

## **SWRPA Technical Assistance to the Town of Westport (As of 2/21/12)**

### **Transportation**

Transportation technical assistance has assisted the Town of Westport by studying transportation needs and issues and coordination of federal and state funding programs that Westport has used for paving and rail parking improvements. On-going assistance is provided for rail parking, transportation incident management/emergency management. Ad hoc assistance is provided upon request.

- Transportation Technical Studies:
  - Route 136 @ Bayberry Lane Extension (underway 2/12)
  - Study of bicycle/pedestrian “hotspots” identified from CTDOT crash data 2006-2008 and Westport Police (underway 2/12)
  - South Western Region Traffic Calming Toolbox, and Roseville Road Traffic Calming Case Study (1998)
  - Zoning Regulations Review – Off Street Parking/Loading and Traffic Report Requirements and Standard (1997)
  - Intersection Improvements – Route 136 (Compo Road North) @ Route 1; and Route 136 (Easton Road) @ Sturges Highway (1996)
  - Route 33 Corridor Study (1995)
- Pavement Management System (PMS) (2004) – a SWRPA initiative funded by USDOT and towns lead to development of the Westport (and other municipal) PMS systems.
- Federal transportation funding programs coordinated by SWRPA that benefited Westport:
  - Pavement Preservation Project 158-203 – Cross Highway, Long Lots Rd Nd Newtown Turnpike (federal share \$975,000 from economic stimulus/ARRA, total project \$1,200,000)
  - Pavement Preservation Project 158-205 – North Avenue, Roseville Road, Cross Highway ((federal share \$1,837,000 from economic stimulus/ARRA and STP Urban, total project \$1,999,000)

### **Emergency Management and Transportation Incident Management**

SWRPA has provided assistance for emergency management programs and CERT since 2003, and transportation incident management since 1991. Assistance has taken the form of

administering grants that provided emergency management equipment, funding for CERT programs, and through USDOT-CTDOT programs radios for first responders, and upgrade of the state police communications system to promote inter-operable interagency communication. Over the years, SWRPA has worked with Westport first responders to enhance unified response through training, table top and functional exercises. Currently, SWRPA staff is working with key first responders and Metro-North to improve response and recovery, an initiative spurred by the July 22, 2011 Metro-North train stranding in Greens Farms. In addition, data and analyses that assist first responders are provided. This month, SWRPA updated the estimate of Westport's daytime population for the Westport Fire Department from the 2000 estimate prepared by SWRPA. Data on vulnerable populations based on the 2000 Census was provided, and is being updated to 2010.

### **Data and GIS Services**

SWRPA provides technical assistance to Westport regarding the US Census and other data sources. Examples include SWRPA's 2011 Census report which details and analyses Census data for the South Western Region and for individual towns, including Westport.

Through the South Western Region GIS User Group, SWRPA has supported the development of municipal as well as SWRPA GIS programs. In January 2012, SWRPA prepared and submitted a \$2.4 million application to OPM's Regional Performance Incentive Program, which provides funding to incentivize towns to coordinate projects and services to create cost-savings. If the application is funded, high-resolution aerial imagery for the entire region would be obtained, as well as high-precision planimetric data which includes features such as sidewalks, utility infrastructure and building footprints.

### **Watershed Management Plans**

SWRPA is working with municipalities and The Nature Conservancy in the Saugatuck River Watershed to develop a watershed based plan. The Purpose of the plan is to help prioritize conservation, restoration and mitigation activities and to address the requirements of a number of state and federal funding programs. The plan will identify management measures to reduce impairments resulting from Non-Point Source Pollution and address the impairments plaguing the individual river as identified by the DEP's *List of Connecticut Waterbodies Not Meeting Water Quality Standards*. The plan will also incorporate the Nine Elements of Watershed Planning established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). With Westport located as the southern most community of the Saugatuck River and hosting the harbor, the benefits of conservation and preservation activities throughout the watershed will be reaped by the town.

The Final Watershed Based Plan is expected to be completed during the fall of 2012.

