Re-elect the following Directors with terms expiring in 2017 to a two-year term, expiring in 2019: John Adams, William Austin, Lee Erdmann, Douglas Fisher, Brian Heavren, David Kilbon, Robert Lee, Richard Porth, Brandon Robertson and Diane Smith.
2. Welcome Lisa Heavner to the Board of Directors (per her position as the new CRCOG Executive Board Secretary), who will serve for a one year period and will be re-elected next year to a full two-year term.

All voted in favor of the motion.

Election of Officers

Chip Beckett made and John Adams seconded a motion to adopt the following slate of officers, who will serve for a one-year term:

- a. President-Steve Cassano
- b. Vice President-Dave Kilbon
- c. Secretary-Lee Erdmann
- d. Treasurer-Chip Beckett

All voted in favor of the motion.

Discussion Item: Should CRCOG and the CRCOG Foundation Proceed with a Regional Futures Initiative?

Executive Director Lyle Wray kicked off the discussion concerning whether CRCOG and the CRCOG Foundation should proceed with a regional futures initiative in the spirit of an Itasca-like project. Such an effort would require a long-term commitment spanning 10-20 years, true game changer projects, and implementation activities/follow up work would be key to realizing any meaningful successes. Dr. Wray walked the group through a PowerPoint presentation he previously made to the Connecticut Bankers Association entitled *Connecticut: Some Ways Forward – Acting on Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*. He went on to comment that many other regions, including Salt Lake City, Minneapolis and Denver (he noted the latter was the same size as the Hartford /Springfield region back in 1990 before it grew significantly) have committed to large game-changer initiatives, and that changing the economic trajectory requires strong leadership and collaboration over long periods of time.

Dr. Wray asked those present to weigh in on how best to go about something like this (particularly to avoid a failure to launch), and whether it makes sense for CRCOG/CROG Foundation to serve as a backbone organization. The agency would simply be charged with making sure things move forward (as opposed to having our fingerprints on everything).

A lengthy and spirited conversation followed, which included the following observations/comments/potential action steps:

Observations/Comments

1. We lack a regional identity (people identify with their town, not with the region and the importance of the regional economy).
2. There is little statewide pride—and a general failure to think collectively. This may be linked to the abolition of counties.
3. While CRCOG is viewed as the most effective COG, it lacks both the ability to raise money and the authority to take action in areas where it could be effective. Local charters also limit regional solutions.
4. To ensure the success and sustainability of a regional futures effort, the private sector must be involved. Broadly, we need to foster better collaboration between the public and private sectors.
5. Remember to focus on small wins and low-hanging fruit, in addition to longer range goals. They provide legitimacy.
6. Leverage anchor institutions (eds, meds, government, foundations, local banks), as well as mid-sized businesses that are anchored here.
7. Organizations like Leadership Greater Hartford have extensive experience bringing people together and have expressed an interest in helping CRCOG move on a regional futures project.

Suggested Action Steps

1. Capitalize on the Governor's unique position to set priorities without a legislative budget in place and assemble an advisory group to advance a regional agenda.
2. Related, pen a letter for CRCOG to serve as a model for the future. Articulate what needs to happen/advocate for empowering legislation for CRCOG to take the lead.
3. Engage retired CEOs ('wise men and women') in a regional futures process—they no longer need to tow the line and have experience, expertise and connections.
4. Launch a PR campaign to highlight what we are, what we can be and how we can do things together. Related, better showcase our successes. The public needs to understand that it makes sense to do it together. Create a sense of 'we-ness'. Use existing channels to advertise how CRCOG is working for you (contribute to town newsletters, push messaging on cable stations, etc.).
5. Investigate the original plan behind the abolition of CT's county structure and its implications for today's taxing structure.

Per President Cassano, next steps will include digesting what we heard today, doing some follow up work this summer and reconvening the Board in September to continue related discussions.

Foundation Project Updates

- *Next Generation Economic Development*
Dr. Wray reported on a handful of activities related to Next Generation Economic Development, including:

1. Establishing a good relationship with the German Consulate in Boston and co-hosting a forum on Industry 4.0 in March that was attended by a large delegation of German officials.
2. Planning for a workshop on attracting and retaining millennials in the fall.
3. Completing a series of working group meetings with the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving as part of the 'What Can We Do Differently?' process.

Scott Gaul from the Hartford Foundation mentioned that Jay Williams will be taking over as President in mid-July. He brings with him a fresh perspective, as well as significant experience dealing with similar challenges to those we face in the Hartford region.

- **Video Testimonial Project**

Hedy Ayers reminded the Board that the University of Hartford has donated video production services to the Foundation to help archive/document CRCOG's successes and to demonstrate the value of regional cooperation. Three 90 second to three minute videos are planned—focusing on transportation, public safety and shared services respectively. A shorter, introductory piece will also be created. Interviews will begin later this summer. Ms. Ayers noted that this project nicely ties into the call to better tell CRCOG's story that came out of the regional futures discussion.

CRCOG Grant and Program Updates

- *Anchor Institutions*

Mary Ellen Kowalewski reported that CRCOG consultants finished their best practices report in December, entitled *Best Practices in Engaging Anchor Institutions and Neighborhoods to Build Corridors of Opportunity*. The report includes six case studies, which were discussed at stakeholder meetings held in New Britain and Hartford in October, along with lessons learned that may apply to the CT**fastrak** corridor. Municipalities have begun to use the report in collaborations with local anchors.

Ms. Kowalewski indicated that CRCOG is already building off of the best practices research through an RPIP project designed to encourage anchor-led TOD in the CT**fastrak** corridor and expand the conversation to the CT**rail**-Hartford Line and **fastrak**East corridors. Key elements of this grant include: 1) creating tools to communicate TOD opportunities, both at a high level and in terms of specific benefits that will accrue to industries; and 2) analyzing existing barriers to TOD and identifying tools to address them (e.g. barriers to recruiting and retaining talent, strategies for encouraging TOD in weak markets, toolkit creation, etc.).

- *TOD Grant Application*

Ms. Kowalewski announced that CRCOG, in partnership with the CT Main Street Center, is filing a new TOD and Responsible Growth Application today in support of the creation of the **Envision Knowledge Corridor Resource Center**. This online portal will link cities and towns to existing planning tools, as well as to tools for scenario planning and visualizing development density.

Adjournment

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.