

1 **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING**  
2 **NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
3 ***December 16, 2020 Draft Meeting Minutes***  
4

5 The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held virtually via Zoom.us.  
6

7 **Attendance**

8 Commissioners: See attached. A quorum was present to conduct business.

9 Staff: C. Dimitruk, B. Remmers, M. Johnston, E. Klofft, K. Boynton, G. Brunswick, A. Adams,  
10 E. Adams, C. Porcaro, A. Holland, L. Briccetti, L. Blasch, M. Serrano, A. Brunstad, K. Lavoie,  
11 S. Coleman.

12 Guests: Kaylee Green, Northwest Access TV.  
13

14 Chair K. Waite began the meeting at 7:01 PM.

15 **Adjustments to the Agenda.** None.  
16

17 **Welcome, Introductions, Opening Remarks**  
18

19 K. Waite welcomed everyone. K. Waite briefly explained that the Regional Plan Committee had  
20 the idea to have three or four commissioners give a brief introduction at each monthly Board  
21 meeting going forward -- to help everyone get to know each other better. Two Regional Plan  
22 Committee members and K. Waite will do introductions for this meeting. K. Waite did a roll call  
23 and each commissioner did a sound check.  
24

25 Lynn Douglas was the first to give an introduction. She described that she lives in Fletcher off  
26 the grid and on a class four road with her husband, daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter and  
27 is currently very busy with her family. She does some things with her church, made complicated  
28 now with COVID-19, and also enjoys gardening and working with herbs.  
29

30 Elisabeth Nance gave the second introduction. She moved to Swanton in 2012 from Mississippi.  
31 She is the Economic Development Coordinator for the Town of Swanton and Franklin County  
32 Industrial Development Corporation (FCIDC); she is glad to have both the regional and local  
33 perspectives between her jobs and this board. E. Nance is going to finish her master's degree in  
34 May and will be going for a doctorate at UVM.  
35

36 Kirk Waite was the last to do an introduction. He is one of the representatives from Georgia. He  
37 has been married for 38 years to his wife Mary and has three daughters and four grandchildren.  
38 K. Waite has deep roots in VT; he is a fourth generation Vermonter and his daughters are raising  
39 the sixth generation. He has coached youth sports for many years – mainly soccer and fast-pitch  
40 softball. He was on the Georgia Planning Commission and spent many years on the Georgia  
41 Select Board. He has been with NRPC for thirteen years. He is retired and worked at IBM for 34  
42 years and Global Foundries for five years. He was able to see much of the world in his career. He  
43 has many hobbies including skiing, gardening, hiking, golf, and more.  
44

45 K. Waite went on to explain that C. Dimitruk will reach out, and the board will continue to do  
46 three or four introductions per meeting as we all serve and participate but could walk away

47 knowing people better. Normally the board gets together in person to celebrate each other and  
48 the end of the year at this board meeting, but this year has been one we won't forget but one  
49 most probably wish we could.

50

### 51 **Opportunity for Public Comment**

52 K. Waite asked for comments. There were none.

53

### 54 **Minutes of the October 2020 Meeting**

55 *S. Jenson motioned to accept the October meeting minutes. E. Nance seconded. One abstained.*  
56 *Motion carried.*

57

### 58 **Presentation: Year End Review**

59

60 Finance/Operations Committee – H. Garret reported that the Finance Committee meets four  
61 times per year. The committee overlooks the budget which C. Dimitruk and the staff create. C.  
62 Dimitruk breaks down complete format of the budget and asks for the committee's input. The  
63 committee oversees spending, and the Building Committee and Executive Committee usually  
64 meet over this, too. Finance Committee members are very frugal. The committee deliberates and  
65 comes to a consensus. If anyone would like to join, the committee always has more room. The  
66 committee's accomplishments for the year include looking over money to start HRC,  
67 improvements to NRPC building, and assistance with hiring of new staff. The committee helps  
68 ensure NRPC and those in the NRPC office have what they need to do their jobs.

69

70 Personnel Committee– L. Ruple reported the committee held a lot of interviews in January and  
71 February for the new Regional Planner and hired E. Klofft who was AmeriCorps. E. Klofft  
72 started her new position when her AmeriCorps term ended, and all is going well. The Personnel  
73 Committee advised on the hiring of the HRC Coordinator and CARES Special Projects planner.  
74 Evaluations were delayed because of pandemic and staff working from home which made it  
75 more difficult, but evaluations were completed this fall. Sometimes the committee would provide  
76 guidance on personnel issues.

