Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials
November 18, 2004

Attendance: Please see attached list.

I. The meeting was called to order by Chairman David Denvir at 12:30 PM at Farrell's in Portland.

II. Minutes

Maryann Boord moved that the minutes be approved as circulated. The motion was seconded by Tim Griswold and unanimously approved.

III. Legislative Update

A. Congress

Betty Wagner distributed information on pending legislation to improve veterans-related services. She announced that an Omni bill containing nine spending bills is scheduled for passage on Friday. T21 is not expected to be addressed until January.

Rep. Simmons voted against the bill that protected Rep. Tom Delay, citing the importance of ethical conduct.

IV. Committee Reports

A. ACIR

There was no ACIR report.

B. Workforce

Charles Augur reported that the next Workforce meeting will be on Dec. 16.

C. Legislative Committee

Maryann Boord distributed copies of CCM legislative priorities. COST will set priorities on January 20, 2005.

V. Old Business

A. Emergency Preparedness

Linda Krause distributed copies of the minutes of the first meeting of the Connecticut Valley Citizens Emergency Preparedness Council.

B. EMS

Chairman Denvir introduced Bob Ziegler and David Kachuck who distributed copies of the Executive Summary of the study of the Middlesex County EMS/ Paramedic system report. Mr. Ziegler noted that the product was somewhat modified to accommodate grant requirements. He stated that he had difficulty getting information and never received much of the necessary data. Only twelve of the nineteen municipalities responded. Eleven of the twenty EMS services responded. Paramedics were usually cooperative.

In no case was the value of the program or the quality of the services questioned in any way. The problems are financial. Five billing services are involved. Very little information was made available from any of them.

The hospital is profitable. This particular service is not showing a profit, therefore, the hospital wants to bill the towns for services provided.
The options are to stay with the hospital and negotiate or commercialize the service.

C. Attorney General Blumenthal

AG Blumenthal arrived and greeted each person present.

The EMS discussion was put on hold to hear from Mr. Blumenthal.

AG Blumenthal announced that he had come to inform the group on his investigation into the fees of Insurance Brokers. He digressed to explain that he had just come from Central Connecticut State College where one person was fired and another demoted for not seeking bids before awarding contracts for food service for the college. He noted that it is all a matter of integrity in government. He commended the assembled CEOs as models of integrity. He is pleased that the policy is bi-partisan and has been adopted by the present governor.

AG Blumenthal is seeking full disclosure and accountability within the insurance industry. He sees too much evidence of conflicts of interest, bid rigging and kick backs. As he mentioned in his testimony before Congress earlier in the week, the responsibility for oversight is left to the states. Federal anti-trust laws exempt the insurance industry.

AG Blumenthal has sent a letter to towns and cities asking for their cooperation and the names of their brokers.

In closing. AG Blumenthal mentioned that earlier in the day he had met with a group of municipal tax collectors. He verified the fact that the maximum allowable fee to be collected by constables and marshals is 10%.Many have been charging 15%.

Chairman Denvir thanked Attorney General Blumenthal for speaking to the CRVCEO and asked the members to consider MIRMA when making insurance decisions. He explained that he is a charter member and member of the board of MIRMA. He and Tony Palermo were both instrumental in forming the group. He does not see CIRMA and MIRMA as competitors but believes that they both should provide quality service to municipalities. He cited Metroguard as the third player noting that competition is good.

B. - EMS Resumed

Bob Ziegler urged the CRVCEO to establish an open dialogue with the hospital or any other supplier. He suggested that a committee be established for that purpose.

His suggestions are that the towns can continue the existing service and negotiate with the hospital, or commercialize, or regionalize the paramedic service. He noted that Valley EMS is regionalized. Griffin Hospital provides the service that is managed by a board of overseers. He warned that any change would involve start up costs and maintenance.

Phil Miller asked if anyone could cite one dispatch service with revenues that exceed the expenses. No one could.

Mr. Ziegler explained that the EMS service provided by the hospital is an intercept service. The medic goes out in a jeep and boards the ambulance. The problem becomes a medical billing issue. He asserted that billing companies, including some towns, are holding large amounts of money that is owed to the hospital. He suggested that the hospital should take back the responsibility of billing for services.

George Dunn mentioned that the collection rate varies from 98% to 64%. It was suggested that if anyone had further questions they should call Bob Ziegler directly.

It was agreed that members should read the summary and place the matter on next month's agenda.

VI. New Business

There was no new business.

VII. Other Business

There was no other business.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Winifred Olson, Clerk