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Paul M. Formica
First Selectman



East Lyme

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HB 5457 TESTIMONY

Senator Cusano; Representative Gentile; Members of the Committee;

Although the SECOG has requested withdrawal of the bill proposed to your committee today, I felt it important for the committee to understand the dynamics of the issue faced by the residents of SE CT in the hopes that at another time you may get involved and help us find a solution.

SCWA was created by the Legislature in 1967 at the request of SECCOG, the regional planning agency who today serves and supports 20 Municipalities, two tribal nations and the two Military Installations in SECT. SCWA's purpose is to act as the regional water authority to plan for and to solve the water shortfalls projected for SECT. In the 44 years since its inception, SCWA has morphed into a successful operator of small water systems who otherwise would have failed, penned numerous water supply plans yet has not performed its mission of implementing regional solutions.

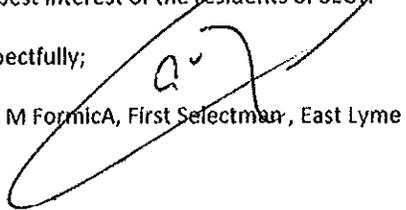
The bill that you were asked to consider was flawed in some respects yet its intent was to return regional water planning and solutions implementation authority away from SCWA and back to the COG, the region's planning agency. SCWA would and should operate its water systems and continue to serve its 2600 customers; a role that is important and necessary for our region. The regional planning authority would shift back to SECCOG where the CEO's could work out and implement those solutions more effectively both financially and politically as a region.

East Lyme has had a water shortfall seasonally for nearly 30 years and recently has embarked on a water banking agreement with neighboring New London where we send our excess water in the winter to New London for return in the summer to satisfy our shortfall. This regional interconnection will solve East Lyme's seasonal water shortfall allowing us economic development opportunities we don't have now and supporting our public safety infrastructure. We expect that the interconnection will support other communities water shortages in the coming years as well as connecting to a larger regional "grid". The project was voted on by the Town of East Lyme at referendum and this \$11 million dollar project (less \$2.6 million in grants and subsidies) will be paid for by the rate payers and taxpayers in East Lyme. SCWA for its part provided a letter supporting the project.

Water shortages exist today in many towns in SECT and the region deserves an organization with the ability and desire to act on providing solutions and more importantly implementing them regionally. If we don't then the 8 million gallon per day shortfall projected for the region in the coming years will get here unresolved and we will find ourselves scrambling for solutions that will be less effective and more costly.

Though we have withdrawn the current amendment to this bill as we could not come to consensus with SCWA on language, SECOG's leadership is committed to revisit this and ultimately to continue to ACT in the best interest of the residents of SECT.

Respectfully;


Paul M Formica, First Selectman, East Lyme and Vice Chair - SECCOG