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STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL NO. 7090
PUBLIC ACT NO. 07-239

DATE: JANUARY 3, 2008
TIME: 5:03 P. M.
HELD AT: NAUGATUCK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MAINSTAGE THEATRE
FINE ARTS CENTER BUILDING
WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT

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2

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5 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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7 DR. STANLEY McMILLEN, ECONOMIST
8 CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND
9 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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MR. McMILLEN: Good evening, ladies

2 and gentlemen. Thank you for coming to our fourth
3 public forum where we gather input for the state
4 strategic plan. I want to briefly explain to you what
5 we're doing, why we're doing it, and how we're doing
6 it, and then we'll get into public testimony. First I
7 would like to introduce our commissioner, Joan
8 McDonald, who will say a few words.

9 MS. McDONALD: Thanks, Stan. Good
10 evening, everybody, and I just want to welcome you to
11 our public forum on looking at Connecticut's economy,
12 and getting your input and feedback into where you
13 think the state is today, and where you think we need
14 to be in the next 5, 10, 15 and 20 years. As Stan
15 mentioned, we're holding a series of 10 public forums
16 around the state. This is the fifth one.

17 We've been to Avery Point,
18 Willimantic, Middletown and Torrington. We had to
19 cancel and reschedule Danbury because of the
20 snowstorm, and we appreciate all of you coming out in
21 the cold weather, and we are really looking forward to
22 hearing what you have to say.

23 This is your opportunity to tell us
24 what you think the important issues that are facing us
25 as residents of the State of Connecticut today, and

1 what you think the issues we will be facing in the
2 future, and any suggestions you have or ideas and
3 initiatives for addressing those issues are welcome.

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4 As Stan will explain, this is the
5 start of our process. We are tasked per Governor
6 Reil's executive order and Public Act passed by the
7 legislature in developing a strategic plan that looks
8 at where Connecticut stands today, and where we will
9 be in the next 5, 10, 15 and 20 years, and part of
10 that process required us to hold public forums, and
11 have a large public dialogue.

12 So this is the start of that public
13 dialogue, getting your input at the start of the
14 process. There will be additional public forums as we
15 move through the process when we have specific
16 initiatives that we would like feedback on. So now
17 I'm going to turn it over to Stan, and he will give
18 you a few more specifics about what we're going to be
19 doing in this planning process. Thank you.

20 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you,
21 Commissioner. I should introduce myself. I'm Stan
22 McMillen, chief economist at the agency. As
23 Commissioner McDonald stated Public Act 07-239
24 established the charge for DECD to develop an economic
25 strategic plan, specifically section four, and I'll

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1 give a little bit more information about that.

2 Obviously, the purpose of these
3 forums is to gather information to build a vision of a
4 Connecticut we would like to see 5, 10, 15 and 20

5 years in the future. The regional planning
6 associations or organizations will present at these
7 forums their comprehensive economic development
8 strategies as well. Public Act 07-239 establishes the
9 need, the requirement to create a strategic plan by
10 July 1, 2009, and every 5 years thereafter to review
11 that plan and update it. We need to be hosting
12 regional forums, and these are only part of the public
13 outreach, I must say.

14 There are 10 of these that are being
15 held through the end of this month. There will also
16 be focus groups and a general survey of the public
17 either electronically or by random digit type of
18 survey. So there will be significant public input to
19 shape a vision of where we would like to see
20 Connecticut be 5, 10, 15 and 20 years in the future.
21 This plan will serve as a roadmap of where we want to
22 be, and the difficult issue is how we get there from
23 where we are.

24 One of the most useful parts is to
25 establish measurable goals and matrix, concrete

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1 measures to assess how we're doing with respect to
2 where we said we wanted to be. So the purpose of the
3 forums is to engage in open dialogue, to specify
4 issues and concerns, and identify strategies to move
5 Connecticut's economy forward. Clearly, these are the
6 factors that we talk about all the time in economic
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7 development circles. We read about them in the
8 newspaper that affect our economy today and in the
9 future.

10 Competitiveness in business,
11 competitiveness in the environment which is the cost
12 of doing business which consists in the regulatory,
13 business tax structure, housing is clearly an issue
14 along with transportation, work force, responsible
15 growth and development.

16 So these are the sort of the primary
17 mega categories in which we would like to organize our
18 thinking. I think this is a conceptual framework for
19 building a strategic plan. First of all, you have to
20 understand where we are so this is the analysis of the
21 status quo. It consists of collecting the data and
22 analyzing it, and using that analysis and data to
23 explain where we are, how we got here, and why are we
24 here.

25 The process we are engaged in now is

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1 to build a vision as to where we would like to be, and
2 the difficult part is the synthesis, and to create a
3 roadmap of where we are to where we want to be, to
4 create a plan to create milestones and matrix that
5 measure our progress as we move along from where we
6 are to where we want to be, and all along the way we
7 want to get public feedback.

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8 The process is that, as you can see,
9 Jackie is here transcribing this. The transcriptions
10 of the four previous forums are or should be on our
11 website today. The first one has been up for awhile.
12 The other transcriptions should be up there shortly.
13 The regional planning agencies who will go first after
14 I'm done will present for 5 minutes their
15 comprehensive economic development strategy, and the
16 reason is that we need to appreciate and recognize the
17 work that they've done, and hopefully this will serve
18 as a basis to stimulate people's thinking about the
19 future of the regions in which we live.

20 Speakers, including elected
21 officials, are limited to 3 minutes, and you can speak
22 more than once. The idea is to give everybody a
23 chance to speak, and when you're thinking, we want you
24 to think outside box. Think big. Bring your highest
25 and best aspirations to what you want, what you dream

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1 for Connecticut. Imagine that you might be king for a
2 day what would you create, what would it look like,
3 and be as specific as you possibly can. And if you
4 have an idea outside this forum, this e-mail address
5 is one that I read every day, and everything you have
6 to say will become part of the public input to the
7 vision.

8 So with that I would like to turn it
9 over to our first CEDS presenter, Peter Dorpalen.

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10 MR. DORPALEN: Thank you, Stan,
11 Commissioner. My mission today is just to give an
12 overview of the region's economy, the Naugatuck Valley
13 region. I'm Peter Dorpalen. I'm the executive
14 director of Council of Governments of Central
15 Naugatuck Valley. We are made up of 13 municipalities
16 in the Greater Waterbury area. The mayors and first
17 selectmen are the board of directors, so to speak, of
18 the Council, and we are the designated planning
19 organization for the region.

20 We're involved in a lot of different
21 types of planning which includes economic development.
22 Transportation is probably one of the key things we
23 report on, and land use has been our historical core
24 for the planning activities. Just to give you a sense
25 of the region, this is a locational map. Obviously

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1 you can see Waterbury, the interchange of 84 and route
2 8. Route 8 is in green. It goes as far as Thomaston
3 down to Oxford, Beacon Falls, west to Southbury and
4 east to Wolcott and Cheshire.

5 In terms of overall trends, the
6 region is growing faster than the state as a whole,
7 but the rate of growth is slowing down, and growth is
8 occurring primarily in the rural and suburban sections
9 of the Central Naugatuck Valley region, but I would
10 note that unlike many other areas, Waterbury's

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11 population is remaining fairly stable. It goes up a
12 little bit, goes down, but it remains stable, and
13 other cities' populations keep going down.

