

1
2 **NRPC Board of Commissioners Meeting**
3 **April 26, 2023**
4 **Virtual Meeting**

5 **Attendance**

6 Commissioners: See attached. A quorum was present to conduct business.
7 Staff: Barry Lampke, Catherine Dimitruk, Dean Pierce, Christine Porcaro
8 Chair B. Irwin welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

9
10 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

11 None

12
13 **Welcome, introductions, opening remarks**

14 B. Irwin welcomed those attending. Participants briefly introduced themselves.

15
16 **Opportunity for Public Comment**

17 No members of the public offered comments.

18
19 **Minutes of the March 2023 Meeting**

20 *Y. Dandurand moved to approve the March minutes as written and B. Morris seconded. Motion*
21 *carried.*

22
23 **Commission Reports:**

24 **Finance/Operations**

25 C. Dimitruk shared that the Finance Committee is going to be meeting in May to do the FY24
26 Budget. H. Garrett asked about the remaining EDA funds and whether they would be spent by
27 the end of the fiscal year. C. Dimitruk confirmed that the majority of those fund would be spent
28 and that a large part will be going to the purchase of a truck for the Healthy Roots Gleaning
29 program. H. Garrett also asked about Vermont Agency of Natural Resources funding and C.
30 Dimitruk shared that a lot of those funds are related to consultant activities that may not
31 happen this fiscal year. H. Garret also inquired about the disparity between the budget and
32 actual for Supplies and Furniture. C. Dimitruk confirmed that it is related to a grant that NRPC
33 manages that provides funding to landowners. H. Garrett asked about the \$30,709 deficit in the
34 budget and C. Dimitruk shared that they have not completed 3rd quarter invoicing. Once that is
35 completed the budget should be in the positive.

36
37 **Personnel**

38 L. Ruple shared that they hired a new project manager and that she will be starting the
39 beginning of May. L. Ruple added that annual staff reviews will take place this spring.

40
41 **Executive Committee**

42 W. Irwin reported on L. Douglas leaving her role as a member of the Healthy Roots Advisory
43 Committee.

44 **Project Review**

45 B. Buermann reported that the committee met to review the natural gas biodigester at the St.
46 Pierre Farm. The committee reviewed the full application and found it is in conformance with
47 the regional plan and that it has regional impact. B. Buermann also reported on the
48 communications tower in Enosburgh. The committee found that it was not in conformance
49 with the regional plan. The committee had written a special letter and presented that to the
50 Public Utilities Commission. The Public Utilities Commission asked for further clarification. W.
51 Irwin shared that he is working with staff member E. Klofft to restate the position of the
52 Commission. Y. Dandurand asked if anything has been done about the digester at Michael
53 Benjamin’s farm. Y. Dandurand shared that it has been discussed at a previous meeting. C.
54 Dimitruk said that she would follow-up on that and make a connection to staff member
55 Marlena Valenta.

56

57 **Transportation**

58 H. Garrett shared that the committee reviewed the draft transportation chapter of the regional
59 plan and offered a few comments and changes. B. Buermann gave a brief update on the
60 construction project at Mother’s Bridge between North Hero and South Alburgh.

61

62 **Energy and Climate**

63 B. Buermann shared that the committee had nothing to report on. R. Beliveau thanked NRPC for
64 promoting the Swanton Energy Committee Event in Swanton.

65

66 **Brownfields**

67 C. Dimitruk spoke about the revolving loan fund and its connection to the Northern Vermont
68 Economic Development District and the work being done in St. Johnsbury. W. Irwin shared that
69 people can read more about the Northern Vermont Economic Development District in the
70 regional plan. C. Dimitruk added that they are currently looking for a commissioner to serve on
71 the Brownfields Committee.

72

73 **Regional Plan and Policy Committee**

74 W. Irwin noted there was a vacancy in the Regional Plan and Policy Committee Chair, with an
75 agenda item later.

76

77 **Municipal Plan Review Committee**

78 No report.

79

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

81 W. Irwin reported that A. Voegele has left the Commission. W. Irwin added anyone interested
82 in representing the Commission on VEPC should get in touch with C. Dimitruk. R. Beliveau asked
83 if there are job descriptions for these different committee positions. C. Dimitruk shared that
84 she would send them out after the meeting.