77

78 Regional Plan and Policy Committee –L. Douglass explained that the next Regional Plan is due  
79 in 2023, and they've started talking about justice, diversity, and equity, increased planning for  
80 emergencies, changes in energy policies and the overall energy scene, the technology/broadband  
81 gap, and many other topics/potential changes for the Regional Plan.

82

83 Project Review Committee – B. Irwin talked about how the primary role of the committee is to  
84 evaluate significant projects in the region and compare attributes of the project to the Regional  
85 Plan to ensure it matches, has regional impact, and is balanced with other elements of the  
86 Regional Plan. Primary kinds of projects that they review are Act 250 commercial and  
87 development projects of significant scale. The committee gets to see the kinds of development  
88 happening in all the towns in the region. Most interesting of all are the energy projects for  
89 Section 248 of Act 250 where they learn about wind, solar, and waste digester projects. This is a  
90 vibrant committee that makes sure applicants understand what the regional goals are, and  
91 typically, when the committee gives recommendations those recommendations are met.

92

93

94 K. Waite then turned to the next part of the meeting: NRPC staff year-end reviews. C. Dimitruk  
95 gave a brief presentation which includes a page for each staff person; each staff page has a

96 picture, a highlight from 2020, and something the staff member is looking forward to in 202  
97 Staff members introduced themselves and noted how long they've been at NRPC.  
98

99 C. Dimitruk provided an overview of some successes in the past year that were related to board  
100 decisions.

101  
102 The Municipal Plan Review Committee will review a plan and make sure it meets all the  
103 requirements of state statute and aligns with other local plans. As a result, when a town is  
104 confirmed, it has a Regionally Approved Municipal Plan and is eligible for municipal planning  
105 grants. Some results these efforts include the following: Alburgh is about to embark on a  
106 recreation plan focusing on unused industrial park land, St. Albans City is about to work on a  
107 housing plan to get more density in the City, Sheldon is restarting a recreation plan, North Hero  
108 just completed a Village Master Plan process, Swanton made a recreation plan, Fairfield is  
109 working on a Town Plan, and South Hero is working on redeveloping their old meeting house.  
110 So, because of actions the board took, towns were able to apply for grants and do some great  
111 projects.

112  
113 There is a six-county Economic Development District, and that district is certified by the federal  
114 government. In the early 2000s, the non-profit that managed that district ceased operations. This  
115 board took the initiative to support the district by dedicating \$5,000 to hire someone to help  
116 untangle the non-profit and keep the district certification going at the federal level. NRPC used  
117 those funds to hire someone to do that work with NRPC and former board members; NRPC  
118 continued to maintain the district, and worked with neighboring RPCs and Regional  
119 Development Corporations to come up with an MOU to share management of the district. Now  
120 NRPC serves as the fiscal agent. NRPC works to keep the district valid at a federal level and thus  
121 there's funding that comes to this region and the other counties in this district including  
122 infrastructure and technical assistance grants. For example, Fairfax got an infrastructure grant to  
123 extend water and sewer lines to Runamok Maple – which will be a huge job creator. NRPC was  
124 able to get a disaster resiliency grant to support HRC work with local farms and businesses on  
125 disaster preparedness. Additionally, NRPC was able to work with Northern Border Regional  
126 Commission (NBRC) program to serve as a technical assistance point for the region and for the  
127 whole six counties to help our communities and non-profits with a NBRC grant. Finally, NRPC  
128 was eligible for, applied for, and received a \$400,000 grant to serve the six northern counties  
129 across two years and now has tremendous added capacity. NRPC hired a Special Projects person,  
130 and Regional Development Corporations were able to expand their technical assistance capacity  
131 to help with recovery projects. In an interesting twist of fate, the person NRPC hired to help  
132 untangle the Economic Development Council of Northern Vermont, became the Special Projects  
133 coordinator.

134  
135 C. Dimitruk also discussed brownfields development which is a project that has been going on  
136 since 2003. At a future board meeting, G. Brunswick will give a more detailed presentation about  
137 the success of the program and what else can be done in the future. With approx. 4 million  
138 dollars in EPA grants, NRPC has invested in a lot of projects in the region. This board was  
139 willing to use funds from other grants to cover the overhead expenses, which was not an eligible  
140 expense until last year, and was willing to take a chance and serve as a host for a revolving loan  
141 fund. NRPC has been able to use the \$4 million to do 23 cleanup assessments on properties,  
142 area-wide examination in three communities, and provide cleanup grants and loans. For example,  
143 the former Fonda site in St. Albans City -- NRPC helped pay for the assessment -- was given a  
144 mix of grants and loans, and the development will help to retain 63 jobs in the area.

