

1 **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING**
2 **NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**
3 ***September 30, 2020 Draft Meeting Minutes***
4

5 The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was a virtual meeting held on Zoom.
6

7 **ATTENDANCE**

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

9 Staff: C. Dimitruk, B. Remmers, L. Briccetti

10 Guest: Jonathan Billings, Northwestern Medical Center (NMC)
11

12 Chair K. Waite began the meeting at 7:00 PM.
13

14 **ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA**

15 K. Waite asked if there were adjustments to the agenda. There were None.
16

17 **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, OPENING REMARKS**

18 K. Waite welcomed everyone and Introductions were made.
19

20 **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

21 K. Waite asked for comments. There were none.
22

23 **MINUTES OF THE JULY 2020 MEETING**

24 *Terry Tatro motioned to accept the July meeting minutes with the modification that A. Larocque*
25 *was in attendance and that there were two action items regarding the North Hero municipal*
26 *plan rather than one. A. Larocque seconded. The motion carried.*
27

28 **NMC SUSTAINABILITY PLAN**

29 J. Billings presented on the status of NMC. He discussed how in Jan 2020 it was confirmed NMC
30 would lose money for a 5th consecutive year and needed a new plan for financial stability. He
31 reviewed how NMC is useful to the region because it consistently has lower than average
32 prices, and people in the region would pay significantly more if they needed to travel to
33 Burlington for care. He discussed how transportation is a barrier to care in parts of the region. J.
34 Billings noted that NMC has some of the lowest relative prices in the state. For this reason,
35 NMC feels justified in their rate increase and are happy with where their budget currently
36 stands.
37

38 J. Billings discussed changes NMC undertook in order to regain financial stability. This included
39 service line adjustments, restructuring of healthy living programs, transitioning addiction and
40 neurology programs into separate partner entities, postponing construction projects,
41 decreasing administrative costs, increasing the use of telemedicine, pursuing a rate increase,
42 and 2 rounds of layoffs in order to promote financial sustainability. J. Billings noted that
43 postponing elective services during March and April due to the pandemic cost the hospital
44 millions of dollars, so adjustments were increasingly necessary due to this change. Overall, J.

45 Billings stated that NMC's financial situation is better than expected considering the impacts of
46 the pandemic because these adjustments led to significant financial savings.

47

48 A. Voegelé asked whether transitioning programs away from the hospital decreased the grant
49 dollars being directed to the hospital; J. Billings responded that certain cut programs were
50 funded by the hospital but others were indeed funded through federal grants. A. Voegelé asked
51 what will happen to the hospital's outreach and community involvement with these cuts; J.
52 Billings affirmed that the hospital will continue to be an active participant in promoting healthy
53 lifestyles, but may need to reach out to corporate and other partners to help fund certain
54 programs. C. Dimitruk asked whether expanded telemedicine will be here to stay after the end
55 of the Covid crisis, J. Billings responded that they hope that will be the case, and are
56 encouraged by recent changes to telemedicine privacy regulations.

57

58 K. Waite requested a draft of a letter of support for NMC from NRPC.

59

60 **COMMISSION REPORTS:**

61 Finance/Operations – No report. The committee is expected to meet in October. Budget
62 adjustments are expected for that meeting, but not significant changes.

63

64 Personnel – Lori Ruple reported that the committee has not met. They also reported two hires
65 recently made including special projects coordinator Kathy Lavoie.

66

67 Executive Committee – No report.

68

69 Project Review – B. Irwin reported that the committee reviewed a subdivision project in
70 Georgia and found that it would not have a negative community impact, but hope the
71 development will include a shared recreational space. The committee also reviewed a large
72 solar project development in St. Albans. Questions about this project were sent to the
73 developers, and B. Irwin stated the committee is hopeful to have a quorum available for their
74 October meeting in order to vote on whether this development conforms with the regional
75 plan. B. Irwin reported that committee members were concerned it would have a significant
76 visual impact for drivers on I-89, that runoff will lead to increased stormwater pollution into
77 nearby Hungerford Brook, and that the generated power may be diverted away from local
78 residents and instead to other states.