85

86 **Green Mountain Transit**

87 No report.

88

89 **Healthy Roots Advisory Committee**

90 Staff member C. Porcaro gave an update on the purchase of a hybrid truck, refrigerated
91 trailer and the work being done to move into the Blue Sky Packing building in Sheldon.

92

93 **Northwest Vermont Regional Foundation**

94 No report.

95

96 **Office**

97 C. Dimitruk gave a legislative update on bills that are moving forward. W. Irwin shared that he
98 sat in on the Housing For All event in North Hero and thanked NRPC for their involvement.

99

100 **Regional Plan and Policy Committee Chair Election (action)**

101 *L. Douglas motion to nominate P. Zamore as new chair for the Regional Plan and Policy*
102 *Committee. Y. Dandurand seconded. Motion carried.*

103

104 **Regional Plan (discussion)**

105 W. Irwin confirmed that the Regional Plan was mailed to all the commissioners. C. Dimitruk
106 thanked the Regional Plan Committee for their efforts. C. Dimitruk reported that the key
107 additions to these drafts were the impacts of COVID-19, climate resiliency, and equity. There
108 were data updates throughout the whole plan and the housing section was completely redone.

109

110 C. Dimitruk shared that the goal tonight was to get initial feedback from commissioners and
111 that there will be future virtual and in-person public hearings such as the in-person May board
112 meeting. P. Zamore reported that the Region Plan process went smoothly and thanked C.
113 Dimitruk and staff.

114

115 R. Beliveau asked for clarification around the energy section of the Regional Plan and asked if
116 he could take it back to the Swanton Energy Committee. C. Dimitruk explained that this chapter
117 is currently a synopsis and place holder and that the full update will take place over the next
118 year and that he is welcome to share it with the Swanton Energy Committee. W. Irwin asked if
119 the plan should be sent out to towns. C. Dimitruk responded that after the board reviews it, it
120 will be sent to all the selectboard chairs, several state agencies as well as be included in the
121 NRPC newsletter.

122

123 C. Sawyer asked if there was preference to make revisions to the Regional Plan as a full board or for
124 individuals to send revisions to the Regional Plan Committee. C. Dimitruk responded that this
125 meeting and discussion is for high level comments for the plan and that after public
126 participation in May, any detailed comments will be reviewed by the Regional Plan Committee.
127 C. Sawyer shared a comment for the housing section.

128

129 W. Irwin shared thoughts on data points shared in the report and acknowledged interesting
130 themes like the growth of the older population and the decrease of the younger population in
131 our region, transportation costs, and development of the regional workforce. W. Irwin also

132 commented on the wealth disparity between Grand Isle and Franklin Counties. R. Beliveau
133 shared that they are doing work with MVU and that there might be potential of collaborating
134 with schools and the Swanton Rec. Department. H. Demars added that there is a shortage of
135 people entering the trades and that education is a great gateway to get people into that line of
136 work. H. Demars also highlighted the link of losing youth in the region because of the lack of
137 housing.

138
139 B. Morris asked that there be more contrast on the bar charts to make them easier to read.
140 S. Jensen shared a personal story about young people she works with who have had difficulty
141 finding housing in Vermont causing one of them to leave the state. N. Draper added that youth
142 voice and involvement is important and that it could help shape the Regional Plan more. N.
143 Draper also shared that there could be more explored and more opportunity given to tourism in
144 the region. W. Irwin agreed and shared that there needs to be more done to market the region
145 as “a place to be.” W. Irwin encouraged all the commissioners to take time to review and make
146 comments on the Regional Plan.

147
148 C. Dimitruk shared that there will be four public meeting in the month of May which will be
149 posted on the NRPC website along with an online form where individuals can submit
150 comments. C. Dimitruk confirmed that she would send out these details and that
151 commissioners can send comments directly to her.

152

153 **Commission Announcements**

154 C. Dimitruk added that there is still an opening for a Grand Isle Youth member.

155

156 *H. Demars moved that the meeting adjourn. B. Morris seconded. Motion carried. The meeting*
157 *adjourned at 8:24 PM.*