

CORNWALL PZC PRESENTATION 2017
NORTHWEST HILLS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Submitted by Rick Lynn, NHCOC Executive Director

The NHCOC continues to be very busy and we have a number of exciting regional planning and service delivery projects underway. As you may know, the COG consists of the Mayors and First Selectmen from the 21 member towns in northwestern CT. The group meets on a monthly basis to discuss issues of municipal concern, oversee COG projects, and explore new opportunities for regional cooperation. In addition to providing a forum for regional collaboration, the COG's work program typically includes activities in three basic areas: regional planning, grant writing and administration, and regional service delivery. I'd like to touch on all three of these COG focus areas for a few minutes this morning. More information on these and other COG activities is available on our website: www.northwesthillscog.org.

Focus Area One: Regional planning activities in 2016 focused on finalizing a Regional Transportation Plan and Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. In 2017, we will be focusing on establishing a regional food hub, developing a new 21-town Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, initiating an update to the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and preparing a Regional Trail Map and Connectivity Plan. I'd like to encourage the PZC to utilize these regional planning documents in the update of your Town Plan of C&D. It can save the town money and simplify the town plan development process. For example, a demographic, economic and housing update by town was recently developed by CERC to inform our RPOD. This same data is typically included in town plans to identify development trends and we hope that our member towns will utilize this information in preparing town plans.

Focus Area Two: Grant writing and administration activities in 2016 resulted in securing over \$750,000 in grant funds to benefit our member towns. These included grant funds for 1) a rural broadband and mobile enhancement study, 2) a water/wastewater study in West Cornwall, 3) an alignment study of a section of the HouBike trail in Kent and Cornwall in cooperation with the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, 4) development of a low-impact development guidebook, 5) development of a food hub feasibility study. In addition the COG is allocated about \$2M each year from ConnDOT for local road improvements and we serve as the fiduciary agent for about \$300,000 in Homeland Security Grant funding each year for our regional area.

Focus Area Three: Regional service delivery activities this year included on-going coordination of a number of popular programs such as our household hazardous waste collection days, a prescription assistance program in cooperation with the Foundation for Community Health, a fuel bank program, the Northwest Hills Public Works Equipment Cooperative, and the region's cooperative purchasing program. Soon we will be initiating a new Neighbor to Neighbor program in cooperation with the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation to provide assistance to people in need to help them through a short-term financial crisis.

Conclude by telling you about a particularly exciting project that the COG is undertaking. That project is the development of a Regional Trail Map and Connectivity Assessment.

This project was specifically recommended in our RTP. The purpose is to enhance awareness of public access trails in the region. The landscape and hiking opportunities in Cornwall and the northwest corner are awesome, and while some towns and land trusts have developed trail maps or publications to advertise their trails, no one has developed a comprehensive regional inventory of available hiking options. We will be doing that and placing the information on the web to enhance awareness of the outdoor recreation opportunities in the area for residents, businesses, and visitors. Research has shown that such enhanced awareness can have significant economic benefits for local businesses and also improve the quality of life for local residents.

Thanks again for the opportunity to attend today's meeting. I'd be happy to respond to any questions you might have.