### **Predisaster Mitigation Plan Update and FEMA Funding Assistance**

The first multi jurisdiction predisaster mitigation plan for the region was developed by SWRPA in 2005 to eliminate the need for each of the region's communities to develop separate plans. In 2011 SWRPA completed a five year update of the plan as required by FEMA. To purpose of the plan is to *reduce* or *eliminate* risk to human life and property resulting from natural hazards. A current Predisaster Mitigation Plan approved by FEMA is required in order for municipalities to be eligible for a number of FEMA grant programs, including certain public assistance funds, Pre-Disaster mitigation grants and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

In 2009, at the beginning of the plan update process, SWRPA hosted a cost benefit analysis training with FEMA and the then Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP) to assist municipalities completing and strength funding applications submitted to FEMA.

SWRPA has also provided technical assistance to the Westport Fire Department to complete a Community Benefit/Cost Effectiveness required as part of a Legislative Predisaster Mitigation Grant received by the Town. SWRPA completed a cost benefit analysis for the project, supplied supporting documents and acted as a liaison between FEMA, the CTDEP, Congressman Himes Office and the Westport Fire Department.

### **Flood Reconnaissance Efforts**

Since the spring 2007 flooding, SWRPA has been working with the CT District 4 congressman and their staff to have a Flood Reconnaissance Study completed for the Region. SWRPA has submitted a number of appropriations requests for funding and approval for the Army Corps of Engineers to complete a study to identify measures to reduce the magnitude of floods experienced. In 2010 the appropriations request submitted by SWRPA was approved by Congress. Unfortunately, at the same time a decision was made by Congress to not initiate any "new starts" programs. Until the precedent of no "new starts" projects is lifted, SWRPA will continue to explore other options to have this study completed.

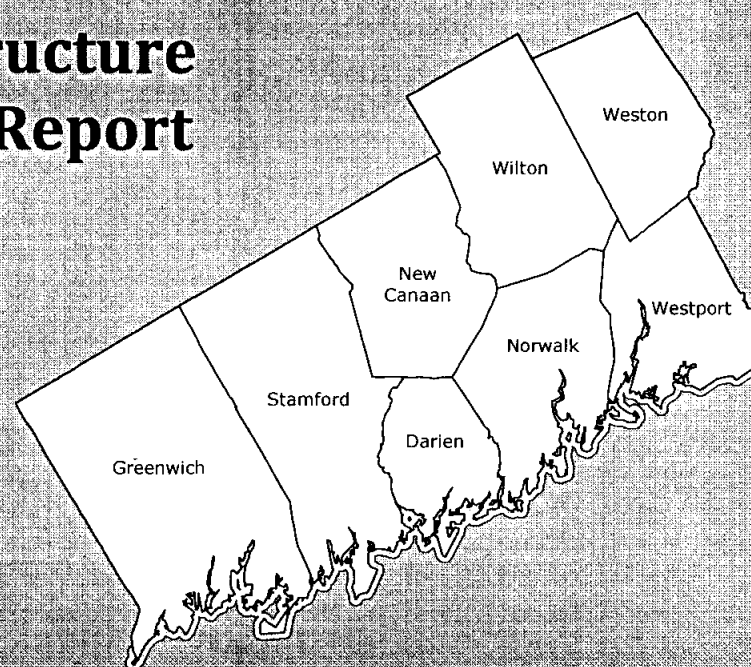
### **Regional Assistance**

In 1997 the Town of Westport became a member of the SWRPA Purchasing Cooperative. In 1996, the South Western Region Purchasing Cooperative was formed. The South Western Region Purchasing Cooperative is comprised of municipal purchasing staff and the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) staff. SWRPA has hosted meetings with municipal purchasing directors to discuss cooperative bidding. The meetings, in turn, led to the formation of the South Western Region Purchasing Cooperative, which now bid cooperatively on sand & salt in the spring and gasoline and diesel fuels during the fall.

