

1 **NRPC Board of Commissioners Meeting**  
2 **January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
3 **Virtual Meeting**  
4

5 The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held using the Zoom platform.  
6

7 **Attendance**

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

9 Staff : C. Dimitruk, B. Remmers, D. Devlin, D. Pierce, M. Valenta

10 Guests : M. Boomhower  
11

12 W. Irwin called the meeting to order at 7:02.  
13

14 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

15 There are no adjustments to the agenda.  
16

17 **Welcome, introductions, opening remarks**

18 W. Irwin welcomes new member M. Scholten who introduces herself and states her excitement to be a  
19 part of the board.  
20

21 **Opportunity for Public Comment**

22 R. Noel noted that Bill Nihan, a former St. Albans Town selectboard member and NRPC Commissioner,  
23 passed away recently.  
24

25 **Minutes of the December 2021 Meeting**

26 *E. Nance mooved to approve the December minutes, B. Dubie seconded. W. Irwin noted that he*  
27 *appreciates the care and effort put into recording the minutes efficiently. Motion carries.*  
28

29 **Presentation/Discussion: Transportation Equity, Michele Boomhower, VTrans Policy**  
30 **and Planning Division Director**

31 M. Boomhower presented on the equity work that VTans is currently undertaking. Act No. 55 was  
32 passed during the 2021 legislative session and requires that VTrans, in consultation with the state's RPCs  
33 undertake a comprehensive analysis of the state's existing transportation programs and develops a  
34 recommendation on a transportation equity framework through which the annual transportation  
35 program and the annual project prioritization process will be considered. She also discussed the  
36 Justice40 Initiative, an executive order of President Biden that requires federal investment be made in a  
37 manner whereby 40% of the overall benefits of the investments flow to disadvantaged communities.  
38

39 M. Boomhower recognized that the transportation system has traditionally disadvantaged people of  
40 color, immigrants, poor people, and other marginalized peoples which is what this project aims to  
41 remedy. The Project Team will be made up of both AOT staff and Regional Planning Commission staff.  
42 There will also be a Consultant Team with members from diverse organizations. There will also be  
43 intentional outreach to marginalized communities. This outreach will be led by Rights and Democracy  
44 Institute which is experienced in this type of outreach and contact with these communities. The goals of  
45 this project are accurate population representation, equitable access to decision making, needs  
46 fulfillment, and equity in service provision and prioritization process, as well as ongoing performance  
47 management. In February, there will be the first advisory group meeting, from May to September there

1 will be community outreach, stakeholder engagement and RPC TAC meetings, then October through  
2 December recommendations and implementation plan, then delivery of final transportation equity  
3 framework report in February 2023.

4  
5 W. Irwin noted his appreciation for the work AOT is undertaking and restates the board's commitment  
6 to learning more about equity and how it can be integrated into the plan. W. Irwin asked what equity  
7 issues are being seen in regards to the Canadian border. M. Boomhower stressed that this is a complex  
8 issue especially because Vermonters do not have control over it, it is controlled by two federal  
9 governments. She does acknowledge there are concerns around biases and profiling and that we want  
10 to ensure that migrant farm workers and new Americans are treated fairly and are not given an unfair  
11 burden in terms of movement. A. Voegelé asks about Indigenous peoples of Vermont as they were not  
12 mentioned as a marginalized community in M. Boomhower's presentation. M. Boomhower agrees that  
13 they have been marginalized by government actions and while there aren't specific points within the  
14 work plan currently in regards to that group, it will be part of the consideration in the project. A.  
15 Voegelé noted that many Abenaki live in our region, live rurally, and may need transportation, especially  
16 elderly Abenaki members. B. Buermann wants to hear more about the way that the 40% for  
17 marginalized communities will translate to places in Vermont like Grand Isle County where there is  
18 simply very little current action and reach. M. Boomhower noted that there are currently discussions  
19 underway to try and understand exactly how disadvantaged communities are defined. She also  
20 recognizes the complexity that our state faces with this, as our rural nature creates real hardships in  
21 terms of transportation services. There are implementing different strategies like deviating from  
22 traditional routes and taking advantage of trips already being taken to try and expand Vermonters'  
23 access to needed transportation services. W. Irwin noted that it is an interesting issue because  
24 traditional marginalized communities like people of color are extreme minorities in our very white state,  
25 and other groups are the more common underserved groups such as extremely rural or low-income  
26 communities. A. Voegelé also noted the importance of the undocumented communities in Northern  
27 Vermont and how they contribute to the viability of our farms.

28  
29 **Commission Reports:**

30 **Finance/Operations**— H. Garrett reported that the committee met Monday night, they reviewed the  
31 budget and a lot of other things, there was great dialogue, and C. Dimitruk and A. Adams from staff did a  
32 wonderful job answering questions about the budget. The committee agreed they won't present the  
33 budget adjustment until next month so they have extra time to digest and review it. W. Irwin asks about  
34 the 700% spending compared to budgeted amount for the CUD. C. Dimitruk answers that this is because  
35 of the person hired to run the CUD and that will be reflected in the next budget. A. Voegelé asks about  
36 inflation's impact on salaries, and discussion continued on this issue.

37  
38 **Personnel** – L. Ruple noted that M. Valenta was hired in November as the Energy and Climate Planner  
39 and started at the beginning of January. The interviews for the Working Communities position are  
40 starting this week and should be filled by mid-February. C. Dimitruk explained this is a three year  
41 position funded by a legislative appropriation by the State of Vermont, and it focuses on increasing  
42 availability of housing in the region.

43  
44 **Executive Committee** – W. Irwin reported the committee didn't meet in January but will be meeting in  
45 February.