14 The strongest growth that we have
15 experienced is in the southwest corner of the region.
16 This gives you a sense of where the population is
17 located. The darker the color, the higher the
18 population density. Continuing on regional trends,
19 age, this is something that's not unique to our region
20 or even to Connecticut, but it's certainly to the
21 Northeast as well is that we have fewer young adults.

22 If we look at an age pyramid,
23 there's a real shrinking of the young adult
24 population, which obviously has an effect on the
25 economy, the lack of young workers. At the other end

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1 we have the aging baby boomers. They are now in that
2 mature workers category, but in coming years they're
3 going to be moving into retirement age, and we're
4 already seeing a lot of age restrictive housing being
5 proposed in the Central Naugatuck Valley region.
6 Race. 16 percent of the population is non-white, and
7 80 percent live in Waterbury.

8 Looking at economic trends,
9 Waterbury is the region's largest employment center.
10 It's also our cultural center and educational
11 institutional center. Employment is definitely
12 shifting to the suburbs with Cheshire, Watertown,

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13 Southbury, Naugatuck being the major employment
14 centers outside of Waterbury. This map is done from a
15 survey of major employers. Actually, some of this
16 data is from CERC and DECD, but it shows all the major
17 employers in the region, and you can see that
18 Waterbury still retains its role as a center, but
19 obviously Southbury, Cheshire, Naugatuck and Watertown
20 are important centers as well.

21 Waterbury historically was the brass
22 capital of the world, but manufacturing employment is
23 declining. It's moving to other parts of the country
24 or being outsourced to other countries, and the
25 economy is diversifying, and it's reflecting state and

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1 national trends as well by shifting to the service
2 sector. But the thing to note is that fabricated
3 metals, the transition from the brass industry,
4 fabricated metals is still an important industry in
5 the region, the region is a center for precision metal
6 manufacturing, reflects the skill level that's
7 required. A lot of it is sustained here particularly
8 the eyelet industry where it's considered an
9 international center, and perhaps to a lesser extent
10 the screw machine industry.

11 Looking at major industries, the
12 latest information we have is from 2003 based on
13 employment, health, business, education services,

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14 fabricated metal and then based on sales. It's
15 banking, chemicals, automotive, retail and, again,
16 fabricated metals. So even though manufacturing
17 employment has gone down, it still plays an important
18 role in the economy.

19 The labor force. The region is an
20 exporter of workers. The majority of the people that
21 are working in the region live in the region. But if
22 you look at residents as a whole where they're going
23 to work, only 5 percent of them, excuse me, 55 percent
24 are working within the region. Another 45 percent are
25 going elsewhere with the greatest commuting being to

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1 the New Haven-Meriden area, and partly that, I think,
2 reflects that housing is more affordable in this
3 region than in many of the neighboring regions.

4 But, again, looking at Connecticut
5 and at this region relative to other parts of the
6 country, housing costs are very high, and that plays a
7 role in our economic growth. Location of jobs is
8 dispersed, and this makes it difficult for residents
9 who do not drive. If you look at the bus service
10 area, it's confined primarily to Waterbury and a few
11 neighboring. So if you have economic development
12 that's occurring in low density areas in the outer
13 lying communities, it's much more difficult for people
14 that don't drive.

15 There is a job links program that
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16 tries to fill that gap with shuttle services, and also
17 there's a disparity between Waterbury and the suburban
18 towns looking at income and educational attainment,
19 which obviously has an impact on the economy. Land
20 use. We're in the process of updating our regional
21 plan, conservation and development, and some of the
22 pertinent issues from there is if you look at the
23 regional core, which is primarily Waterbury, Naugatuck
24 and into Watertown, there are limited sites for
25 development, and the legacy of old factories, old

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1 operations you have brownfields and some deteriorating
2 infrastructure.

3 Looking outward, there's hopscotch
4 development, and looking at aerial data we're seeing
5 that land consumption in the region is occurring
6 faster than population growth; that we're consuming
7 more land than we're actually growing.

8 I'm just going to close here with
9 our regional future land use plan map. This is a
10 draft. It's what we're working on. The red, I guess
11 you would call it red, it doesn't quite come out as
12 read, orangey-red in the center, that's the regional
13 core which is the regional center in the plan. We
14 also have in gray in Oxford and Cheshire major
15 economic growth areas, and there's some smaller areas
16 that are being recommended for economic growth as

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17 well. I think that does it.

18 MR. McMILLEN: Good.

19 MR. DORPALEN: Thank you.

20 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you, Peter. I
21 would like to ask Jim Ryan to come up, and Jim is the
22 president of the Shelton Economic Development
23 Corporation, and present their CEDS along with Rick
24 Dunne.

25 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you. My name

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1 is Rick Dunne. I am the director of Valley Council of
2 Governments. We are the regional planning for the
3 southern end of the Naugatuck Valley district. Jim is
4 going to present our regional CEDS in just a second.
5 In our 5 minutes I am going to try, in two seconds, to
6 give you the 10,000-foot view of our portion of the
7 region.

8 Really this is a plea to the State
9 of Connecticut to coordinate all types of investments,
10 primarily transportation, economic investments, and
11 environmental investments in the region so that we get
12 the types of investments that don't require future
13 unanticipated expenses for the State of Connecticut.
14 For instance, economic development investments in
15 areas where transportation infrastructure exists so
16 that we're not later having to go back and build that
17 transportation infrastructure. Planning transportation
18 infrastructure for future economic development

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19 investments will be made, those types of things.

20 Our area is the backbone of the
21 route 8 corridor running down into Fairfield County.
22 For those of you who saw The Hartford Courant I
23 believe on Monday, there was an article about how the
24 Naugatuck Valley is really the bedroom for Fairfield
25 County industry; and if we're not able to continually

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1 move people on the transportation system, and create
2 new transportation options from the Valley into
3 Fairfield County, we're going to choke off that
4 economic growth in Fairfield County.

5 We thought a little bit about where
6 we should be making this presentation whether, it was
7 going to be at the Bridgeport regional meeting or here
8 in Waterbury, but our regional CEDS, which Jimmy will
9 present, incorporates the Waterbury area down into the
10 Lower Valley area. So I thank you for your time,
11 Commissioner. Nice to be with you.

12 MS. McDONALD: Thank you.

13 MR. DUNNE: Without further ado,
14 Jimmy Ryan.

15 MR. RYAN: Thank you, Rick. Hello,
16 everybody. My name is Jimmy Ryan. I work for the
17 Shelton Economic Development Corporation. We are a
18 not-for-profit local development corporation in
19 Shelton, Connecticut, been in business since 1983.

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20 I've been there since 1984. Some of the best work
21 that we've been able to do, though most rewarding, is
22 regional economic development through this EDA CEDS
23 process, and I think I can do this in four minutes.
24 We'll see.
25 This map of Connecticut shows where

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1 the US EDA has approved comprehensive economic
2 development strategies, and it's almost completely
3 correct, but it doesn't reflect for our 18 town and
4 city area the fact that Newtown has joined us. I
5 think all of you are acquainted with the United States
6 Economic Development Administration. Although I am
7 involved in regional economic development and local
8 economic development, I am really a redevelopment guy,
9 and the reason we got involved was we were looking for
10 infrastructure funding to address some of our needs in
11 our downtown revitalization area, and there was no
12 approved CEDS or ODDP in our area.