# Discussion With Westport RTM

## SWRPA-SWRMPO Proposed Structure Change to COG - Due Diligence Report

March 6, 2012



- **Current Structure**
- **Findings**
- **Operating Scenarios**
- **FAQ's**

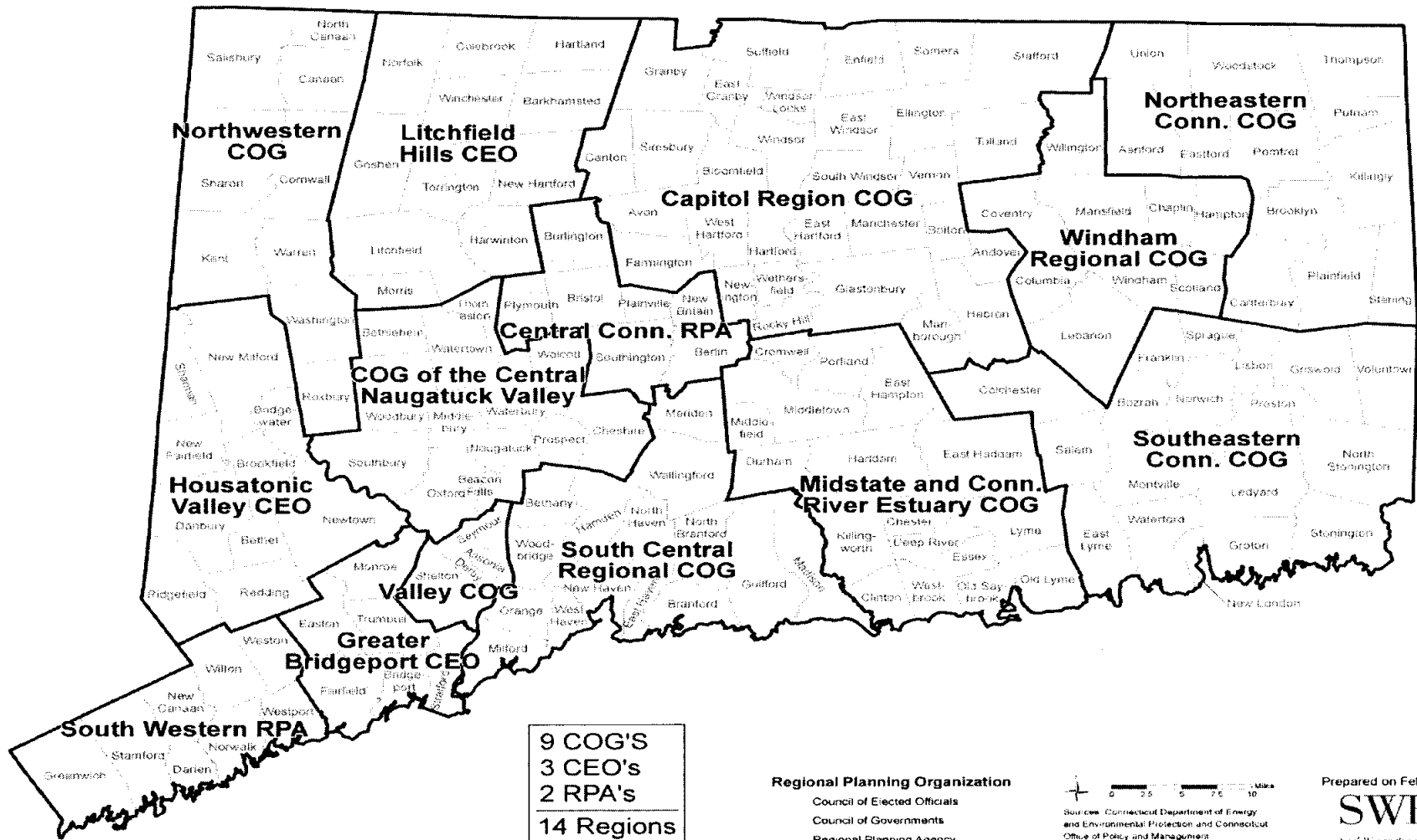
**Current Structure:**  
**SWRPA – SWRMPO 1947 to Present**

# Current Structure

- 1947 – Regional Planning Agencies (RPA) were authorized with county government abolished
- 1950s – Connecticut established 15 RPAs
- 1962 – Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) created by Federal government to guide transportation planning and funding
- 1965 – Council of Elected Officials (CEO) option enacted
- 1971 – Council of Governments (COG) option enacted
- 1971-2011 – Of the current 14 regional planning organizations  
12 have become CEOs or COGs  
– SWRPA only one of two remaining RPAs