145

146 The Board was also able to contribute because of municipal commitment and connections. With  
147 the pandemic response, staff knew that the board would be okay with NRPC pivoting to support  
148 communities and put other projects on hold. The board has been consistently supportive of  
149 recovery efforts and allowed staff time to help the Communications Union District (CUD) and  
150 even voted to serve as the fiscal agent. The CUD members are all volunteers, so without board  
151 support – and Sean Kio’s work -- they would be in a very different. Also, because of local  
152 connections and understanding of local needs, a few interesting things happened including the  
153 tire disposal issue. NRPC connected with the solid waste district and helped make some changes  
154 for Green Up Day and tire disposal. With the board’s interest in supporting agriculture, NRPC  
155 agreed to be the host for the HRC. A strong commitment to water quality has led to our region,  
156 in 2021, to start being a clean water service provider to help implement on-the-ground clean  
157 water projects. Willingness to focus on public health and prevention as part of community  
158 planning allowed NRPC to do “The Municipal Guide to Prevention” which has been used widely  
159 across the state.

160  
161 In the coming year, NRPC will focus on current projects and other new areas. The Northwest  
162 Regional Foundation was established a year ago, but the pandemic has delayed efforts. NRPC  
163 hopes to have renewed focus on this foundation in 2021. NRPC will also be working with  
164 communities to support implementation of local cannabis legislation. Finally, NRPC will be  
165 working on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion and how it relates to regional work.

166  
167 C. Dimitruk commented on the great and growing team. B. Morris commended C. Dimitruk on  
168 what she’s done for NRPC, growing it into a powerful force.

#### 169 **Recognition of Staff and Commissioners**

170  
171 K Waite stated that normally this time is used to talk about people who have hit a 5- or 10-year  
172 milestone. K. Waite thanked staff for being a dedicated and talented source for the region. NRPC  
173 can and does make a difference and has a positive influence on the region and the towns. He  
174 thanked everyone for their dedication and efforts and wished them Happy Holidays. K. Waite  
175 listed a few recognitions: Alisha Larocque has served for five years. Terry Tatro is celebrating  
176 five years with Alburgh Village and 37 years with the Commission. K. Waite said thank you to  
177 all the newbies and all the long term members.

178  
179 **FY 21 Budget Adjustment Consideration:** *Should NRPC reallocate a portion of the Board*  
180 *meeting food expenses to a contribution to a regional food shelf or other charitable food*  
181 *organization?*

182  
183 A.Voegele made a recommendation that NRPC reallocate a portion of the board meeting food  
184 expenses to a food shelf or other charitable food organization. A. Voegele explained that s NRPC  
185 serves two counties, we have people who are hungry all throughout the region. His idea is to give  
186 the money to an organization that supports all the food shelves in the region as a way of  
187 distributing what we can give to the towns back to the towns. Or we could allocate money  
188 directly to all the food shelves; if we can, we need to support all in the two-county area.

189  
190 E. Nance commented that through the Working Communities Challenge, A. Brunstad reached  
191 out to many of the food shelves and has the connections. K. Waite described that it seems like  
192 NRPC would contribute money to all the food shelves and divide the money evenly among them.

193  
194 *E. Nance made the motion that we provide \$100 to each of the food shelves in Franklin and*

195 *Grande Isle. B. Buermann seconded. Discussion opened.*

196

197 B. Morris commented that he wants to make sure it makes a difference. K. Waite said that likely  
198 \$100 won't make a huge difference for any food shelf, but it signals they are getting support  
199 from NRPC. H. Garrett asked if we have done this before. K. Waite replied that we have not. A.  
200 Voegele said this is a humanitarian gesture. B. Irwin said thank you to A. Voegele for bringing  
201 up the idea. R. Noel brought up the point that the money is still being allocated toward food.  
202 Board members expressed consensus on this point.

203

204 *K. Waite asked for vote. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried.*

205

206 **Commissioner Announcements.**

207 H. Demars thanked C. Dimitruk and NRPC for all the help for Grand Isle.

208

209 **Adjourn**

210 *K. Waite thanked everyone and asked for motion to adjourn. C. Steen motioned. J. Farnham*  
211 *seconded. Motion carried.*

212

213 *Meeting adjourned at 7:58 PM.*