

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING**  
**NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
*July 28, 2021 Draft Meeting Minutes*

The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held using the Zoom platform, and public access was provided at the Regional Planning Commission offices at 75 Fairfield Street, St. Albans.

**Attendance**

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

Staff: C. Dimitruk, K. Lavoie, D. Pierce, D. Devlin.

Guest: Karen Bates

Chair B. Irwin began the meeting at 7:10 PM.

**Adjustments to the Agenda-** None.

**Welcome, Introductions, Opening Remarks-** Chair B. Irwin welcomed everyone and introductions were made.

**Opportunity for Public Comment-** None.

**Minutes of the July 2021 Meeting**

B. Irwin asked for any errors and/or omissions. *R. Noel moved to accept the July 2021 meeting minutes.*

*B. Buermann seconded. Motion carried.*

**Presentation: Missisquoi Basin Plan**

K. Bates, Basin Planner for the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), delivered a presentation on the draft Tactical Basin Plan for the Missisquoi Bay Watershed. She indicated that copies of a handout and the “pre-public” draft of the plan have been supplied to the Commission staff for distribution to Commissioners. The Plan—which will be released for public comment in mid October—focuses on sources of pollution affecting rivers, streams, wetlands, and lakes in the watershed. One of those pollutants is phosphorous. The Agency of Natural Resources’ (ANR) planning efforts emphasize working with community partners to improve stewardship within watersheds. ANR’s efforts also focus on protecting and restoring natural resources. The current Tactical Basin Plan for the Missisquoi Bay watershed was adopted in 2016. The 2021 draft plan is the result of a year and a half planning effort. ANR staff are hoping the document will be finalized and signed by the ANR secretary in December. A public meeting will be held at the Enosburgh Emergency Building on October 20<sup>th</sup>. An online meeting will be held the following night. The planning process was built on ANR’s monitoring data, assessments, and strategy development. These will be followed by public input and then implementation.

The plan has five chapters (basin overview, protection priorities, restoration priorities, strategies, and implementation). One of these chapters (three) incorporates information from the TMDLs for Lake Champlain and Lake Carmi. The strategy chapter addresses pollution sources across a range of different land uses and sectors (such as agriculture, roads, wastewater, and resource restoration). The ANR’s online “storymap” used by K. Bates during the presentation also identifies project

47 partners, completed projects, and opportunities for restoration and remediation. Detailed data on  
48 phosphorous loading and phosphorous reduction targets are provided as well.

49  
50 The presentation was followed by a question and answer session. B. Irwin asked about  
51 phosphorous reduction goals shown on one of the presentation slides. K. Bates responded by  
52 referring to contents of the Plan. B. Irwin also asked about ways NRPC will influence  
53 implementation of the plan. K. Bates drew attention to the Plan's implementation table which  
54 identifies areas where specific Partners are likely to be involved. Commissioner Alling asked K. Bates  
55 to rate the effectiveness of the current five-year plan. She responded the State of Vermont has  
56 fulfilled or is in the process of fulfilling major elements of the Plan. Large financial commitments  
57 are being made to address water quality. Within the document itself, Chapter 3 describes progress  
58 made to reach targets such as those contained in the Lake Champlain TMDL. K. Bates expressed  
59 optimism about the progress that can be achieved in the next five years. Commissioner B. Morris  
60 asked if there is an estimate concerning how long it will take for phosphorous to "work its way out  
61 of the system." K. Bates indicated this issue is the focus of research now being conducted at UVM  
62 but she hopes conditions in the watershed will look much better in the future. B. Dubie thanked K.  
63 Bates for her presentation and stated he was impressed by her optimism. He noted that some  
64 parts of the lake have issues, and it will take much work to allocate funds for specific projects and  
65 programs. As the session drew to a close, C. Dimitruk indicated that a copy of the meeting handout  
66 will be emailed to all Commissioners. Those who would like a copy of the draft Plan need only  
67 request it. She added that the NRPC is the designated Clean Water Service Provider (CWSP) for the  
68 Missisquoi basin. One role of the CWSP will be to identify and advance projects that reduce  
69 phosphorus. Preliminary information released recently suggests the target for the Missisquoi basin  
70 will be to reduce phosphorus by 153 kilograms a year, with potential funding for non-regulatory  
71 project being on the order of 1.6 million dollars. C. Dimitruk concluded by saying in past years the  
72 regional plan and policy committee has reviewed the draft Tactical Basin Plan and given a  
73 recommendation to the board about whether it conforms to the regional plan. She advised that  
74 the Commission take the same approach this time.

