

**4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN
MEMBER TOWN TEAM MEETING**

AGENDA

JANUARY 13, 2021, 2PM – 3PM

VIA ZOOM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88432467766?pwd=RTh3czN6cTVtRUtnRHgyZG5zL1U4QT09> - Meeting ID: 884 3246 7766 - Passcode: fxcc62

Call in: 1 646 558 8656 - Meeting ID: 884 3246 7766 - Passcode: 992034

Welcome!

Future consideration and election of Steering Committee Officers

Priority action items – 4 Town calendar, asset inventory

4 Town ‘campaign’ creation with Nichols College

Team Stakeholder and Committee list

Review and consideration of next steps to be taken in January/February

Other business

Next meeting date, time, agenda items

Adjournment

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN MEMBER TOWN TEAM MEETING NOTES

January 13, 2021 – via Zoom

2:00pm – 3:00pm

Welcome –

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting between the 4 towns who have worked together to prepare the 4 Town Regional Economic Vitality Plan. Those in attendance introduced themselves.

Steering Committee Officers –

The following individuals have been appointed as members:

: Bolton – Josh Kelly, Sandra Pierog, Patrice Carson

: Coventry – pending – Eric Trott, Wendy Rubin, and Erica Pagliuco continue as staff representatives

: Mansfield – Ryan Aylesworth, Cynthia VanZelm, Cara Workman

: Tolland – Mike Rosen, Caitlin Gordon, Jim Hutton

Priority Action Item – 4 Town Calendar:

The Committee continues to consider options for a 4 Town calendar that is easily implemented, cost effective, and connects with existing websites, social media and other platforms.

Previously, Google calendar and Microsoft 365 were viewed as possible options to further consider. Bolton is in the process of evaluating a new website which needs to be considered for compatibility as well as the other towns.

Wendy Rubin provided an overview of the 'UpTo' app '06238' community event calendar experience that she and other Coventry departments were involved with a few years ago. The app is free, very user friendly, and provides an engaging interface for the user. The staff had prepared posting protocols, user rules, as well as mechanisms to enable it to be a fundraising effort. The subscription fee was only \$10 per month.

Some comments regarding the potential of requiring an app versus using a link to a Town website and potential impediments were discussed.

Mansfield is currently examining a community calendar. Cynthia will look into what the status of the situation is and report to the Committee at the next meeting.

Eric will share the details with the Committee on 06238 that were provided by Wendy. The protocols and user rules can be considered as a starting point for whatever option is pursued.

Priority Action Item - Asset inventory:

Each town has begun inputting examples of significant assets in a document that can be used as a clearinghouse for more information on the inventory, as well as project stakeholder names. Copies of existing marketing resources and other materials that showcases the region's assets can be collected as well.

The goal with the theme-based asset inventory is to assist in creating relevant action items for a committee to carry out. Such as concepts for further resources and information that can be used to attract local citizens and visitors to connect with the assets in the region.

Committee members shared creative ideas such as a regional scavenger hunt, connective tour ideas with links to businesses and destinations which can be shared in a map resource. It was suggested that since this is a regional effort, CROG may be able to assist since they serve as the host of the town's GIS platform.

Other ideas were discussed such as local currency opportunities where money spent in the region can be reinvested in the region with the support of local businesses. An example in western Massachusetts called 'Berkshares' was mentioned. The Town of Tolland has been considering a similar venture.

4 Town 'campaign' creation with Nichols College:

Tim Liptrap reported that the project will likely be able to be initiated in February. The situation with Nichols College and other institutions Tim could work with has been challenging due to the pandemic. There has been a positive response by the entities that Tim has communicated with on the project thus far. A college network – campaign competition is envisioned that will likely provide viable options to consider.

Team stakeholder and Committee list:

A tab can be added to the Google document that includes stakeholder information for the member towns.

Next steps:

The following are the next steps that will occur up to the scheduled meeting next month: continue asset inventory, continue consideration of event calendar, update Google document with relevant information.

Other business:

Eric shared details about the 8 Mile River Wind and Scenic Watershed 'Wander our Watershed' campaign. A very attractive and informative map resource that provides details on open space, hiking trail and preserved lands in the watershed was produced to showcase all of the special locations in the region. This can serve as a template for the 4 Town effort, since there are many opportunities for outdoor recreation in the region. Copies of the information will be shared with the Committee.