13 So we combined our efforts with a
14 then Naugatuck development, excuse me, Naugatuck
15 Valley Development Corporation and now Waterbury
16 Development Corporation. I see Michael O'Connor is
17 here and their team. We came up with a comprehensive
18 economic development strategy. Initially the goal was
19 the funding. Now I have a narrative here I am going
20 to provide the Department with copies of what the
21 process is about. But there is a very carefully

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22 scripted program that you have to follow.

23 Initially we didn't have the right
24 amount of respect for that program. We thought it was
25 going to be far easier, and we weren't going to get

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1 everything from it that we would need in the end. We
2 find out that it is a very excellent program not
3 because of the funding opportunities, but because of
4 the relationship building that it provides for, and
5 the team building that it provides for.

6 Now, our Naugatuck Valley Corridor
7 Committee, we have a 50-member committee. We have our
8 two development corporations, Waterbury and Shelton,
9 in the lead. We have both Chambers of Commerce, the
10 Valley Chamber of Commerce and Waterbury Chamber of
11 Commerce. I see Steve Sasla here. I am with Rick
12 Dunne, and Peter Dorpalen is intimately involved, and
13 then we have a large steering committee and a strategy
14 committee that's reflective of our communities and
15 business community.

16 Our goals are very simple ones. We
17 share these. Improve overall transportation and
18 communication systems. This is where we want to be in
19 5, 10 15 years from now. We want to be able to drive
20 from Shelton, Connecticut to Stamford, Connecticut in
21 35 minutes like we could when I first started work in
22 1978. It would be nice to go back in time and recover

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23 in those areas, but the plan itself outlines our
24 priorities, again, similar across Connecticut,
25 transportation, route 8 and I-84, brownfields

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1 redevelopment, philanthropic.

2 We are able to administer our CEDS
3 program. No one has money to support it but for two
4 foundations. One is the Katherine Matthews Foundation
5 from Seymour, Connecticut, and the other is the
6 Community Foundation of Greater New Haven. They have
7 been able to provide us with seed money for the
8 maintenance of this program, and therefore we put in
9 our work program developing the relationship between
10 the business community and philanthropy.

11 Workforce development is of interest
12 to us, great interest to us. We are monitoring the
13 WIRE program that's being administered through the
14 workforce in Bridgeport and Joe Carbone's group. Of
15 course there's infrastructure investments annually.
16 We solicit proposals from the 18 town and city CEOs.
17 We rank those. We develop those into first, second
18 and third tier recommendations so EDA can consider
19 them for funding.

20 Presently we have two first tier
21 recommendations that have been submitted draft
22 pre-applications to the US Department of Commerce's
23 Economic Development Administration although we have a
24 number of tier 1. We also embrace the concept of

25 shooting for a national heritage designation to create

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1 a super region to promote our heritage and our history
2 and tourism and economic development.

3 So the CEDS document has been
4 combined to not just get infrastructure investment.
5 This is to use as a tool to promote our other
6 priorities in the region and strengthen everybody's
7 hand overall. It's worked wonderfully. What do we do
8 annually? There is an annual report that's due June
9 30 to maintain your CEDS eligibility. We work with
10 our committee. We work on our infrastructure list.
11 To every degree possible, with limited funding that we
12 have, we provide technical assistance to communities
13 to try to get their programs a little bit further
14 along.

15 I think all of you know that small
16 communities normally have some staff capacity issues
17 or no staff. We do monitor workforce, development,
18 transportation and brownfields priorities, and we
19 don't try to take the place of existing organizations.
20 The intent was not to create a new group to manage us,
21 but was to use the strengths of existing organizations
22 such as Chambers of the Council of Governments and the
23 development corporations. This heritage designation
24 is a part of this year's work program.

25 We have had several Congressional

1 summi ts. Rosa DeLauro has been at a transportation
2 summi t and economi c devel opment summi t, and thi s year
3 we plan to have something to focus on brownfi elds
4 redevelop ment prospect s. We meet wi th EDA offici als,
5 and we try to i denti fy new fundi ng partners for our
6 CEDS process. We are in the -- we just fini shed the
7 thi rd year of a 5-year program, what we are going to
8 do wi th our new CEDS.

9 We feel it's very important to
10 conti nue to coordi nate those types of activi ties wi th
11 the Department of Economi c and Communi ty Devel opment.
12 We've been watchi ng a bi t from afar. New Haven's done
13 a better job than we have at moni tori ng the work of
14 the State of Connecti cut, al though I know Steve Sasla
15 has been there. There has been many Legi sl ati ve
16 di scussi ons on how we approach these economi c
17 devel opment partnershi ps. We want to make sure any
18 changes that the State of Connecti cut makes that it
19 doesn't affect the existi ng eli gi bi li ty for our
20 communi ties.

21 We are in a posi ti on ri ght now,
22 because of the support and cooperati on we have gotten
23 from Waterbury, to have all of our 18 towns and ci ti es
24 eli gi ble for consi derati on for EDA fundi ng. So we
25 actual ly feel paralyzed that someone may do something

1 that will remove that eligibility. Again, these are
2 typical examples of some of the types of things we
3 have interest.

4 Riverfront Recapture, this is an
5 example of work that the DECD has provided us with
6 important seed money in from anywhere from 10 to the
7 past 6 years where we went from having nothing to now
8 we have nearly \$250 to \$300 million worth of new
9 private investment that's anticipated over the next
10 decade. In fact, there's so many partners now because
11 of collaborations, this is a tier 1 type CEDS project.

12 Route 8. I am here with Rick Dunn.
13 Route 8 is a major priority for us, you know. Having
14 these types of hearings used as a vehicle for getting
15 state and federal funding is of great importance to
16 us. This shows the type of traffic that we have over
17 the Commodore Hull Bridge going all the way up to the
18 mix master. So when we start talking about
19 transportation, we are not just talking about the
20 lower river valley. We are interested in the
21 redevelopment for the mix matter in Waterbury. We are
22 interested in the transportation center that has been
23 proposed for Waterbury, and making sure there is
24 adequate funding, etc.

25 We just had a transportation seminar

1 in Shelton for our entire 18 town-city districts, and
2 the types of speakers we had were Connecticut DOT
3 transit operators. We had people working on the route
4 8 corridor access improvement, and Pitney Bowes has
5 developed great efficiencies in administering programs
6 that would help serve their employees and work and
7 transit.

8 So today we recommend that the state
9 consider funding for all of you at high levels. It's
10 always the bottom line, and there's all sorts of ways
11 we can approach things, but state funding is something
12 that's needed to maintain these CEDS programs. It is
13 very important to do as much as you possibly can. We
14 would like to see the State of Connecticut consider
15 taking the tier 1 -- I'm done?

16 MR. McMILLEN: Yeah.

17 MR. RYAN: Thank you.

18 MR. McMILLEN: You can finish.

19 MR. RYAN: All right. We would like
20 to see the state take any ratings and rankings that
21 are produced as a part of anyone's EDA-approved CEDS
22 process and consider them as they start to develop
23 budgets for Appropriations with the General Assembly.
24 There is a very valid process in place for reviewing
25 and vetting these projects with lots of support from

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1 the community and local chief elected officials,
2 Councils of Governments, the business community.