79

80 Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) – Harold Garrett reported that the committee met in
81 September with the State of Vermont, who updated the committee with the statewide rail
82 freight plan.

83

84 Energy Committee – No report.

85

86 Brownfields Committee – No report.

87

88 Regional Plan and Policy Committee – No report.

89
90 Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC) – No report.

91
92 Green Mountain Transit – C. Dimitruk reported that GMT in Montpelier is planning on replacing
93 fixed transit routes with microtransit and that this might have applicability to the northwest
94 region.

95
96 Clean Water Advisory Committee – No report. The committee is expected to meet October 8th.

97
98 Healthy Roots Collaborative Advisory Committee – B. Dorcheff reported that the committee
99 met in September. They also reported the hiring of Christine Porcaro as a staff member for
100 Healthy Roots. He also reported that the collaborative has a new work plan in place outlining
101 adjustments to administration, vendor engagement, and other aspects of Healthy Roots. Lastly,
102 he reported that Healthy Roots won an award of \$10,000 from Plumrose USA for the program.

103
104 Northwest Vermont Regional Foundation – C. Dimitruk reported that the Plumrose donation to
105 Healthy Roots will use the foundation as a conduit for the grant.

106
107 Office – B. Remmers stated that work is being completed on the 3rd year of the Grants in Aid
108 program and municipality sign-up is beginning for the 4th year of the GIA program. She also
109 announced that the project review committee meeting will occur soon and that discussions will
110 center on the St. Albans solar project.

111
112 L. Briccetti introduced himself to the committee as the new NRPC EcoAmericorps member. He
113 informed the board that he is beginning service on the Lake Carmi private road erosion
114 inventory project and on creating and refining stormwater education materials for the region.

115
116 C. Dimitruk reported that audit fieldwork has been completed, despite the challenge of
117 conducting it remotely. It was also noted that work with the Northern Border Regional
118 Commission grants to support community projects has begun, and that the Working
119 Community Challenges grant was submitted earlier in the day. Lastly, she announced that Kathy
120 Lavoie begins 10/1 as the NRPC special projects coordinator.

121
122 **FY2021 COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

123 *A. Voegele motioned to approve FY2021 committee assignments. C. Steen seconded. The*
124 *motion carried.*

125 **COMMISSIONER ANNOUCEMENTS**

126 None.

127

128 **ADJOURN**

129 *Richard Noel motioned to adjourn. The motion carried.*

130 *The meeting adjourned at 8:18 PM.*

FY 21

Committee Assignments

Appointed by the Chair
Approved by the Board of
Commissioners September 30, 2020

Personnel Committee

Lori Ruple, Chair
Terry Tatro
Laz Scangas
Bob Buermann
Albin Voegelé

Project Review Committee

Alisha LaRocque, Chair
William Irwin
Neal Speer
Colleen Steen
Harold Garrett
Albin Voegelé
Bob Buermann

Regional Plan and Policy Committee

Lynn Douglas, Chair
Lori Ruple
Elisabeth Nance
Sylvia Jensen
Yvon Dandurand

Finance Operations Committee

Harold Garrett, Chair
Laz Scangas
Rowena Brown
Barclay Morris
Richard Noel
Brad Docheff

Executive Committee

Kirk Waite, Chair*
William Irwin, Vice-Chair
Rowena Brown, Secretary
Harold Garrett, Treasurer
Lori Ruple, Chair Personnel
Alisha Larocque, Chair Project Review
Lynn Douglas, Chair Reg. Plan & Policy
Laz Scangas, At Large
Bob Buermann, Past-Chair

Municipal Plan Review Committee

Rowena Brown, Chair
Sarah Hadd
Leonard Charron
Elisabeth Nance
Wesley Kempton

* Chair is ex-officio member of all committees