Next meeting date, time, agenda items -

A day during the week of February 8 will be selected and be shared with the attendees. Agenda items that were on the January agenda will be discussed at the next meeting.

Adjournment –

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00pm.

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN

MEMBER TOWN TEAM MEETING

AGENDA

FEBRUARY 10, 2021, 2PM – 3PM

VIA ZOOM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89758820185?pwd=aIM1Y2VhUWk3ZVFUYWkxNzB0UThTd09> - Meeting ID: 897 5882 0185 - Passcode: 1BfLyR

Call in: 1 646 558 8656 - Meeting ID: 897 5882 0185 - Passcode: 817852

Welcome!

Future consideration and election of Steering Committee Officers

Priority action items – 4 Town calendar, asset inventory

4 Town ‘campaign’ creation with Nichols College

Team Stakeholder and Committee list

Review and consideration of next steps to be taken in February/March

Other business

Next meeting date, time, agenda items

Adjournment

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN
MEMBER TOWN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

February 10, 2021 – via Zoom

2:00pm – 3:00pm

Welcome –

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting between the 4 towns who have worked together to prepare the 4 Town Regional Economic Vitality Plan.

Steering Committee Officers –

The following individuals have been appointed as members:

: Bolton – Josh Kelly, Sandra Pierog, Patrice Carson

: Coventry – pending Town Council appointment – Eric Trott, Wendy Rubin, Erica Pagliuco
continue as staff representatives

: Mansfield – Ryan Aylesworth, Cynthia VanZelm, Cara Workman

: Tolland – Mike Rosen, Caitlin Gordon, Jim Hutton

The meeting kicked off with a discussion on ways of furthering efforts with the projects that have been agreed upon as initial priorities by the Committee. Specifically, the 4 Town calendar, open space map/brochure, and expanding the benefit of the asset inventory. One way of expanding the benefit of the asset inventory is to develop a variety of regional tours in the 4 towns that highlight the businesses and other destinations (assets) which can be part of a larger marketing effort. The open space assets can be identified in the 4 towns and incorporated into a regional map/brochure that identifies all the properties and provides specific information about them. This would be similar to the resource that was developed by the entities associated with the 8 Mile River Watershed planning efforts.

Those in attendance volunteered to be part of the subcommittees and/or suggested other individuals who could participate as well. A robust list of members was created to serve on the following subcommittees: 4 Town event calendar, open space map/brochure, regional destination tour guide, regional currency, and Nichols College student logo competition.

The 4 Town team staff will work together to develop the master list of participants and their contact information so that the subcommittees can begin meeting before the next Steering Committee meeting. These details will be shared with all involved.

4 Town ‘campaign’ creation with Nichols College:

Tim Liptrap gave a report. He has been reaching out to his peers at other colleges to discuss the project and determine interest. The goal is to kick off the student competition project on March 15, but would like to meet with Staff before the launch to get all the details. Extra credit is typically earned for the work completed by the student. In order to create more motivation for the students, we may need to be able to offer an opportunity for ongoing work/internship. Judges representing the 4 Towns will need to be available to assist in the evaluation of the work. More details will be provided as we approach the launch date.

Regional currency:

The Town of Tolland Staff and EDC have been discussing the potential of creating a local currency. A member of the Tolland EDC and Mike Rosen spoke on the topic and some of the research that had been done about other locations that have inspired such a project. The city of

Berlin, CT; UCONN's Husky Bucks; and western Massachusetts with Berkshares are examples that were discussed. The local currency can be exchanged at a discount and spent at local businesses. This could be a unique business support and regional marketing activity that could be combined with the regional tourism destination guide. Also, the likelihood of success for this project is increased due to the fact that all four towns are participating.

There are a number of important variables that need to be considered with the project, such as what currency medium is preferred. This is particularly important due to COVID. The exchange rate needs to be developed as well as the relationships with banks for the exchange of the funds. Local vs. franchise businesses need to be considered.

Next steps:

The committee member participants and contact information will be compiled. The various committees will attempt to meet before the next Steering Committee meeting to take initial steps with the projects and report at the next Steering Committee meeting.

Other business:

None.

Next meeting date, time, agenda items -

A day during the week of March 15 will be selected and shared with the attendees.

Agenda items that were on the February agenda will be discussed at the next meeting.

Adjournment –

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00pm.

