

1 **NRPC Board of Commissioners Meeting**  
2 **February 28, 2024**  
3 **7:00PM**  
4 **Virtual Meeting**  
5

6 The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held using the Zoom platform.  
7

8 Note: Chair W. Irwin lost power and was dropped from meeting briefly. Vice Chair Andy Alling assumed chairing  
9 duties until W. Irwin rejoined the meeting. C. Dimitruk also lost power and was dropped from the meeting and  
10 returned to participate by telephone.

11 **Attendance**

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

13 Staff: Catherine Dimitruk, Dean Pierce, Sara Gratz  
14

15 Chair W. Irwin welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.  
16

17 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

18 Chair W. Irwin inquired about any required adjustments to the meeting agenda. No changes were  
19 suggested by the board members.  
20

21 **Welcome, Introductions, Opening remarks**

22 Chair W. Irwin welcomed everyone to the NRPC's February board meeting. Participants briefly  
23 introduced themselves.  
24

25 **Opportunity for Public Comment**

26 No members of the public offered comments.  
27

28 **Minutes from the November meeting**

29 Chair W. Irwin remarked on the omission of the January 2023 meeting minutes from the meeting  
30 packet. It was decided that action on these minutes would be postponed to the next board meeting.  
31

32 **Presentation: St. Albans City Initiatives**

33 Commissioner C. Sawyer delivered a comprehensive presentation on current initiatives in St. Albans  
34 City, emphasizing infrastructure improvements and strategies to attract private investment. He noted  
35 the City's approach has been to: Focus on public infrastructure improvements and seek to attract  
36 private investments.  
37

38 The City has recognized that the private response to public improvements can be positive, there is risk  
39 associated with doing nothing, and that the municipality can act effectively as a 'master developer.'  
40 By playing this role the City can respond to market failures, directly implement its municipal vision, and  
41 realize a return on its investments through grand list growth.  
42

1 C. Sawyer also emphasized that municipalities are well situated to see returns because they can take a  
2 long-term view. They also have:  
3 - the ability to leverage investments in public services and infrastructure;  
4 - access to financing like grants, TIF, relatively cheap debt, and multiple revenue streams;  
5 - the ability to acquire, improve, and transfer property; and  
6 - the ability to enter into development agreements (which serve to protect municipal interests).

7  
8 He then gave examples of several Downtown Streetscape projects.

9  
10 The presentation prompted questions from Commissioners S. Jensen and K. Waite, focusing on housing  
11 opportunities and specific development projects. S. Jensen asked about first-time homebuyer  
12 opportunities. In response, C. Sawyer noted that apartments generally are seen as providing a more  
13 immediate response to the housing crisis, but he is receptive to the suggestion about the need for  
14 home/apartment purchase opportunities.

15  
16 K. Waite also expressed support for homeownership opportunities. He asked about the development  
17 near Beverage Mart. C. Sawyer responded it is the Butterfield project containing 72-85 units of  
18 affordable housing.

## 19 20 21 **Commission Reports**

22  
23 **Finance/Operations** – K. Waite shared that the Finance Committee met in February and reviewed  
24 budget adjustments in detail. These adjustments will be discussed later in the meeting. The  
25 committee also discussed internal procedures and profit and loss statement included in meeting  
26 materials.

27  
28 **Personnel** – L. Ruple reported the committee did not meet in February.

29  
30 **Executive Committee** –W. Irwin reported the committee met. At the meeting, members  
31 considered changes to the personnel policy, which will be discussed later in this meeting.

32  
33 **Project Review Committee** –Committee Chair W. Buermann was not in attendance. C. Dimitruk  
34 reported that the committee met. However, no board action is required as a result of the  
35 committee discussion.

36  
37 **Transportation Advisory Committee** – H. Garrett shared that TAC met in February. It developed  
38 comments on programs and has provided those comments to VTrans.

39  
40 **Energy and Climate** – K. Waite reported that the committee met and focused on goals and targets  
41 for the energy plan, which is in development.

42  
43 **Brownfields Committee** –C. Sawyer met and discussed projects in Swanton, Highgate, and  
44 elsewhere.

1  
2 **Regional Plan and Policy Committee** – C. Dimitruk indicated that the committee did not meet but  
3 will be scheduling a meeting in the next one to two months.

4  
5 **Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC)** – C. Dimitruk reported that there were no projects  
6 from our region on the most recent VEPC agenda.

7  
8 **Green Mountain Transit** – C. Dimitruk briefly reported on changes being made to a contract and to  
9 the schedule for implementing fares in central area.

10  
11 **Healthy Roots Advisory Committee** – C. Dimitruk referred to the written report included in the  
12 meeting packet.

13  
14 **Northwest Vermont Regional Foundation** – K. Waite reported that the Foundation met in February  
15 and discussed financial transfers relating to the Healthy Roots program.

#### 16 17 **Staff Announcements**

18 C. Dimitruk reported on the recent Selectboard gathering hosted in cooperation with the Vermont  
19 League of Cities and Towns. She believes future coordinated sessions, including more easily  
20 accessible training opportunities, may be held in the future.

#### 21 22 **Personnel Policy Updates (action item)**

23 A memo and proposed changes were enclosed in the packet. A. Alling reported that the proposal  
24 has been through a couple of iterations with the Executive Committee. There are three elements.  
25 The first would add the Assistant Director to the contacts. The second would decouple the time off  
26 staff are allowed for holidays from any specific dates (staff would have some discretion about when  
27 to take the holiday although the office would be closed on the generally observed date). The third  
28 would modify language in the harassment policy. K. Waite commented that changes relating to  
29 harassment were proposed to align the policy with recent statutory changes, and were drafted  
30 with the assistance of legal counsel. L. Ruple concurred, while also mentioning additional minor  
31 edits.

32  
33 *C. Sawyer moved to approve the changes to the Personnel policy, as presented. S. Hadd seconded*  
34 *the motion. The Chair called for the vote. Result of the vote was: All in favor, no nays, no*  
35 *abstentions.*

#### 36 37 **FY24 Budget Adjustment**

38 K. Waite explained reported that the preliminary proposal for budget adjustment shows the  
39 Commission ending the year with a positive balance of \$30,539. However, he then proposed a  
40 change that would add \$9000 to the building reserve, pursuant to the reserve policy. If accepted,  
41 the revised proposal would have the Commission ending the year with a positive balance of  
42 \$21,539. There was no discussion.

1 *The Chair entertained a motion. K. Waite moved to approve the budget adjustment as he has*  
2 *described. A second was provided by Andy Alling. The Chair called for the vote. Result of the vote*  
3 *was: All in favor, no nays, no abstentions*

4

5 **Commissioner Announcements.**

6 Chair W. Irwin expressed hope that no one needs to travel during the and flash freeze and that  
7 towns don't suffer as a result of the strong winds. H. Britch-Valenta observed that the  
8 Commissioners are a resilient group.

9

10 **Adjourn**

11 *S. Jenson motioned to adjourn. N. Draper seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

12 The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.

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