

1 **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING**
2 **NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**
3 *April 28, 2021 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, L. Blasch, C. Porcaro
10

11 Chair K. Waite began meeting at 7:00 PM.
12

13 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

14 None.
15

16 Welcome, introductions, opening remarks

17 Chair K. Waite welcomed everyone and introductions were made. Commissioners S. Hadd, Y.
18 Dandurand, C. Steen and B. Dubie and staff member L. Blasch and C. Porcaro gave extended
19 introductions.
20

21 **Opportunity for Public Comment**

22 None.
23

24 **Minutes of the March 2021 Meeting**

25 Chair K. Waite referenced last month's minutes enclosed in the board packet and asked if there
26 were any errors or omissions. B. Buermann mentioned that his name was misspelled in the
27 March notes on line 84. B. Buermann motioned to accept the minutes with a spelling error
28 fixed. Y. Dandurand seconded. Motion carried.
29

30 **Commission Reports:**
31

32 **Finance/Operations– Harold Garrett**

33 H. Garrett, C. Steen and L. Ruple did not receive the board packet. K. Waite said the board
34 packeting including the financials could be found in the email with the link for the board
35 meeting. C. Dimitruk shared the budget report and balance sheet on screen. Currently they do
36 show a deficit of \$43,541 but this is because of the billing cycle and will be cleared up once the
37 quarter billing cycle is complete. Generally looking in good shape for being ¾ the way through
38 the fiscal year. No actions needed. No questions.
39

40 C. Dimitruk pointed out on the balance sheet that NRPC has a high accrued vacation liability
41 compared to other years due to the work that had to be done at the beginning of the COVID-19
42 pandemic. NRPC is working on encouraging people to take time off. It does exceed the current
43 reserves but believes it is a temporary increase. No actions needed. No questions.
44

45 **Personnel**

46 L. Ruple shared that the committee met in April and discussed staffing plans and possible new
47 positions. The positions will be posted shortly and they are getting ready with evaluations that
48 will happen later this summer. No actions needed. No questions.

49

50 **Executive Committee**

51 K. Waite reported that the Committee did meet he was not there. The topics were primarily
52 around 2022 staffing and budget preview as well as the Montpelier Granite Works RLF Loan
53 Agreement Extension. There was also discussion around fiscal year '22 officer nominations. K.
54 Waite has selected the nomination committee and all have agreed to serve: A. Voegele, M.
55 Morris, B. Buermann, E. Nance, and Y. Dandurand. No actions needed. No questions.

56

57 **Project Review – Alisha Larocque**

58 A. Larocque was not in attendance but B. Irwin reported on 4 projects. One of the projects is
59 Bayview Crossing Senior Housing Facility. They will be adding on to the facility. The committee
60 had additional questions so they have put off voting relative to regional impact and
61 conformance with the regional plan until those questions have been answered. The second
62 project, which had been previously discussed, is the battery electric storage system which is
63 useful for wind turbine or solar projects that generate power and need to store it between use.
64 There will be more of them across the state and the committee is hoping someone at the
65 Department of Public Service will come and talk about those storage systems because our
66 region has one of the first in the state. That project has not been voted on relative to regional
67 impact and conformance with the regional plan. The third project was a solar facility (2.2 MW)
68 in St. Albans and it was voted to be in conformance with the regional plan and has no
69 substantial regional impact. The fourth project was the Barry Callebaut facility which is a new
70 access drive and that was voted to be in conformance with the regional plan and has no
71 substantial regional impact. No actions needed. No questions.