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN

MEMBER TOWN TEAM MEETING

AGENDA

MARCH 17, 2021, 2PM – 3PM

VIA ZOOM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83685733329?pwd=VXRPWIZ0SW1jUEpoc3MxSzEySm5Wdz09> - Meeting ID: 836 8573 3329 - Passcode: 9WhZ3G

Call in: 1 646 558 8656 - Meeting ID: 836 8573 3329 - Passcode: 514732

Welcome!

Future consideration and election of Steering Committee Officers

Reports from Committees - Priority action items –

: Community calendar, open space mapping, regional destination tours, local currency

4 Town ‘campaign’ creation with Nichols College

Team Stakeholder and Committee list

Review and consideration of next steps to be taken in March/April

Other business

Next meeting date, time, agenda items

Adjournment

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN MEMBER TOWN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

March 17, 2021 – via Zoom

2:00pm – 3:00pm

Welcome –

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting between the 4 towns who have worked together to prepare the 4 Town Regional Economic Vitality Plan.

Steering Committee Officers –

The following individuals have been appointed as members:

: Bolton – Josh Kelly, Sandra Pierog, Patrice Carson

: Coventry - Eric Trott, Wendy Rubin, Erica Pagliuco

: Mansfield – Ryan Aylesworth, Cynthia VanZelm, Cara Workman

: Tolland – Mike Rosen, Caitlin Gordon, Jim Hutton

At a future meeting, the Committee will consider officers that can be voted on. However, in the meantime the 4 Town Staff will do a ‘round robin’ of hosting of each meeting to represent each respective town and to create some variety in the guidance at each meeting.

Reports from Committees – priority action items:

Open space – recreational asset map – Eric provided an update on the subcommittee’s work.

The subcommittee met earlier in March and had a productive first meeting. Each town discussed their current status with GIS and open space mapping that the staff or volunteers possess. Jennifer Kaufman from Mansfield demonstrated some of the mapping and GPS projects that she has been working on. Mike Cipriano from CRCOG agreed to assist the 4 towns in the effort to create a unified GIS map. The Wander our Watershed map and informational resource is viewed as a good template for the project. It was agreed that each town will compile the list of sites to be included and begin efforts to locate the data that will be shared with CRCOG. The subcommittee will meet next on April 5.

Community calendar – Cynthia provided an update of the subcommittee’s work. The subcommittee met earlier in March and also had a productive first meeting. Each town gave a report on the status of their respective calendar. It was agreed that each town wanted to maintain their own calendar. Two towns are in the process of considering updates to their calendar. The goal of having a link created that shares all the calendars is what the subcommittee feels is most prudent. Each town will be working their IT staff to investigate this matter further. It is also possible to have a landing page or website developed where the link could be provided. Contact with the State Tourism Department will occur to consider what platform they use. It will be necessary to consider the various posting policies and criteria, as well as forms that will be required. Samples to consider were provided by Wendy from Coventry. The subcommittee will be meeting again before the next Steering Committee meeting.

Regional Tours development: Patrice provided a report and indicated that the subcommittee is comprised of 7 members. They are looking to meet in the next week. The asset inventory list will be consulted to begin creating ideas for mini-tours. The idea of creating ‘sub-themes’ of the overarching 7 themes identified in the study that could be the basis of tour development. These would connect the dots of the various assets in the 4 towns. Also, connection to larger and other regional assets can be considered to further drive visitors to the area.

Local currency: Mike provided a report and indicated the subcommittee has not yet met as it was envisioned that this project would be better focused on in a few months. The hope is that the COVID situation will improve and would cause more of a comfort zone with the particular currency medium that is chosen. Examples of other currencies in and out of the State were discussed. The topic is maintained as an ongoing discussion item with the Tolland EDC. Mike also reported that Tolland has hired a new Planning Director who will be arriving later this month and is expected to attend the next meeting.

4 Town 'campaign' creation with Nichols College: Tim Liptrap gave a report on the project. Tim reviewed the case brief that was created to examine the outcomes and to conduct a 'test' of the subject with the students at both Asnuntuck College and Nichols College. The title of the project was 'Place Branding a Geographical Area'. Tim found that there is very little research and collegiate publications available on the subject which led him to think that this subject is not as relevant as it once was, particularly for smaller towns or regions. Unfortunately, the results that were provided by the students were not very creative and fell short of expectations.