3 We would like to see the DECD and
4 state Department of Transportation use our CEDS
5 documents to support recommendations for
6 transportation investments. We think the greatest in
7 the area is in brownfields redevelopment. I was
8 speaking with Chester Camerotta outside before, and
9 it's absolutely embarrassing the federal government
10 only invests \$70 million a year for brownfields
11 cleanups for the entire country, and we have competed
12 successfully for that. It's very important -- the US
13 EPA is terrific, but we need adequate funding for seed
14 money, and some of the sites that are just out there
15 in our urban centers in Bridgeport and Waterbury, if
16 you get those projects up and running so they can be
17 ready for redevelopment. They will never be ready for
18 redevelopment unless the states and others invest in
19 those today.

20 Again, please don't affect our US
21 EDA eligibility as you re-configure the state's
22 economic development team at any point in time. It's
23 very valuable to us. We have almost a decade's worth
24 of work in it. Thank you.

25 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you, Rick.

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1 Thank you, Jim. I want to leave that up on the screen

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2 as the conceptual framework, and I understand Jeffrey
3 Berger was here, Representative from the 73rd
4 District, and Steve Sasla is going to speak for him
5 now. When you're ready.

6 MR. SASLA: Here?

7 MR. McMILLEN: At that mic, yeah.

8 MR. SASLA: First let me -- this is
9 Jeff Berger speaking now, okay? First, let me
10 apologize that due to a previous commitment I will not
11 be able to attend. I thank Commissioner McDonald and
12 the entire DECD staff for hosting this important
13 strategic forum in Waterbury. As House Chair of the
14 Legislature's Commerce Committee, I view this forum as
15 an important open discussion allowing for public and
16 local officials to comment and lend valuable insight
17 into the future of the Greater Waterbury region. With
18 that said, we are at a crossroads of our economic
19 future.

20 The Greater Waterbury region has
21 consistently recorded the worst unemployment
22 statistics of all regions in the State of Connecticut.
23 This is a trend that must be reversed. If our core
24 urban centers with populations of greater than 100,000
25 are left to decay, that will ultimately foster an

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1 economic tsunami dragging down the entire region into
2 recession creating an economic cul-de-sac.

3 The state and federal government
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4 must provide real substantial dollars to foster growth
5 and prosperity. Funding for business and development
6 growth, along with the advancement of the Multi-Modal
7 Transportation Center, are two components to that end.

8 The Brownfields Task Force will soon
9 provide the General Assembly and Commerce Committee
10 for the second year of recommendations and requests.
11 I can think of no more important issue that faces this
12 state and region than brownfields reclamation. Smart
13 growth, job development, along with substantial and
14 real tax revenue are the end result of an aggressive
15 and long-term commitment in this region and this
16 state. We must strengthen our core cities to unleash
17 potential for economic development.

18 Finally, as we review
19 transportation, the Multi-Modal Transportation Center
20 is the key to our regional success, but with that must
21 come an improved rail line access for both commercial
22 and passenger use. Let us get our freight off of the
23 highways and utilize a prosperous commercial rail
24 line. As we look to re-configure route 84 and 8 and
25 the mix master, we must create synergy between

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1 economic development, job growth, and municipal tax
2 revenue.

3 In essence, let's get it done and
4 done right, because our future and the future of the

5 region and the State of Connecticut is at stake. Good
6 luck and I look forward to your final report and
7 recommendations. Thank you.

8 MR. McMILLEN: Now, Steve, are you
9 going to -- you have a presentation speaking for
10 yourself?

11 MR. SASLA: I can go again?

12 MR. McMILLEN: Yes, you may, because
13 you were actually representing --

14 MR. SASLA: I am going to speak now?

15 MR. McMILLEN: Yes, please.

16 MR. SASLA: I am going to speak for
17 the Chamber, actually. Let me just preface this by
18 saying there's a theme you're going to hear here. You
19 have already heard it from Peter, Jimmy and Rick, and
20 I am going to continue -- and, Jeff, actually, and I
21 did not talk to Jeff prior to these comments.

22 Good evening, Commissioner McDonald
23 and the members of the DECD staff who are here this
24 evening, and welcome to the Greater Waterbury Region.
25 I think I speak for many in the audience and we

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1 commend you for undertaking this important initiative.
2 We truly appreciate your allowing us to provide input.

3 My name is Steve R. Sasla, and I'm
4 president and CEO of the Waterbury Regional Chamber.
5 The Chamber is the premier business organization in
6 northwest Connecticut. We serve the needs of over a

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7 thousand businesses, not only in the City of Waterbury
8 but throughout the 13-town region as well. Our
9 immediate service area also includes the
10 municipalities of Beacon Falls, Bethlehem, Cheshire,
11 Middletown, Naugatuck, Oxford, Prospect, Southbury,
12 Thomaston, Watertown, Wolcott and Woodbury. Our 1,000
13 members and their 30,000 employees work and live
14 primarily in our region.

15 This is the fifth in the series of
16 nine public hearings you are conducting regarding the
17 State's strategic plan for economic development.
18 While Connecticut is a relatively small state, I'm
19 sure you have heard from many before me that our state
20 is not a one size fits all state. The Greater
21 Waterbury Region is different than the Hartford Region
22 or the New Haven Region or Lower Fairfield County, for
23 that matter. We need to a regional strategy to
24 optimize our economic growth potential.

25 As Michael Gallis, a leading expert

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1 in large-scale metropolitan regional development
2 strategies pointed out in an analysis prepared
3 especially for the Waterbury Regional Chamber, the New
4 York economic region has nine corridors of
5 significance, three in New York, four in New Jersey
6 and two in Connecticut, I-95 and I-84. One of the
7 things that concerns me is Gallis's observation that

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8 all four of New Jersey's corridors have exhibited a
9 higher growth rate than Connecticut's two corridors.

10 While the I-95 corridor links New
11 York and Boston, two major economic regions, the I-84
12 corridor, once considered a secondary corridor, is now
13 rising in importance as an inland access route between
14 Canada, northern New England and New York and the rest
15 of the East Coast.

16 If we do not begin to treat the I-84
17 corridor and the Greater Waterbury Region in more
18 global terms, the State of Connecticut will miss a
19 tremendous opportunity to keep its commerce flowing
20 into the 21st century and beyond. Good planning today
21 in the I-84 corridor will reap tremendous economic
22 results in the future.

23 To begin this venture with the State
24 as a partner, the Chamber strongly encourages a multi
25 pronged strategy to position Waterbury, it is reason

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1 and the I-84, as well as the route 8 corridor, for
2 optimal growth. We have seven specific
3 recommendations.

4 First and foremost, the Multi-Modal
5 Transportation Center, which Jeff mentioned, must be
6 built, and I won't go any further with that. Second,
7 as Jeff also mentioned, we need to get serious about
8 providing a reasonable train schedule for commuters in
9 the Naugatuck Valley as well as commercial freight.

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10 This is a chicken and egg situation. However, the
11 state has never seriously considered increasing train
12 service on the Waterbury line and with increased
13 service will come more economic investment. To
14 illustrate my point, I would once again like to look
15 at what New Jersey has done.

16 Third, adequate funding needs to be
17 provided if the State is going to get serious about
18 brownfields remediation and redevelopment as outlined
19 in the Brownfields Task Force report from last year.
20 We do hope to be one of the pilot sites selected for
21 the new program promulgated last year by the
22 Brownfields Task Force, which we, the Chamber,
23 initiated.

24 Fourth, we would hope the DECD would
25 work with the City of Waterbury and our partners,

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1 obviously us, the Waterbury Development Corporation,
2 Main Street Waterbury, the mayor's office, to ensure
3 that economic impact analysis is completed before a
4 final design is proposed for the realignment of I-84
5 and route 8 interchange.