# Current Structure:

## Current Connecticut Regional Planning Organization Structure





## Current Structure: Regional Planning Organizations - 2012

### Regional Planning Agencies RPAs - 2

- SWRPA
- Central Connecticut

### Council of Governments COGs - 9

- Valley
- South Central Regional
- Southeastern  
Connecticut
- Central Naugatuck  
Valley
- Northwestern  
Connecticut
- Capital Region
- Windham Region
- Northeastern  
Connecticut
- Estuary – Mid-State

### Council of Elected Officials CEOs - 3

- Housatonic Valley
- Litchfield Hills
- Greater Bridgeport

## Current Structure:

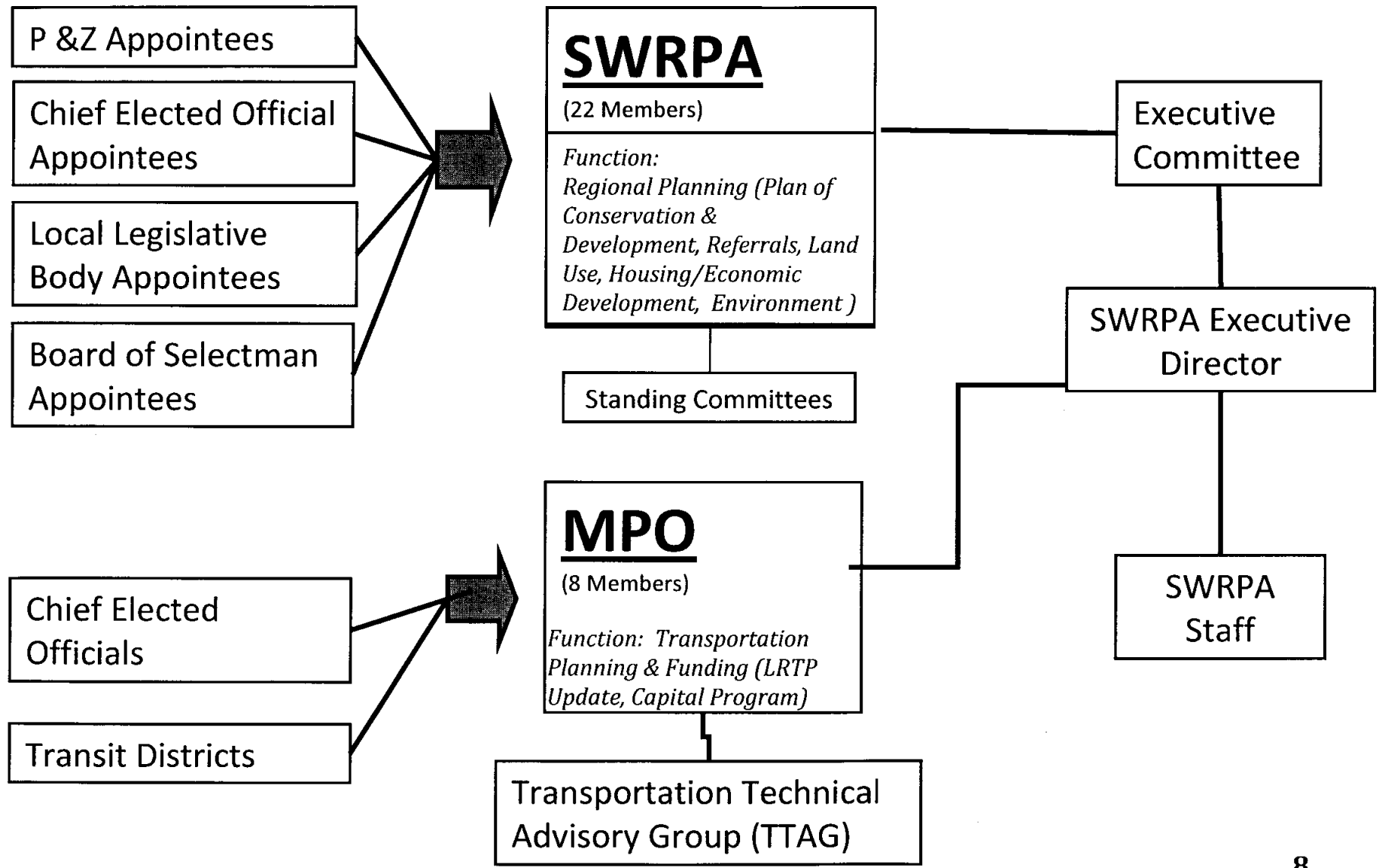
### SWRPA – SWRMPO – Professional Staff

- 22 person volunteer board
- **Focus:** Overall fiduciary and governance responsibility for SWRPA Staff
- **Committees:**
  - Referrals
  - Transit Oriented Development
  - Environmental - Watershed
  - Legislative
  - Strategic Planning
  - Communications

