



CRCOG Weekly Legislative Report

2020 Legislative Session

March 6, 2020

Weekly Legislative Feature Issues:

Update on the potential Coronavirus outbreak within the state of Connecticut. Several surrounding states have already identified cases of the coronavirus being present in their communities. The State of Connecticut has been putting into place procedures and taking precautions to deal with the outbreak of Coronavirus in its communities when it occurs. There was an informational forum on the topic held today at the Legislative Office Building, where the Department of Public Health, Connecticut Hospital Association, various CT state colleges and Universities, including the University of Connecticut were present to inform the public and officials regarding preparing for the coronavirus.

This past week has revealed new developments of particular interest to you:

Lamont Announces Executive Staff Changes

After more than a year at the helm Governor Lamont's Chief of Staff is leaving the administration. Ryan Drajewicz, who had taken a leave of absence from Bridgewater Associates to be in charge of Lamont's transition team will be moving on, but Drajewicz says he's going to stay for an additional three weeks to aide in the transition before going back home to spend time with his six year old son. While working at Bridgewater, Drajewicz helped founder Ray Dalio with a 10-year transition plan out of his day-to-day management of the company into a role as co-CIO and prior to that he worked for former U.S. Senator Chris Dodd. Drajewicz said his biggest disappointment was transportation, Drajewicz spearheaded Lamont's effort to get the transportation plan passed through the legislature that included limited tolling. Paul Mounds who is currently chief operating officer will be replacing Drajewicz. Mounds was previously in charge of Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's legislative policy team before spending some time working in the nonprofit world. Josh Geballe who is currently a part of the Department of Administrative Services Commission will take on Mounds' responsibilities as chief operating officer and will be responsible for communicating with state agencies.

[Lamont Announces Executive Staff Changes](#)

After decades of independence, state legislators want to exert more control over the Metropolitan District

The Metropolitan District has always been protective of its independence; however, lawmakers would like to wring out more accountability, transparency, and a commitment to a modern code of ethics. Democratic Senators Matt Lesser and Derek Slap, have discussed adding yearly audits from the state Auditors of Public Accounts, adopting an ethics code similar to the ones' used by cities and towns to address nepotism, updating the district's outdated charter and streamlining the sprawling, 29-member commission. The commission board is comprised of members who have been appointed by legislative leaders and the governor. The Planning and Development Committee are in the process of drafting a bill that would revise parts of the state statues on which the MDC was founded and re-examines the structure of the districts commission. The MDC has taxing authority, can condemn land through eminent domain, and sell bonds to raise money just as cities and towns can. According to Senator Slap, he believes that the makeup of the board should be something that is a part of the comprehensive charter review, instead of political appointments. Seventeen of the commissioners are from the MDC's eight member towns: Bloomfield, West Hartford, Rocky Hill, Newington, Wethersfield, Hartford, East Hartford, and Windsor. While an additional four commissioners who are representatives of the "nonmember" towns and instead are communities that buy drinking water from the MDC. The nonmember towns are Glastonbury, South Windsor, Farmington and East Granby. Scrutiny of the MDC's practices have been fueled by two factors, a rate hike of nearly 14 percent that is cutting deeper into the wallets of families, and leaders within the MDC wanting to grant a 50 percent discount to a Niagara bottling company in Bloomfield, the largest commercial customer. The discount would only take effect if the company's water usage increased from 600,000 to 1.8 million gallons per day. Residents of the MDC aren't pleased with a rate cut being granted to a company that increased its water consumption that lacks a financial incentive. The discount being floated has been presented to residents as a way for Niagara to reach and maintain its full capacity. A final commission vote has been set for Monday at 5:30 p.m. at the MDC offices. The MDC had proposed the discount twice before, in 2016 and 2018 but quickly scrapped it after being met with opposition. At the same time, the MDC and it's four nonmember towns have been clashing against one another over a water surcharge the towns believe they shouldn't have to pay. A tentative settlement of a class-action lawsuit would see the MDC having to pay nearly 7.7 million to thousands of overcharged customers. To cover the settlement the MDC has stated it would have to raise water rates. A suggestion has been raised that the state's Public Utilities Regulatory Authority step in and regulate the MDC and set rates, as it does with investor owned utility companies and privately held water companies. However, PURA doesn't regulate municipal entities, so it isn't much of an option in helping regulate the MDC.

[After Decades of independence, state legislators want to exert more control over the Metropolitan District](#)

Hartford's draft master plan calls for infill development, renewable energy and 'college town' atmosphere

A draft of Hartford's next master plan lays out an ambitious plan to further develop the city to promote equity, renewable energy and economic growth in the region ahead of the city's 400th birthday in 2035. The Planning and Zoning Commission developed a 71-page plan which relied on feedback from about 2,000 participants in public meetings and surveys asking residents how they viewed Hartford today and how they want it to grow in the next 15 years. A new city plan by state law must be developed every decade according to state law. There were a handful of recommendations in the plan which offered a blueprint for building 5,000 new housing units, expanding bus and rail service throughout the region, and increasing investments for arts districts and to spur entrepreneurship and 10 real estate developments. The plan also establishes the goal of cutting gun violence in half, growing the city's grand list, building on vacant and underutilized surface parking lots, converting closed schools to community centers, attracting new grocery stores and restaurants and developing Hartford as a "college town" by housing an additional 1,000 higher education workers and students. For Hartford to become more equitable and prosperous the city needs to grow, and to grow we need to attract new businesses and create jobs and that's what this plan is meant to accomplish.

[Hartford's draft master plan calls for infill development, renewable energy and "college town" atmosphere.](#)

Tracked Bills:

Please see attached document.