6 Fifth, we would hope that DECD would
7 work in partnership, as it already begun to do under
8 Commissioner McDonald, to build strategic regional
9 partnerships with the private sector through
10 organizations such as the Metro Regional Chamber

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11 Alliance. The Metro Regional Chamber Alliance is a
12 consortium of the eight largest Chambers of Commerce
13 in the state, and our ability to positively affect
14 public policy is profound. In addition, however, we
15 are also calling on DECD and Commissioner McDonald to
16 remove the administrative logjam at OPM to release the
17 \$100,000 that Representative Berger secured in the FY
18 2006-07 budget to assist our efforts in funding a
19 regional economic alliance for the Greater Waterbury
20 region and a good portion of the northwest Connecticut
21 as well as the Naugatuck Valley.

22 Sixth, we would hope that DECD would
23 give serious review to its development incentives.
24 It's imperative in a region like Greater Waterbury
25 that we do all that we can to maintain our industrial

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1 base and attract new businesses that find our region
2 suitable for their needs. Our manufacturers need real
3 help such as expanding enterprise zone benefits and
4 making the voluntary remediation of brownfields an
5 incentivized reward system, not a punishment. Our
6 health services are in their ascendancy. They need
7 assistance with expansion and technology transfer.

8 And last but not least, we would
9 hope that DECD would give serious consideration to
10 several high impact projects in our region including
11 the revitalization of the Waterbury Central Business
12 District, Renaissance Place in Naugatuck and the Route

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13 10 Limited Liability Corporation mixed use development
14 in Cheshire.

15 Please be reminded that unlike the
16 other major cities in the state Waterbury is a city of
17 micro businesses. 85 percent of our businesses employ
18 25 people or less. The impacts that these large scale
19 projects would have on our region and their host
20 municipality would be tremendous. The Greater
21 Waterbury region needs more of these types of
22 initiatives and we need help revitalizing our core
23 downtown with more efforts like Main Street,
24 Waterbury.

25 In conclusion, not only does the

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1 Greater Waterbury region need a strategy for
2 successful economic growth, but so does the State of
3 Connecticut, but would argue that the state's strength
4 lies in its cities and regions, and I applaud the
5 efforts of Governor Rell, the Legislature and
6 Commissioner McDonald for getting serious about the
7 state's short and long term economic well being.
8 Please let us be your partner. Thank you. I will be
9 happy to answer any questions now or at a later time.
10 I look forward to having further conversations with
11 you. Thank you.

12 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you, Steve.
13 What I want to make clear is that the strategic plan

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14 is required to take account of all the regional plans
15 and the state plan of conservation and development.
16 So every one of these plans that exists, and there are
17 some that are actually revisions and some that are
18 being created as we speak, this strategic plan,
19 comprehensive strategic plan needs to take them all
20 into account. I would like to call Mary Ann Fontaine
21 to speak.

22 MS. FONTAINE: I need to be taller.
23 Good afternoon. My name is Mary Ann Fontaine. I am
24 the director for the Center for Business and Industry
25 Training here at the college. The comments that I am

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1 going to read represent several of the departments at
2 the college not necessarily the views of everybody at
3 the college. We believe that the DECD strategic plan
4 for the future should include, among other things, a
5 mission and vision statement that emphasizes
6 recruitment, retention, and development of companies
7 and organizations in the State of Connecticut which
8 fosters a new image of Connecticut nationally and
9 internationally as a state of innovation where
10 workforce creativity, curiosity and exploration are
11 rewarded.

12 Also, it should include incentives
13 for teams, partnerships, and clusters that effectively
14 advance recruitment, retention, and development of
15 companies and organizations that create jobs in

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16 Connecticut, especially rapid response teams who are
17 fully trained and authorized to address any and all
18 forms of assistance that current companies or new
19 incoming companies may need.

20 Also, includes support
21 entrepreneurship at multiple levels including public
22 and private partnerships, education and training and
23 support services at a regional basis; a research
24 department, which is probably already there, which
25 really does a lot of work determining which sectors

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1 and industries are desirable to attract to the state;
2 which are strong and sustainable industries and also
3 industries in decline; and establish metrics to assess
4 the impact of business and workforce recruitment,
5 development and training programs and services, and
6 benchmarks progressive and successful programs from
7 other states.

8 In addition, we think there should
9 be an oversight group that breaks through some of the
10 politics to re-synchronize the web of agency programs
11 and services that exist currently for business and
12 industry. Some examples of successful programs across
13 the country that were mentioned were State of Michigan
14 in which the automotive industry is a strategic
15 sector. A public-private partnership has been
16 established between businesses and three major

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17 manufacturers, universities and community colleges to
18 train and retrain educators and workers in the
19 industry on emerging electronic technologies that are
20 driving the future.

21 Another example is Oklahoma who has
22 a fast forward program that employs literally SWAT
23 teams comprised of every key state entity to sell the
24 state and their incentives to companies looking to
25 locate there. Among them that are part of that team

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1 are community colleges and vocational technical
2 schools. Their Quality Jobs Program, which includes
3 Training for Industry Program which is ranked No. 1 in
4 the country by Kiplinger Magazine, incents companies
5 by paying for all start-up training costs, curriculum
6 development, delivery, etc., for several years and
7 also provides us to companies who provide full-time
8 jobs with benefits, and also pays for a portion of
9 salaries for their employees for several years, among
10 other tax incentives.

11 In terms of the role of community
12 colleges, we feel that our role should be partnering
13 with the DECD and private industry. One of the key
14 areas would be building and enhancing programs to
15 ensure a strong workforce pipeline. Once the state
16 targets the industries which we're looking to attract
17 to the state, the universities and community colleges
18 can assist by identifying career paths and skill sets

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19 and by building program partnerships.

20 MR. McMILLEN: Wrap it up.

21 MS. FONTAINE: Okay. Basically the
22 rest of this would attest to building teams at all
23 levels to cut through a lot of the red tape and a lot
24 of the redundancy that we have in state agencies in
25 terms of what is being administered and in our

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1 university and community college system in terms of
2 redundancy in programs and delivery systems and to put
3 teams together that involve state agencies, higher
4 education, education at all levels and business and
5 industry to put together better modes of delivery.

6 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you. I would
7 like to call Marilyn Cormack.

8 MS. CORMACK: I'm tall enough. Good
9 evening. I'm Marilyn Cormack and I'm the
10 president/CEO of the Birmingham Group Health Services.
11 Birmingham Group Health Services is located in Ansonia
12 serving the five Valley towns and surrounding area.
13 We employ 177 staff, serve over 4,000 people annually,
14 have a budget of \$10 million and have a 35-member
15 board of directors who represents various industries
16 and businesses in the local area.

17 I am speaking today representing the
18 Connecticut Community Providers Association. The
19 Connecticut Community Providers Association represents

22 state at half of what it would cost the state to
23 provide those services directly. Private providers
24 are an efficient and effective means of providing
25 essential services to the state's most vulnerable

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1 populations. There are essential services that
2 government should provide and are a good investment in
3 the state's fiscal well-being.

4 However, historic under funding
5 jeopardizes the availability and quality of services
6 causing people in crisis to end up in much more costly
7 settings such as emergency rooms, hospitals and in the
8 criminal justice system. More than 20 years of
9 inadequate funding will lead to a reduction in high
10 quality services. When community providers are used
11 to balance the state budget, everyone ends up paying
12 more through higher taxes to fund more expensive
13 alternative care.

