Over 175 key CT leaders convened Nov. 12 and Nov. 13 in Westbrook for a first-ever economic summit collectively organized by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) and the Connecticut AFL-CIO.

The three statewide organizations partnered for the first time to convene a unique Connecticut summit meeting for key business, government, labor, education and social service leaders to brainstorm on the best common pathways for Connecticut’s economic future. CCM will issue a final report on the summit’s findings in early December. Here is news coverage of the summit from the Connecticut Post.

Connecticut Post

Diverse interests come together at economic summit

By Ken Dixon

Friday, November 13, 2015

WESTBROOK — Avoiding the pitfalls of partisan politics, 150 business leaders, union activists, educators and local-government officials on Friday tackled Connecticut’s thorniest issues, and came close to solving them by lunchtime.

They agreed on the need for enhanced regionalism; more funding for education; affordable housing; streamlined state agencies; a balance of priorities on funding for roads and mass transit; and more diversity in the way the state pays for services, beyond the dependence on local property taxes.

If only policy-making was always that easy.
“Clearly, putting a coalition together to look at the over-riding, major issues that the state faces, is part of the necessary process,” said Paul Timpanelli, executive director of the Bridgeport Regional Business Council. “We are facing very serious issues on how we progress as a state on the economic front. I think coalition building is part of that process.”

The two-day summit, Project B.E.S.T (Bringing Every Stakeholder Together), sponsored by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, the Connecticut Business and Industry Association and the Connecticut AFL-CIO, did build consensus. But things often change when lawmakers gather for the General Assembly, which begins in February.

One way to encourage regional cooperation is to show the savings that can be realized in their local taxes, said Lyle Wray, executive director of the Capitol Region Council of Governments.

“If some people don’t care now, a lot of people will care if you say they could save $2,000 a year if animal control was regionalized,” Wray said.

Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton, who sat in on a group discussing diversity, said the summit’s diverse backgrounds and perspectives were refreshing.

“The most important thing is we have the three legs that Connecticut stands on talking together,” said Boughton, a former state House member and gubernatorial candidate. “It’s community leaders, labor and the business community. If they’re on the same page, some really good things are going to happen.”

Fairfield First Selectman Michael Tetreau said the benefit of the meeting was that those with vast differences could agree on common goals.

“Everybody is looking forward to getting together again,” said Tetreau, who sat in on a taxation working group. “I really like the focus on jobs and on job creation,” he said. “Nobody is saying we have too many jobs.”

The only criticism leveled during the noontime summaries, was a union member’s complaint about the inclusion of the need for “flexibility” in contract bargaining in the final recommendation.

The group agreed that they will continue pursuing their proposals with the 2016 General Assembly. A final report will be compiled by the CCM, which represents most of the state’s towns and cities at the state Capitol.