The subcommittee discussed a number of next steps and ideas to consider, such as, bringing in a marketing expert to provide some guidance on the subject. Richard suggested a firm that he is familiar with and was willing to reach out to and invite to a future meeting. Eric suggested that Erica Pagliuco, the Coventry Farmers' Market Manager could also be brought in for a discussion. Caitlin suggested that the community could be involved in the selection of possible ideas. Cara offered that 'The Thought Exchange', a UCONN entity could be asked to assist, depending on their availability. They assist with the evaluation of answers to open ended questions that are posed to a community that is problem solving an issue. Comments are received, ranked, quantified, bias trends are removed and a report is prepared on the findings. It was agreed that this would be a helpful exercise.

It was agreed that a subcommittee should be formed to explore this issue further. Richard, Cara, Caitlin, Tim and Eric volunteered to be part of the subcommittee. They will schedule a time to meet before the next meeting.

Tim mentioned that he did some research on the subject, in particular the 'Journal of Marketing' to find what the current trends are. He did not find material on branding at the local level, which raises the question is it effective or efficient. Instead, Tim suggested that perhaps the 'brand' can be developed by the individual and shared through social media via photos, posts, likes and shares. The visitor creates the brand with the content contained in the social media platform that is selected. This is an important element that will be carefully considered.

Team stakeholder and Committee list: Eric indicated that the link to the Google document was included with the meeting invite and it reflects the latest input on the inventory and stakeholder list. This will serve as a landing spot for ongoing updates in these two areas.

Next steps:

The subcommittees will continue their respective work and will report at the next meeting in April.

Other business:

Richard indicated that he is willing to reach out to the 'Elements' marketing firm that he recommended and invite them to our next meeting and is willing to work facilitate the visit if there is an expected fee. Richard was thanked and it was agreed.

Next meeting date, time, agenda items -

A day during the week of April 12 will be selected and shared with the attendees.

Agenda items that were on the March agenda will be discussed at the next meeting.

Adjournment –

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00pm.

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN

MEMBER TOWN TEAM MEETING

AGENDA

May 26, 2021, 2PM – 3PM

VIA ZOOM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83662535631?pwd=Sld2SEZHTXJWNmVrVUIyUEZzRDFkdz09>

Meeting ID: 836 6253 5631

Passcode: 453981

OR Dial 929 205 6099

Meeting ID: 836 6253 5631

Passcode: 453981

- 1- Welcome!
- 2- Reports from Committees: Community calendar, open space mapping, regional destination tours, marketing
- 3- 4 Town 'campaign' creation with Nichols College
- 4- Team Stakeholder and Committee list
- 5- Review and consideration of next steps to be taken in May/June
- 6- Other business
- 7- Next meeting date, time, agenda items, host community

Adjournment

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN MEMBER TOWN TEAM COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

May 26, 2021 – via Zoom

2:00pm – 3:00pm

Welcome! - Attendees were welcomed to the meeting between the 4 towns who have worked together to prepare the 4 Town Regional Economic Vitality Plan.

Reports from Committees:

Community Calendar has a meeting tomorrow to discuss which route to go. They have taken a step back to develop a policy of what type of events to include and get logistics in order.

Open Space Mapping met with CRCOG representatives who have been very helpful. Started with looking at Wandering Our Watershed and gathered resources. Looking at CT Trail Finder which becomes active on June 5. Maine has a trail finder application and website which is great and very useful. Looking to enhance the visual inventory – taking photos of trails or a unique amenity of a property to be revealing of the property. June 7 is the next meeting and CLEAR will be at the meeting to show some of their products. Things seem like they are making great headway.

Regional Destination Tours hasn't met since the last meeting but will meet after Memorial Day. Finishing the asset list and looking at how to connect things or advertise. Eric brought up looking at destination trails and discussing the overarching themes that link the four towns but also what might be themes outside our area which make it a bigger. The Windham Regional Tourism Group is meeting tomorrow so there should be more information from them.

Marketing – Eric introduced Wendy Bury who is the Executive Director at the Cultural Coalition which supports the DECD replacing Windham Arts at the former DHSO. Wendy is our liaison to the State for the Arts through DECD. She is helping groups understand how Arts supports what is going on in towns. The Marketing Committee met with Amy at Elements Graphic Design last month and discussed whether municipal or regional branding is worth it or should we look at another approach? Amy's experience with her work for New Haven would argue that it municipal branding should be encouraged. Amy gave a quote (\$8500 or approximately a little over \$2000/town) to look at what it might cost. Eric discussed that we tried branding before but it didn't work out as we thought it might. It would seem that not all consultants would be geared to municipal branding. Eric also attended an ICMA branding webinar which addressed the specifics of this type of branding. It was mentioned that cities in particular have had a lot of positive experience in place branding (what we are trying to do) but also public branding. One of the keys is to get as much input as possible in developing a brand. Cautioned on a regional situation when communities have their own brand and that messages don't conflict. Marketing Committee tried to focus on what's our ultimate goal and our mission? And may need to take some time to focus and identify and understand that – is it tourism, EDC, business support, or all or more? The Marketing Committee will look to get things together in early June and report back to the whole committee.