14 Speaking to labor force quality and
15 sustainability, I have seen firsthand how inadequate
16 state funding severely hinders our ability to track
17 and retain qualified staff. Unlike other industries,
18 staff turnover often has catastrophic effects on the
19 work we do by placing an incredible strain on our
20 clients who often develop close, trusting
21 relationships with our staff. This can cause major
22 crisis or setbacks for people who already struggle

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23 with significant mental health and addiction issues.
24 As we are understaffed due to vacancies more people
25 wait for the supports they need.

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1 Speaking to capital and energy costs
2 and supplies, not only do we lack the funding to offer
3 competitive wages, we also struggle to pay for the
4 escalating costs of health insurance, utilities and
5 other infrastructure needs. Our energy costs alone
6 have gone up 48 percent in rate charges. Our
7 recommendations are we're asking the Governor and the
8 legislature to provide a Community Provider Rescue
9 Fund to ensure we continue high quality services.

10 The Community Provider Rescue Fund
11 will provide an immediate fix to shortfalls in the
12 last two budget years, stabilize the system create a
13 new base for future funding, and establish a
14 consistent cost of service adjustments to avoid future
15 shortfalls. The description of the fund is it's an
16 immediate infusion of \$135 million to stabilize the
17 system; the formation of a commission to consider a
18 long-term indexing solution; and creation of a capital
19 improvement fund for community providers to be
20 maintained on an annual level at \$65 million.

21 We encourage you to recognize the
22 value of community providers as you develop your
23 economic strategy. Thank you.

24 MR. McMILLEN: I would like to call
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25 Richard Whitney to speak.

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1 MR. WHITNEY: Rich Whitney. I'm
2 just a taxpayer over in Plymouth, which I didn't see
3 on the map, but we are right around the corner from
4 Thomaston. In 3 minutes I don't know how much I could
5 say about what I wanted to say but, I think the two
6 things that most affect this region and Connecticut in
7 general negatively is the taxes, and how much taxes we
8 have to pay as far as property taxes, taxes on our
9 car, income taxes, and I think the most positive thing
10 about Connecticut and especially this region is the
11 natural resources, which I spend all of my time in the
12 local parks, on the Naugatuck River, all my free time
13 on the Housatonic River, and just in the local area.

14 We have the Mattatuck State Forest
15 where you can hike, you can climb, you can mountain
16 bike. We have the white and gray stone cliffs. We
17 have the Naugatuck River. We have Black Rock State
18 Park. We have the Thomaston Dam. We have the Tunxis
19 Trail. We have the Mattatuck Trail. We have the Blue
20 Trails and further north we have the Housatonic River.
21 We have St. John's Ledges, the People's Forest and
22 Canaan Mountain.

23 All these places are phenomenal for
24 adventure sports, which if you look into sports today,
25 adventure sports is the hugest category growing now,

1 bigger than football, bigger than baseball, bigger
2 than hockey. That is the sports that people are
3 getting into, and spending their time in doing, and we
4 have an awesome opportunity here with the Naugatuck
5 River that runs right through Thomaston through
6 Waterbury through Naugatuck all the way down to Beacon
7 Falls, which I have been on from above the dam all the
8 way down through Beacon Falls to the steel bridge
9 where we take out, and all along that area, especially
10 in Waterbury and Naugatuck, I see a ridiculous amount
11 of burned out factory buildings that are not being
12 utilized that are just sitting there doing nothing.

13 Just to point out a few areas that
14 you can easily put a great area in and which people --
15 when you go and take a kayak trip, and you are going
16 to put in right there, you're going to have people
17 wanting to eat, wanting to drink, needing facilities,
18 somewhere to stay, lodging, hotels, motels, all that
19 kind of stuff, and you could easily put in or take out
20 anywhere along the river in Waterbury especially where
21 there's all these brick factories that are no longer
22 in use. Same thing in Naugatuck.

23 I mean, there's just tons of places
24 where you could put in or take out. Also in
25 Naugatuck, right in Naugatuck we pass two different

1 I would like to call Thomas Marano.

2 MR. MARANO: I'm tomorrow more with
3 NU I am a business development manager. I'm a
4 certified economic developer, and I've been in the
5 business since 1992 where I got my start at your
6 agency. I have one point today basically. This is an
7 observation that I have. We have a statewide plan of
8 conservation and development, but there is no plan to
9 train those who are charged with executing that plan.
10 So our point to you tonight is that as part of this
11 plan, that DECD can become a clearing house or a
12 warehouse for training resources and for best use
13 regulations that professional planners, land use
14 Commissioner and the like can use.

15 Now, there are a number of things
16 that cause us to think this. First of all, there are
17 no requirements for land use commissioners to actually
18 attend training. In our experience we know a lot of
19 commissioners have told us personally that when they
20 get appointed, they are handed the book, and said the
21 meetings are Tuesday nights. Show up. We'll see you
22 then even if there is no coordinated statewide
23 training plan. There are a number of groups,
24 including ourselves, through our Community Builders
25 Institute, who are attempting to train these folks.

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1 So through the UConn Clear Program, Main Street Land
2 Use Leaders Alliance, ICSC, environmental groups, the
3 Planners Association, there is a lot of training out
4 there, some of it half day, some is full day. They
5 all have a lot of different themes. Some of them
6 contradictory. So it's very difficult for
7 commissioners, planners, etc., to get good, consistent
8 training that has a common theme.

9 Not all towns ask their
10 commissioners to actually seek out that training, and
11 so the result is that the local capacity of people
12 making land use decisions varies. It varies on the
13 boards themselves. It varies from town to town, and
14 this can lead to a lot of problems with developers.
15 For example, from town to town whether or not is the
16 process going to be easy, what's going to knock their
17 project out, etc., so on, as well as it leaves the
18 land use decisions that can negatively impact
19 communities, nearby communities, abutting landowners,
20 etc., and so on. So we're going to make the following
21 recommendations.

22 First of all, that you develop a
23 statewide strategy to reach out to elected officials,
24 land use commissioners, professional staffs through
25 surveys, etc., just to kind of gauge the training

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1 assets out there, the level of skills and their

2 training needs. No. 2, we ask that as part of this
3 plan that you develop a statewide land use training
4 curricula with input from developers, legal experts,
5 environmentalists, state agencies such as DEP, etc.,
6 and so on. Thirdly, we ask you to support the
7 existing land use training groups like ourselves,
8 ICSC, you know. You can be that clearing house to
9 keep public schedules, and then to try to convene us
10 so that there are there are no gaps in the training
11 topics. And, fourthly, we ask you to, as part of
12 this, develop a database of model land use regulations
13 that all the communities can use. Thank you very
14 much.

15 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you, sir. I
16 would like to call Leo Frank.

17 MR. FRANK: Good evening. Hello,
18 Commissioner. I'm Leo Frank. I am the interim CEO of
19 the Waterbury Development Corporation. I've been in
20 this position only a short time, but a member of that
21 group for many, many years. I am proponent of
22 strategic planning coming from private industry. Our
23 group has a strategic plan to take advantage of the
24 flight of people coming into the Valley. We did so by
25 shipping Michael O'Connor down to Naugatuck to get

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1 that done, because we are next in line, and we hope
2 he's very successful. Good luck, Michael.