- Research, planning and advisory services to municipalities
  - Regional Planning
  - Transportation
- Budget just under \$1.5 MM
  - Federal DOT funds
  - State DEEP & OPM funds
  - Member municipalities

- **Focus – Oversight of**
  - Transportation planning
  - Region's required 4-year long range transportation plan
  - Region's required transportation capital program
- **Representation:**
  - Region's 8 municipal Chief Elected Officials
  - 3 Transit District Directors (Norwalk, Stamford, Westport)

# Current Organizational Structure



## **Findings:**

**Two COG and Two CEO Participants**

## Findings:

Two COG and Two CEO Participants

SWRPA and MPO Chairs/Vice-Chairs with the Executive Director held discussions regarding satisfactions and concerns with:

- Litchfield Hills CEO
- COG of the Central Naugatuck Valley
- Housatonic Valley CEO
- South Central COG

- Understand their views of effectiveness working in the COG and CEO structures.
- Observe the advantages and disadvantages over the RPA structure.

## Findings:

### Two COG and Two CEO Participants

- Leadership is placed where it belongs with the chief local elected officials (CEOs):
  - In the past the focus was only on a group of volunteers and in many cases communications were weak or non-existent with the CEOs.
- Leadership by the CEOs has value-added in the form of greater prestige, attention and importance to the organization.
- Volunteerism is still preserved since each municipality selects a member and an alternate to a Regional Planning Committee.
  - Additional appointees to other committees can occur through mutual agreement of the CEOs.

## Findings: Two COG and Two CEO Participants

- One monthly meeting consolidates all regional planning and transportation issues.
  - This type of streamlining is important during an era when more than ever we need economy and efficiency in government.
- The skill sets of many of the CEOs worked well in conducting the business of the new agency structure.
  - This was especially apparent with financial work since all CEOs participate in the annual preparation of a municipal budget and the maintenance of a multi-year financial plan.

## Findings:

### Two COG and Two CEO Participants

- All volunteers and professionals expressed satisfaction with the new structure.
- Volunteers felt the level of work was manageable.
- The new structure reinforced the collegial operations of the elected officials, the volunteers and the professional staff.



# Operating Scenarios

## Operating Scenarios:

### South Western Organizational Structure: COG

- Non-transportation regional planning matters previously performed by SWRPA, agency finances, organization administration
- Transportation planning matters previously performed by MPO
- Promoting regional coordination and cooperation

