

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING  
NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
MARCH 26, 2008  
MEETING MINUTES**

The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held at the F-GI Workforce Investment Board site.

Commissioners: See attached.

Staff: Catherine Dimitruk and Bethany Remmers

Guests: None

Quorum was present to conduct business.

**Welcome, introductions, opening remarks**

Chair R. Larose welcomed everyone at 7:00 p.m. and introduced a new commissioner, Paul Larner from Saint Albans Town, followed by roll call. R. Larose also announced that John Sayles, Agency of Natural Resources Deputy Secretary, was unable to attend the meeting to discuss the Center for Clean and Clear and ANR reorganization effort.

**Opportunity for Public Comment**

None.

**Minutes of the January 2008 Meeting**

*C. Steen motioned to accept the January 2008 minutes as written. R. Roberge seconded. Motion carried.*

**Committee Reports:**

**Executive Committee** – R. Larose reported that the Executive Committee met in March and discussed strategic planning and other topics which would be covered later in the meeting.

**Finance/Operations** – D. Peirce reported that the Mid-year Budget Adjustment would be discussed later in the meeting.

**Personnel** – No report.

**Policy/Project Review** – M. Guernsey reported that the Policy/Project Review Committee met in March and reviewed four projects that did not qualify for substantial regional impact and had no major issues with the Regional Plan. The Committee also discussed proposed legislation that is being considered at the statehouse, including on housing, riparian buffers, and the repeal of Act 43, which would re-open the TMDL Plan for Lake Champlain. The Committee also approved submitting comments that oppose the riparian buffer bill as currently drafted and comments that support the repeal of Act 43. The letters of comment were endorsed by the Executive Committee. The Committee discussed whether the Commission should support grant applications for small net-metered renewable energy projects, which we would normally not be notified of during Act 248. These projects are small (15kw capacity, or 150kw for a farm system). Projects larger than this require full Act 248 review and we will be notified. A. Beaderstadt asked whether one could determine if a project was economically feasible.

*M. Guernsey motioned that the full board support grant applications for net metering renewable energy projects as long as they are economically feasible and supported by the municipal plan. A second was not required. The motion carried.*

*H. Garrett motioned to approve the project review report as written. B. Manning seconded. The motion carried.*

**Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)** – R. Larose reported that the TAC met in March and discussed potential updates to the Routes 78 and 36 chapters of the Long Range Transportation Plan. Heavy truck traffic and the status of the VTrans project development process for Route 78 were the focus of conversation. A 1997 scoping study estimated that the cost of widening and other safety improvements for a section of the Route 78 would cost \$30 million. In the future, VTrans may have to reevaluate the proposed project and find ways to scale back. The Route 2 corridor will be discussed at the April TAC meeting.

The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail presentation for municipal officials and the TAC has been rescheduled for April 28 at 7PM. Representatives from VAST and VTRANS will provide an update of its trail conversion efforts. Municipal representatives will be asked to provide their initial thoughts on the design and management of the trail.

**VT Assoc. of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA)** –B. Kittell reported that he attended the quarterly meeting of VAPDA which focused on Vermont’s energy future.

**Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC)** – No report.

**Downtown Development Board** – No Report.

**Office** – C. Dimitruk reported that she is working on a Franklin County broadband project which aims to educate the regional community on broadband issues, assess broadband needs and demand, and support the expansion of infrastructure and applications throughout the county. Project partners could include the Vermont Council on Rural Development and Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation. Municipalities may also participate in the process. C. Dimitruk noted that the executive committee discussed options for regional energy planning. She also noted that the executive committee opposed proposed changes to the Community Development Block Grant program. The state is recommending that loan payments get paid back to the state instead of having them paid back to the local municipality where they can then be re-loaned. B. Remmers reported that she has transitioned to the transportation planning position on March 1<sup>st</sup>. She also reported that the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Mapping PDM-C project was successfully completed at the end of February.

### **Fluvial Erosion Hazard Assessment Presentation**

B. Remmers presented the results of the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Mapping and Phase 2 Geomorphic Assessment. The project was funded by FEMA with a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant), administered through the Vermont Department of Public Safety with technical support by DEC River Management Program. In the 2006, NRPC and Ross Environmental Associates completed Phase 2 stream geomorphic assessments (SGA) on approximately 26 miles of stream in Georgia and Highgate. The purpose of completing the Phase 2 assessments was to provide NRPC with field data to develop Fluvial Erosion Hazard (FEH) maps for participating

municipalities. The results of the Phase 2 SGAs and the FEH maps can be used by the municipalities and NRPC to guide management decisions regarding future development and land use within the FEH corridor. Also, the NRPC can work with municipalities to implement stream corridor restoration projects. The NRPC used the results from this Phase 2 Assessment and earlier assessments by the Lake Champlain Committee and South Mountain Research to develop FEH maps for Georgia, Saint Albans City and Highgate. NRPC has met with the Georgia and Saint Albans City planning commissions. The information was well received and the NRPC will continue to work with these communities on implementing a FEH overlay in their zoning.

### **NRPC Mission**

C. Dimitruk reported that the executive committee would like to complete a strategic planning process. It is an opportunity for the commission to take a step back, see what it is doing well and identify what it could do better. C. Dimitruk noted that it was a good time to initiate strategic planning because the NRPC has a great staff, an active board, is doing projects well and is not having budget troubles. C. Dimitruk envisioned that the process would take four to six months to complete and would look at the next 18 months to three years. Staff would draft a work plan and a small subset of the board would participate in the process and report back to the entire board. Board members asked about hiring an outside facilitator and how municipalities and other stakeholders would be involved.

C. Dimitruk asked that the board review the current mission statement as the first step in the process. She noted that a mission statement has three parts: purpose, business and value. The board discussed potential changes to the mission statement and focused on the purpose of the commission. Many of the comments focused on planning for the future or providing communities with the tools to do so. Some of these comments included: to help communities be ahead of the curve of change; plan for the health and safety of our communities; enhance the quality of life in member communities; plan for the future of our children, grandchildren and town; and help our communities to continue providing a quality of life.

Comments were recorded and will be reviewed by the Strategic Plan Committee.

### **Mid-year Budget Adjustment**

M. Guernsey reported that the NRPC revises the budget mid-year to reflect the projects and expenditures that were not known when the budget was created in June. C. Dimitruk noted that there was a budget surplus over \$77,000. A major reason for the surplus was that the commission did not hire a new person for the transportation position. The surplus could be used to fill potential future funding gaps.

*H. Garrett moved to accept the mid-year budget adjustment report. L. Scangas seconded. Motion carried*

### **Other Business**

None.

*B. Kade moved to adjourn the Board Meeting. B. Johnson seconded. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:48.*