3 I would like to concur with the
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4 comments of my predecessors who spoke, Peter Dorpalen,
5 Mr. Ryan, Mr. Dunne, Waterbury is a center of our
6 guide here, and I think their points were very
7 salient. The specific purpose for me being here is to
8 personally invite the commissioner to come to our
9 office, and meet my staff and talk to the folks who
10 have been doing this many years who are out there in
11 the public, in the business community, really
12 touching, feeling what the pain of our area is, and I
13 would leave a card for you. I would like you to call
14 me or I can call you, and we would like to get
15 together, and I know you've been in Waterbury and
16 gotten a tour, but we would like to just spend a
17 little more time with you.

18 One of the things I wanted to
19 comment on is I have been working part-time for the
20 agency for the last 14 months before I had gotten this
21 assignment. I'm a retired banker, and I was hired to
22 do outreach to the businesses in Waterbury. I
23 personally have visited 100 companies in the last 14
24 months, and from their perspective they are very
25 concerned about our high cost of energy, our Workmen's

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1 Comp is egregious, and some of the legislators are
2 trying to make it more egregious, and offshore
3 competition is always a topic and health care.

4 So if DECD can have some solutions

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5 to those problems, we think we may be able to attract
6 a little more industry than retail, and we hope you
7 can address those somehow. Those are my comments. I
8 want to be brief. I'm meeting with some of my cohorts
9 shortly, so I wanted them to see who I was, and I have
10 a good chance to meet you and them. So I'll leave you
11 my card, and hope to hear from you soon. Thank you.

12 MS. McDONALD: Thank you.

13 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you, Mr. Frank.

14 I would like to call Vincent Nolan from the Town of
15 New Milford.

16 MR. NOLAN: Good evening,
17 Commissioner McDonald, Dr. McMillen. Nice to see you
18 again. I'm here for my second stint from the Town of
19 New Milford. I joined your first session on that
20 blustery, cold November night in Torrington. I
21 mentioned that evening that one of the concerns that I
22 see for Connecticut's Economic Development is our
23 regional focus, and having had an opportunity to think
24 more about that, I just wanted to reiterate that
25 point, and point it out as a potential problem.

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1 New Milford being the southern most
2 town, southwestern most town in Litchfield County, we
3 call ourselves the gateway to Litchfield County, and
4 therefore from a tourism/economic development point of
5 view, we tend to integrate more with the folks from
6 the north. Our regional planning agency is in

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7 Brookfield, the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected
8 Officials, and so we look to the south for that.

9 Here tonight I stand in Waterbury
10 where I'm a member of the Regional Workforce
11 Investment Corps. We look to the east when it comes
12 to workforce investment strategies. We are not
13 integrated with one another in these different pockets
14 of economic development issues, so it remains a
15 concern and my coming here tonight, and I'll probably
16 talk you in Danbury later in the month, you know, it
17 kind of points out to the fact that our community,
18 which is an interesting microcosm of Connecticut, both
19 rural, industrial and a retail center for our region,
20 we're not quite integrated into everything that we
21 need to be doing.

22 I want to support what Tom Marano
23 from NU said as well. As an economic developer, not a
24 planner, many of my colleagues are both planners and
25 economic developers. I do have to interface with

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1 Local land use personnel, volunteers largely, who do
2 labor training. While they're deliberate and sincere,
3 they don't always hear the same things that I hear as
4 an economic developer when I go to conferences
5 workshops and training sessions, and I have become the
6 teacher, and that's not always the most effective way
7 to work collaboratively with local land use people to

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8 try to infuse knowledge at the local level from one
9 man's perspective, so I support that.

10 I asked my boss, Mia Murphy, before
11 I came today if there was anything in particular she
12 would like me to express, and what she indicated was
13 infrastructure was a major concern for her. As we try
14 to employ growth strategies in our business sectors,
15 we find from time to time that some of the challenges
16 are having the available resources or the planning
17 time to prepare for the growth.

18 For instance, we have some
19 transportation issues in our community that we're
20 dealing with currently coming to the end of a major
21 state highway redevelopment. It's caused some
22 concerns for many of our local businesses as that's
23 transpired, and then it comes up a bit short as it
24 approaches our town that we cannot access our major
25 brownfield redevelopment site with major truck

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1 traffic, because less than 10 years ago leadership in
2 the community did not seek out infrastructure
3 improvements, and now we're handicapped in going
4 forward.

5 So some of it is our own fault, the
6 community's fault, but we would like to see better
7 integration of DOT, DEP, and other investment
8 strategies integrated with our own growth strategies
9 for business. Thank you.

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10 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you, sir. That
11 concludes all the folks that have actually signed up.
12 Is there anybody else who would like to speak? Yes,
13 sir. Please state your name.

14 MR. LEWIS: My name is John Lewis,
15 and I have been delivering babies in Waterbury for the
16 last 29 years. My first comment is totally off my
17 area of expertise, and I think I want to agree with
18 some of what Jeff says about getting the freight off
19 of our roads. This means we want to think big. I
20 think we need to get a rail system down on the
21 corridor along 95, and put the freight off of the
22 roads and onto the railroads where there's railroads
23 or monorails, the beautiful monorail
24 systems. Why can't we build some monorail systems
25 from Waterbury, high-speed trains like they do in

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1 Japan, some bridgework on/off to New York City. We
2 are the bedroom here in Torrington. People work in
3 New York City. It's a very good way to keep our green
4 space, and talking --

5 In my expertise in working in the
6 health care field, there's a doctor down in Old
7 Saybrook, Connecticut. His name is Richard Reese, and
8 he wrote a great book, Innovation Driven Health Care.
9 I would have you talk to him, and he's got great ideas
10 of innovation, and how innovation comes from the

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11 bottom up and not from the top down, from the federal
12 government down. Innovation is best done from the
13 bottom up, I believe.

14 The other comment is health care
15 information technology. We have a silo mentality in
16 medicine and in health care, and we need to have a
17 situation with E-Health Connecticut, and the other
18 structures that are already here in place to have
19 hospitals to be able to communicate throughout the
20 whole state. Of course this would be to the whole
21 nation we have to communicate. So if someone gets
22 sick in New London, and they go to their doctor in
23 Waterbury, Connecticut, the records are simultaneously
24 available, so you get proper care without duplication
25 of service and is safer. There's also E-Prescribe so

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1 you can prescribe medicines that are legible.
2 Everyone knows what medicines people are on, and the
3 interactions between medicines are also there.

4 Again, I think this health care is a
5 big economic drive in the City of Waterbury, and I
6 would like to see some state initiatives to possibly
7 even to develop health information technology in the
8 Waterbury area where it develops into an industry.
9 Thank you.

10 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you, sir. Is
11 there anyone else who would like to speak or speak
12 again? Please state your name.

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13 MR. TRACZYK: Good evening. I'm
14 Chris Traczyk. I suppose I wear several hats here
15 tonight. I just wanted to make a couple of comments
16 to the commissioner and DECD. Very briefly, I think
17 there have been a lot of pertinent comments made
18 earlier about brownfield sites and industrial sites
19 and transportation and the rest of them. I want to
20 echo some of them, but I haven't heard anyone talk
21 about housing, and this is the Department of Economic
22 and Community Development, and I just wanted to stress
23 that as you put together a strategic plan, you need to
24 make sure that you include housing as part of that
25 plan, and that it's a very important part of it.