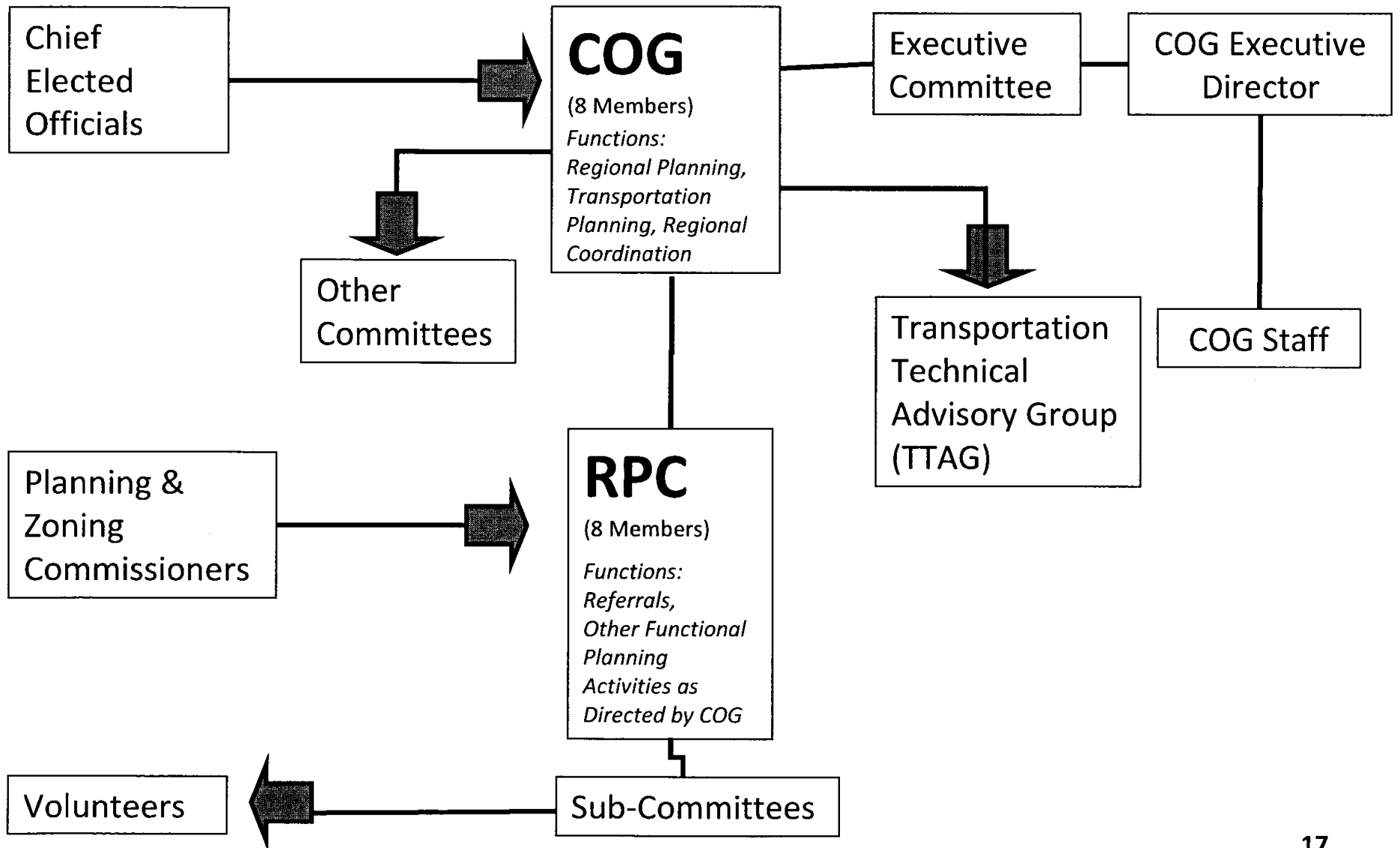
- Comprised of 8 municipal Chief Elected Officials serving as representatives – 1 vote per representative
- 8 person regional planning commission (RPC) carries out planning duties and responsibilities (including referrals) in cooperation with the municipal Chief Elected Officials
- Opportunities for volunteer participation on special and advisory committees supporting the COG and RPC's comprehensive and functional planning responsibilities/duties

## Operating Scenarios: COG Regional Planning Commission

- **Comprehensive planning:** propose and update a plan of conservation & development
- **Functional planning:** as directed by the COG, RPC should carry out planning activities for specific functional areas, i.e. housing, economic development, environment, etc.
- **Zoning and subdivision referrals**
- **Other reports/plans/policies** that the COG deems appropriate

- One RPC representative per COG municipality with one vote each
- State statute requires that an RPC representative be a member of and appointed by their municipal planning commission, with the concurrence of the local municipality's appointing authority

# Operating Scenarios: Organizational Structure of a South Western Region COG



# Operating Scenarios: COG Advantages & Benefits Findings

Thought Leadership Task Force – Advantages & Benefits	
<b>Chief Elected Official Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align municipal leadership with decision making</li> <li>• Directly involved in non-transportation discussions/decisions</li> <li>• Responsible for COG agendas, activities and accountable</li> <li>• Accountable to the citizens</li> <li>• Provides opportunity for stronger, unified voice in State Legislative matters</li> <li>• Can empower its members, board or employees, to engage in lobbying activities or to retain the services of a law firm, government relations advisor, or other consultant.</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWRPA staff reduces Board meeting preparation from 24 meetings to 12</li> <li>• COG could provide stronger, unified voice in State Legislative matters</li> <li>• More efficient and productive allocation of professional staff focus and time</li> </ul>
<b>Municipal Autonomy Status Quo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversion to COG would not diminish local municipal autonomy.</li> <li>• Municipal Planners and Planning &amp; Zoning Commissions would maintain their autonomy unaltered.</li> <li>• COG does not have taxing authority.</li> <li>• Conversion to COG would have no impact on current State study re Regional Planning Agencies boundaries.</li> </ul>