72

73 **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

74 H. Garrett reported that the committee met and they had a presentation from the Chittenden
75 Regional Planning Commission on what they plan to do with I-89. It was reported that there will
76 be some major changes, in particular Exit 16 into Colchester. The Chittenden RPC also reported
77 changes to 189 coming out of Shelburne going into South Burlington. They will come back in the
78 fall with a final presentation. The committee also reviewed some of the paving and bridge
79 projects and how they are categorized. B. Morris added that VTRANS has changed the criteria
80 for evaluating projects so when regional TACs bring up a transportation issue they give it more
81 weight. K. Waite added that he saw notification that paving between Georgia and St. Albans
82 should be starting on or around May 15th and end in October. H. Garrett also added that they
83 will be repaving VT Route 120. B. Morris said that he does not believe the changes being made
84 to I-89 will have any impact of Franklin County but that coming out of Grand Isle County they
85 will continue to see issues with Exit 17 and that the real issue is with the feeder roads rather
86 than the interstate. H. Garret mentioned that they did ask them to study adding an on-ramp
87 and exit ramp for Milton but that ended up not being included. A. Voegele asked whether the
88 State's plan would change based on the new transportation funding provided by the Biden

89 Administration. H. Garrett responded that that AOT would not commit. Y. Dandurand
90 acknowledge the pushback on the “band-aid” solution that has been proposed for Route 120
91 and asked H. Garrett if there is a timeframe of when they are going to relook at Route 120 or if
92 this is this the long-term solution. H. Garrett said that they have not committed to refurbishing
93 it because it needs a new base. They are also looking into the 4 corners on Route 120 leaving
94 town and heading towards Lake Carmi. There are currently no solutions on how fix that area.
95 H. Garret encouraged other commissioners to joining the TAC meetings if there are issues that
96 they see affecting their town. No actions needed.

97

98 **Energy Committee**

99 Did not meet.

100

101 **Brownfields Committee**

102 C. Dimitruk referenced the Exec. Committee update and the Montpelier Granite Works RLF
103 Loan Agreement Extension due to COVID related delays. The committee has submitted and new
104 request for additional revolving loan funds from EPA and they should know within a few
105 months if that was granted. No questions. No actions needed.

106

107 **Regional Plan and Policy Committee**

108 L. Douglas reported that the committee did not meet but the indicator reports are going to be
109 delayed even longer because of COVID. No questions. No actions needed.

110

111 **Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC)**

112 A.Voegele reported that there were no applications brought to VEPC this month. No questions.
113 No actions need.

114

115 **Green Mountain Transit**

116 B. Buermann reported that in the last meeting they talked about the proposed changes to
117 service. There was a proposal for St. Albans that is currently on hold so there are no changes.
118 They also discussed additional funds that are coming in so they are looking at making zero fair
119 option available for at least one more year and looking how to apply that across the system and
120 also how that applies to following years. No actions needed. No questions.

121

122 **Clean Water Advisory Committee**

123 Did not meet.

124

125 **Healthy Roots Advisory Committee**

126 B. Docheff reported that Healthy Roots is continuing infrastructure and business planning. HRC
127 is trying to figure out the best infrastructure to invest in to best support the charitable food and
128 farm/food business communities. No actions needed. No questions

129

130 **Northwest Vermont Regional Foundation**

131 C. Dimitruk reported that there are no updates but when the Executive Committee next meets
132 it will also be a Regional Foundation meeting.

133

134 **Office**

135

136 C. Porcaro shared that the Everyone Eats Program was celebrating the 1 millionth meal being
137 distributed in Vermont on 04/29. Healthy Roots has been facilitating the program since
138 September 2020 and have had the pleasure of working with both restaurants and service
139 providers in the region.

140 C. Dimitruk shared information that was release right after the last Board of Commissioners
141 meeting about properties sales to out-of-state buyers. The link was shared in chat:
142 <https://ptt.mapvt.com/>. It showed that there was a 38% increase in property sales to out-of-
143 state buyers compared to previous years. C. Dimitruk shared that she is a member of the
144 Climate Council and represents the rural perspective and is the co-chair of the Rural Resilience
145 and Adaptation Subcommittee. That committee has been meeting and exploring what
146 resilience planning the region should be doing in our rural areas to address the impacts of
147 climate change, what state and federal programs exist already and how they could be modified
148 and really taking a look at equity issues around those programs. The Council has done mostly
149 process work to date but recently met with their Public Engagement Consultant who will be
150 designing a whole series of input opportunities for local government, interest groups and
151 regular citizens. Public comments and inquiries can be made directly on the Climate Council
152 website and the minutes and video of the meetings can also be found there.