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1 There's been a lot of discussion in
2 the state in my travels, in my job, there have been
3 numerous comments from business, business planning
4 agencies, municipalities, about how the cost of
5 housing in the State of Connecticut is impacting the
6 ability of a community to grow. So I just wanted to
7 encourage DECD to look at the cost of housing, the
8 lack of diverse, affordable housing stock, and realize
9 that that's a detriment to the growth retention and
10 infusion of new businesses coming to the community.

11 I wanted to encourage the
12 commissioner and the DECD staff to continue the work
13 they've already begun on streamlining some of the

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14 existing state programs in terms of getting state
15 money out the door, in terms of businesses and housing
16 production, and to encourage the increase of
17 production here in the state of Connecticut. I think
18 the state should encourage transit-oriented housing
19 production, and I think that should be throughout the
20 state; not just along the shorelines, but it should be
21 suburban communities, some of our urban centers,
22 Hartford, Waterbury, Danbury, a number of the other
23 urban areas as well in order to --

24 The state should also be encouraging
25 transit-oriented business placement so that it

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1 encourages public transportation, reduces the amount
2 of traffic on our roads, which in turn reduces the
3 amounts of commuter time that everyone has. When
4 people have to commute an hour to get to their job, it
5 makes it very difficult for quality of life as well as
6 for the businesses to continue to grow and go on.

7 I want to support the remediation of
8 the use of brownfield and other outdated industrial
9 sites. We have a lot of resources here in the state,
10 and it's makes more sense to reuse those as opposed to
11 creating new. The state should support and provide
12 incentives to encourage placement of new businesses
13 where there's an existing infrastructure, and where
14 there's public transportation which will help reduce
15 capital and energy costs.

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16 And, lastly, I think the state
17 should support and encourage regional partnerships to
18 eliminate some of the pitting of township against
19 township where they are all going after exactly the
20 same business in order to get them in their town, and
21 there should be ways to find creative solutions to
22 that.

23 And, lastly, I would just echo I
24 think the state should really support and encourage
25 the municipalities, and provide technical assistance

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1 and planning, and support land use planning to the
2 organizations. That's all I have, thank you.

3 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you very much.

4 MS. McDONALD: Thank you.

5 MR. McMILLEN: Is there anyone else
6 who would like to speak?

7 MR. WHITNEY: Rich Whitney again. I
8 just wanted to comment a little bit more about the tax
9 situation. I do have a Bachelor's degree in business.
10 I do work in the business world. I have for 15 years
11 since I've been out of college. I'm not just a
12 kayaker so you'll have to excuse my appearance today,
13 but I've been working since five this morning, and I
14 didn't get a chance to change or anything. So that
15 being said, what I wanted to say was that as far as --
16 you know, no one likes to be taxed. No one likes to

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17 pay a lot of money and that type of thing unless
18 they're getting something for it, and in reality, if
19 you look at how much taxes we pay in this state, if
20 you combine federal, state and local taxes, we are the
21 highest taxes in the country, more than Massachusetts,
22 more than New York, and more than New Jersey.

23 Many of the people that I grew up
24 with who went to college and came back here couldn't
25 make it, and they're not here anymore, and there's

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1 very few of the people that I grew up with living in
2 this state anymore, and their major reason is the cost
3 of the taxes to live here and everything I mentioned
4 before, and, you know, the state says, well, we need
5 to tax the heck out of you, and you need to spend all
6 this money on education. No.

7 I'm for education. I went to the
8 public school system I went to college. However, you
9 spend all this huge amount of money to education,
10 which mostly goes to the administration, and you
11 supposedly give these kids a great education who are
12 going to come back and do great things in the
13 community, but they come back to the community, and
14 they can't afford to live there anymore. So it's a
15 catch 22 situation. So that taxes, that is really the
16 major thing that we need to look at when we want to
17 bring people to these communities, and bring people to
18 this state.

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19 It was just on the news the other
20 night on Channel 3 that we're in the bottom four of
21 states that people want to move to, and the number one
22 reason that people cited was the tax burden in this
23 state. So it's not just a matter of I don't have
24 enough money this week to put food on the table. It
25 affects all the other aspects of life as far as, you

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1 know, like I said, education.

2 Now, we put all the money into the
3 education budget, and my town, we can't afford to
4 build a new police department, which ours is like a
5 closet, because we put all the money into a \$48
6 million school project. We can't fix the police
7 department, which is just as important to the
8 community as education is. We can't build a new fire
9 department. All three of our fire departments are in
10 the wrong area to make it anywhere in time, in a quick
11 amount of time. We can't afford to now fix those fire
12 departments, because we spent \$48 million on the
13 school project.

14 So everyone wants to be educated,
15 but their house is going to burn down, and there is
16 not going to be any police there so ... that is a
17 huge factor, the tax situation, and that really has to
18 be the thing that's looked at, and the thing that
19 scares me about this whole thing, and all these fancy

20 people with suits and everything is that I'm just
21 afraid that it's going to be the same thing that
22 happens in this state over and over again; that once
23 it gets to the level of the government being involved,
24 there is so much red tape, and there is so much
25 baloney going on that we're not going to accomplish

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1 anything. Thank you.

2 MR. McMILLEN: Thank you, sir.
3 Let's hope that there are people out there who will
4 participate in the process as we go along and prevent
5 that from happening.

6 MR. WHITNEY: I hope so.

7 MR. McMILLEN: Is there anybody else
8 who would like to speak? Commissioner?

9 MS. McDONALD: What we've been doing
10 at the other forums, and we'll continue the practice
11 here, is we see other people arrive in the next 15, 20
12 minutes, because we want to make sure that everybody
13 that would like an opportunity to speak has had an
14 opportunity. As Stan and I both said at the beginning
15 of tonight's forum, this is the start of the dialogue.
16 Our deadline for completing the plan is July of 2009.
17 We are going to be on a parallel course where we do
18 the analysis and collect the data, but also we put
19 proposals forward that hopefully will address some of
20 these issues as we move forward.

21 I think it's important to note
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22 several of the initiatives that were raised here today
23 from land use planning to open space to natural
24 resources to brownfields redevelopment to
25 transit-oriented development, all are important, and

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1 what I want to make sure that everybody is aware of
2 that even though this is an economic development
3 strategic plan, it is housed within the Governor's
4 responsible growth statute and her agenda for
5 responsible growth, which is looking at creative ways
6 that we can do our development at brownfield sites so
7 that we do preserve our natural resources.

8 We recognize the burdens that are on
9 the state from a tax standpoint, from a regulatory
10 standpoint, and we're going to be looking at creative
11 ways of dealing with all of these, and hopefully
12 you'll all continue to be part of the dialogue. We'll
13 be back with specific recommendations that we will be
14 seeking your input on. As Stan mentioned, we'll be
15 having focus groups, but what we are very heartened by
16 is the significant numbers of people that have come to
17 the forums, and have sent in their comments to the
18 website, because we will factor all of them in. We
19 will look at every one of them closely. So now we'll
20 keep the record open and see if other people show up
21 in the next 15 or 20 minutes. Thanks.

22 (Whereupon, this hearing was

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concluded at 6:23.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Jacqueline V. McCauley, a Notary Public
duly commissioned and qualified in and for the State
of Connecticut, do hereby certify that this hearing
was taken on the 3rd of January, 2008 at 5:03 p.m.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand
and affixed my seal this 9th day of January, 2008.

Jacqueline V. McCauley
Notary Public

My Commission expires: 5/31/10

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