4 Town 'campaign' creation with Nichols College – Tim Liptrap reported on the phenomenon that students are not signing up for internships or summer classes so there have been a lot of classes canceled and no students to do the work, so this will be paused.

Team Stakeholder and Committee list – Reminder of the ongoing inventory in real time so people can keep track online.

Review and consideration of next steps to be taken in May/June – Subcommittee level reports, Kate of Metro Hartford Alliance will be invited to attend our meeting, reporting on grants, check on budget funds in town budgets.

Other business – Cynthia and Ryan met with Kate of Metro Hartford Alliance (MHA). Ryan reported that she provided an overview and what it could do for Mansfield and Ryan thought the Chambers could be involved. There may be some help MHA could provide this group and we should have Kate meet with us and talk about ways they could engage with us on goals of mutual interest. Ryan asked about a group discount if maybe we wanted to join as a region. It was suggested that it might be worth asking Courtney Hendrickson about what she thinks about involving MHA – Cynthia will reach out to Courtney. Ryan has shared our report with Kate. It was consensus to see if Kate would attend our next meeting.

Wendy Bury mentioned she would see how they can work with our region and sees some overlap and things to share. The Cultural Coalition has made a request that one percent of the American Rescue funds go to arts and culture and they are spearheading this effort and feels there is a lot of opportunity especially for smaller towns.

Eastern Regional Tourism District offered a grant but the timing appears to be too short to apply.

Next meeting date, time, agenda items, host community – Coventry will host the next meeting on June 23, 2021 from 2:00-3:00pm

Adjournment

**4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
AGENDA
AUGUST 25, 2021, 2PM – 3PM
VIA ZOOM**

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88390694791?pwd=b2dSY3Q5bG9rMGF1TEdxSINkaWZtUT09> - Meeting ID: 883 9069 4791 - Passcode: pbzYv5

Call in: 1 646 558 8656 - Meeting ID: 883 9069 4791 - Passcode: 156853

Welcome!

Reflections on the successes of our 4 Town efforts in 2021

Setting goals for tasks to be completed in 2021 and 2022

Other business

Next meeting date, time, agenda items

Adjournment

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
MEETING NOTES

August 25, 2021 2PM – 3PM

Reflections on the successes of our Four Town efforts in 2021

Eric Trott recapped some of the successes over the last few months.

He said the staff team is looking into a Community Heart and Soul grant to assist with community outreach. Cynthia van Zelm will follow-up with Heart and Soul to see if the match can be in-kind.

Wendy Bury, the Exec. Director of the Cultural Coalition, attended the meeting and mentioned that there is a lot of Economic Development Administration money available. A project has to be in a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). Wendy said she hopes to attend the Four Town meetings on a regular basis.

The four towns are in different council of governments who prepare the CEDs.

Eric suggested bringing in staff from the Capital Region Council of Governments and the Northeastern Council of Governments for future meetings.

There was some discussion about bringing in town economic development commissions and conservation commissions. Ryan Aylesworth said they may be more responsive if they have something specific to do.

Eric suggested next steps are to bring in the Last Green Valley, the council of governments, and the chambers to share what they do and how we can be partners.

There was some discussion of identifying key performance indicators vis a vis the Four Town Plan for Economic Vitality. Eric suggested starting with the list of implementation tasks. Cynthia suggested sending the Exec Summary of the Plan and the implementation matrix to each member of the steering committee as part of the meeting agenda packet.

Wendy referenced adding info to the CT Tourism website section on “stories for the season.”

Setting goals for tasks to be completed in 2021 and 2022

The steering committee discussed holding a regional event in 2022. This could revolve around CT Trails Day, Town tag sales, CT Open House day, Earth Day, as a few examples.

Tim Liptrap said if it is a project, he might be able to assign it to one of his classes.

The staff team will discuss at its meeting on September 6.