153

154 C. Dimitruk updated on the Rental Registry Bill, the Housing Bill, the Cannabis Bill and the
155 Transportation Bill. The Rental Registry Bill sets up a statewide rental registry as well as shifts
156 the health inspection for rental properties from the local health officers to state officials at the
157 Department of Fire Safety. This bill has a lot of support and has a lot of funding to go along with
158 it to build the new systems on the state level and will take pressure off of municipalities. The
159 Housing Bill incentivizes changes to local bylaws encouraging new housing. It also gets rid of the
160 duplicative permitting that is required if you have a local water and sewer system. The Cannabis
161 Bill flips the opt-in provision to be an opt-out provision for retail cannabis on the local level.
162 And finally, in the Transportation Bill, there is a section that was added that will have the
163 Agency of Transportation work with the Regional Planning Commissions to examine issues of
164 equity in transportation. There will be consult assistance for the RPCs to work with the Agency
165 of Transportation on that issue. C. Dimitruk also mentioned that NRPC will be starting
166 budgeting so the Finance Committee will be hearing from her.

167

168 **Presentation: Northwest Vermont Communications Union District (NWCUD)**

169 S. Kio, Enosburgh Commissioner and CUD Chair, presented on the Northwest Vermont
170 Communications Union District. NWCUD was created last year because of poor connectivity and
171 concern about broadband. These issues were brought to the surface even more because of the
172 pandemic. The vision of NWCUD is to break the barriers to internet access for all communities.
173 NWCUD wants Universal Access, to prioritize the unserved in our region, and to provide a
174 service that is reliable and affordable. Current member communities are: Alburgh, Georgia,
175 Fairfax, Highgate, Sheldon, Fairfield, Bakersfield, Enosburgh, Berkshire, Montgomery and
176 Richford. NWCUD was created in August of 2020 and collaborated with NRPC for Broadband

177 Innovation Grant. NWCUD has completed a regional survey, deployed 18 free Wi-Fi hotspots,
178 collaborated in VT Community Foundation to provide a local library a technology grant. NWCUD
179 is continuing to see collaborations for CUDS, to apply for various grants and engage with
180 legislator. Looking ahead: NWCUD is selecting a consultant for a business plan, hiring a CUD
181 manager, project planning of phased approach to regional buildout and preparing for phase 1
182 implementation in 2022. S. Kio went on to explain the benefits of fiber and an Open Access
183 Network. S. Kio encouraged the commissioners to join NWCUD meetings. They are open and on
184 the first and third Tuesday at 6:30pm. K. Waite asked about cell phone service and whether
185 that would also be addressed. S. Kio responded that fiber optic networks help with the cellular
186 networks as well. B. Irwin asked if the presentation slides would be made available. C. Dimitruk
187 said she would send the presentation out to the entire board. B. Buermann mentioned the VT
188 Electric Coop were working on pole preparation for fiber. S. Kio replied that a lot of utility
189 companies did their own feasibility studies and they have since reached out and are in
190 discussion and collaborating with utility companies.

191

192 Commissioner Announcements: B. Docheff reported that he will be leaving his post following
193 this meeting. The Town of Fairfax is currently hiring for his position. He gave well wishes and
194 thanks to everyone on the board. The rest of the commissioners thanked B. Docheff for the
195 work he has done and wished him well.

196

197 B. Docheff made a motion to adjourn. C. Steen seconded. Motion carried.

198

199 Meeting Adjourned at 8:08 pm

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