46  
47 **Project Review** –B. Buermann noted that the December meeting dealt with multiple projects including  
48 the PurposeEnergy project in Enosburg for a biodigester, which they are viewing through an equity lens

1 since it is located in a neighborhood. They also discussed a net metered wind project in Fairfield, they're  
2 waiting for the final application for full comments. There is also a South Hero battery storage system and  
3 it has been found to be in compliance with the regional plan. At the January meeting they discussed the  
4 PurposeEnergy project and a Georgia solar project. He also noted that E. Klofft has been extremely  
5 helpful in making these issues understandable.

6  
7 **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)** H. Garrett noted the February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting will include the  
8 region's legislators in order to discuss transportation issues. B. Remmers agrees she will send out the  
9 meeting link for February to all commissioners as there is substantial interest.

10  
11 **Energy Committee-** B. Buermann noted this will be discussed later in the agenda.

12  
13 **Brownfields Committee** – C. Dimitruk reported that there will be new money made available to fund  
14 some more of the region's brownfields sites. There will also be a spot opening up on the committee so  
15 commissioners should contact C. Dimitruk or G. Brunswick if they are interested in joining. W. Irwin  
16 noted that L. Scangas is going to leave the commission as he has many other commitments but wants to  
17 hold an appreciation ceremony as he has been such a committed member for so long. N. Speer agrees  
18 that a formal recognition of his service is a great idea.

19  
20 **Regional Plan and Policy Committee-** They did not meet in January and will be meeting in February. This  
21 will include lots of work on updating the regional plan.

22  
23 **Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC)** – A.Voegele hasn't had internet so has not been able follow  
24 up on this but will soon.

25  
26 **Green Mountain Transit-** B. Buermann reported that contracts are in their final stages; the budget is  
27 also almost done. GMT is also doing a Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion assessment so he is hoping  
28 committee members will learn skills to bring back to the commission. C. Dimitruk noted that they looked  
29 at finding funding sources for public transit.

30  
31 **Healthy Roots Advisory Committee-** L. Douglass reported they just finished their annual report, the  
32 amount gleaned and the number of have both grown massively, as have their number of involved  
33 growers and makers. L. Douglas expresses gratitude and support for the staff's wonderful work  
34 expanding the program.

35  
36 **Clean Water Advisory Committee-** C. Dimitruk reported they did not meet; it will probably be disbanded  
37 as part of the Clean Water Provider implementation.

38  
39 **Northwest Vermont Regional Foundation-** C. Dimitruk reported that they met but they did not have a  
40 quorum so they will meet again soon. W. Irwin explains this is a nonprofit entity for the commission and  
41 it allows the commission to engage on grants and funding opportunities only available for nonprofits.

42  
43 **Office-**C. Dimitruk participated in a recent Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation meeting  
44 on the welcome centers, there is a recommendation to add a new Welcome Center in North Franklin  
45 County and there is broad support. E. Nance noted that Representative Corey Parent expressed that  
46 there is Agency of Commerce and Community Development momentum to make this new Welcome  
47 Center happen and that should be capitalized on.

1 C. Dimitruk noted the equity presentation at the next board meeting will be on ethical leadership and  
2 equity on a broader scale.

3  
4 D. Pierce reported that the schedule for creating the Basin Councils has been pushed back a little but  
5 they're making good progress.

6  
7 B. Remmers noted that the Municipal Roads General Permit Working Group has been meeting monthly  
8 again and the state is looking to renew the permit for the new cycle so she will be keeping the TAC  
9 appraised of any changes. The VT Culverts Working Group is moving to a new platform that will be  
10 easier to use and update. W. Irwin expresses deep gratitude for the level of work the staff does.

11  
12 **Regional Energy Committee-**

13  
14 C. Dimitruk explained that the energy committee used to be very active and helped put together the  
15 Energy Plan, but then stopped meeting. Now, as there is a new Energy and Climate Planner, and  
16 additional opportunities in this area the committee should be brought back to help. W. Irwin suggests  
17 the name be changed to the Regional Energy and Climate Committee. A. Voegele suggested a changes  
18 to ensure the group considers ideas from around the nation and world. C. Dimitruk suggests to hange  
19 the second bullet in general activities to "provide a forum for exchanging ideas and information among  
20 groups working on the global, national, state, regional, and local level."

21  
22 *K. Waite moved to adopt the Energy and Climate Committee charge with the changes noted. R. Noel*  
23 *seconded. Motion carried unanimously. W. Irwin suggests that citizen committee member suggestions*  
24 *and Commissioner volunteers should be directed to C. Dimitruk.*

25  
26 **FY 21 Audit-**

27 W. Irwin appreciates the overview that explained what the auditors looked at. C. Dimitruk explains this  
28 is the first year in quite some time the Commission has been required to have a single audit as the NRPC  
29 received over \$750,000 in federal monies, and that means the audit is especially in depth. There were  
30 no findings or noted areas of deficiency. The NRPC was also in the black, within roughly 2% of the  
31 projected amount. No issues found in the production of programs which included brownfields and a  
32 COVID program. H. Garrett expresses appreciation for Catherine and the staff for the great job they're  
33 doing. R. Noel stresses the statement "found no deficiencies," and how great that is.

34  
35 *A. Voegele moved to accept the audit, N. Speer seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

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37 **9. Commissioners Announcements**

38 S. Hadd says that Fairfax has a meeting tomorrow for a Racial Equity presentation and anyone can email  
39 her for the link, and the winter jamboree has been postponed due to severe weather.

40  
41 **Adjourn**

42 R. Noel moved to adjourn, E. Nance seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:48.