# Operating Scenarios: COG Challenges & Concerns Findings

Thought Leadership Task Force – Challenges & Concerns	
<b>Questionable Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conversion to COG will result in additional work burden on CEOs and Regional Planning Commissioners.</li><li>• Challenge to justify conversion to COG when the current organizations are working well and there are no apparent significant advantages to a conversion.</li></ul>
<b>Shifting of Power &amp; Roles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One vote per COG member effectively results in some reapportionment of balance of power</li><li>• Assuming current SWRPA Planning &amp; Zoning members migrate to the COG Regional Planning Commission, 14 current SWRPA members will be “decommissioned”.</li></ul>



# **Top Ten COG FAQ's**

# Top 10 COG FAQs

## 1. Would a COG foreshadow a return to county government?

No...

A COG is not a government, and does not have any authority to perform governmental functions.



## Top 10 COG FAQs

### 2. Will the COG be a taxing authority?

No...

Connecticut state statute does not provide a COG  
any authority to levy taxes.

## Top 10 COG FAQs

### **3. Will there be a way for current SWRPA representatives to participate?**

Yes...

The Regional Planning Commission may create any sub-committee it deems appropriate; volunteer members may be appointed by the RPC to such committees.

## Top 10 COG FAQs

### 4. Will the voting procedures be different for a COG?

No...

- Simple majorities of voting memberships will constitute quorums, similar to SWRPA and the MPO.
- Simple majorities of members present at meetings will be required to approve voting measures, similar to SWRPA and the MPO.

## Top 10 COG FAQs

### **5. Will the State be able to use this proposed structural change to force consolidations of regions?**

No...

- Regional boundaries are currently determined by the Office of Policy and Management.
- State government can mandate consolidations if they wish, regardless of regional structure.

## Top 10 COG FAQs

### **6. Will local planning and zoning commissions have a diminished role in the COG?**

No...

Since RPC membership is to be comprised only of P&Z commission members, there are no seats at the table for appointees from other legislative bodies.

## Top 10 COG FAQs

### **7. Will the COG appoint members to the RPC?**

No... state statute requires that:

- The RPC will be comprised of local P&Z members.
- Local P&Z commissions appoint its members to the RPC.
- The local appointing authority must provide concurrence for RPC appointments.

## Top 10 COG FAQs

### 8. Will the workload for COG members and RPC members increase?

Maybe...

- Certain COG members may have additional work, especially if they are in a leadership role. However, COG members in other regions have not reported increased workloads.
- RPC members may have additional work related to their responsibilities to attend RPC meetings and, in some instances, COG meetings.

## Top 10 COG FAQs

### 9. Will a proposed COG impact “Home Rule”?

No...

- The COG does not and will not have any authority over local decision making processes.
- On a regional basis, a COG has the same referral responsibilities as a regional planning organization such as SWRPA.



# Top 10 COG FAQs

*10. Any questions you may have...*

**RTM ORDINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**February 29, 2012**

**REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS ORDINANCE**

**THE PROPOSED ORDINANCE:**

The proposed ordinance would adopt CGS Sections 4-124i through 4-124p as amended, for the formation of a regional Council of Governments (COG), authorize the Town to join such Council when duly established, designate the First Selectman as the representative of the Town on such Council, and authorize the RTM to designate an alternate representative from its members.

**DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION:**

The RTM Ordinance Committee reviewed the above-described ordinance at its February 29, 2012 meeting, which Gail Kelly also attended.

The committee voted unanimously to recommend that a sunset clause be added to the ordinance, and then voted unanimously that, subject to that recommendation, the proposed ordinance is ready for consideration by the RTM.

The committee also discussed, but did not vote on, whether the ordinance should be modified to allow the RTM to appoint any elected official of the Town of Westport as the alternate representative.

Respectfully submitted,

THE RTM ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

George Underhill, Reporter  
Lee Arthurs  
Don Bergman  
Allen Bomes  
Eileen Flug, Chair

Absent:  
David Floyd