75  
76 **Commission Reports:**

77  
78 Finance/Operations - H. Garrett indicated that the Finance committee did not meet in August or  
79 September but will be meeting on October 18. He anticipates the NRPC's financial audit will be available  
80 at that time, and the committee will address any needed adjustments to the budget. In the event of a  
81 surplus, further discussion by the Executive Committee may occur. The profit and loss statement was  
82 included in the meeting packet. According to Commissioner Garrett, the organization is in good shape  
83 for this time of the year.

84  
85 Personnel - L. Ruple indicated the committee met and reviewed staff evaluations and recommendations  
86 for pay increases and bonuses. The committee agreed to recommend to the Executive Committee that it  
87 accept the proposal. Commissioner Ruple also mentioned that a search will be made to hire an entry  
88 level energy and climate planner. C. Dimitruk added the position will be advertised in the coming week.

89  
90 Executive Committee - B. Irwin reported that the Committee met in September and again discussed  
91 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion matters. He noted that further discussion of the topic will take place later  
92 in this meeting. The Committee also considered and acted on the proposal relating to raises and

93 bonuses. Finally, the Committee discussed a number of different presentations and guest speakers it  
94 would like to include on meeting agendas in the coming year.

95

96 Project Review - B. Buermann reported that the Committee met in August and September and discussed  
97 several projects.

98 R. Noel asked if the extension of sewer and water to the airport will require review. C. Dimitruk  
99 responded she thinks Act 250 will have jurisdiction.

100 B. Buermann asked if a motion to approve is needed. The response of the Chair was that a motion to  
101 approve would not be required.

102 Transportation Advisory Committee - H. Garrett began his report by congratulating Richard Noel for  
103 have a bridge named after him. The Committee did not meet in September but did meet in August. The  
104 focus of the meeting was delivery of a state rail report. Thanks were expressed to St. Albans Town for  
105 hosting the meeting at their new facility. Commissioner Garrett also reported on the timing of Route 78  
106 improvements. It is his understanding work may begin within the next two years and construction will  
107 take two years to complete. He also reported that construction has begun on the culvert replacement  
108 project on Route 105 in Richford. B. Morris asked if the Route 78 work might coincide with work planned  
109 for the exit 17 interchange. Commissioner Morris reminded participants in the meeting that those are  
110 the only two ways into Vermont from Grand Isle County. B. Buermann added that at about the same  
111 time work may commence on the North Hero-Alburgh bridge. C. Dimitruk will follow up. H. Garrett then  
112 asked C. Dimitruk if TAC members could be notified in advance of any local meetings with VTrans such  
113 as the one held to discuss the Route 78 bridge in Swanton village. C. Dimitruk will coordinate with B.  
114 Remmers.

115

116 Commissioner H. Demars asked a question relating to speed studies and who might assist his  
117 community to complete one. H. Garrett indicated some police and sheriffs departments have that  
118 capability. C. Dimitruk responded that NRPC has the ability to perform some speed studies, and she will  
119 discuss the issue with B. Remmers. B. Irwin added that to change speed limits may require involvement  
120 of the VTrans Traffic Committee, as was the case in his town.

121

122 Energy Committee - B. Buermann reported that the Committee did not meet in August or September.  
123 He added that the state is working on the Comprehensive Energy Plan and Climate Action Plan. The  
124 committee will be meeting sometime in the near future to start going over those Plans.

125

126 Brownfields Committee –C. Dimitruk is unaware of any matters beyond what is included in the materials  
127 in the meeting packet.

128

129 Regional Plan Committee - E. Nance was unable to be present. C. Dimitruk reported that the Committee  
130 is attempting to identify a new regular meeting night. They hope to find it in time to meet in October.  
131 After that, the committee and staff should be able to present a general schedule for update of the  
132 regional plan.

133

134 VT Economic Progress Council - C. Dimitruk reported that no projects from the region were discussed by  
135 the VEPC.

136

137 GMT – B. Buermann reported that GMT is in the process of negotiating with the three unions  
138 representing employees. He is hopeful these negotiations can be resolved within the next two months.  
139 Next, he mentioned that bus ridership is still down but it's stable and we're looking for improvements.

140  
141 CWAC – The committee did not meet. C. Dimitruk added that the Commission will need to have a  
142 discussion about the ongoing need for the committee with the initiation of the CWSP program and  
143 creation of Water Quality Councils.

144  
145 Healthy Roots Advisory Committee – L. Douglas reported that there has been much discussion about  
146 fundraising, increasing personal donations, and applying for local grants (including one from the Swift  
147 group). She added that many in the food service arena are experiencing difficulty finding and retaining  
148 staff.

149  
150 NW VT Regional Foundation - C. Dimitruk reported there is nothing new on the foundation front  
151 except it has provided support for some Healthy Roots activities, as was mentioned previously.

152  
153 **Staff Reports:**

154 C. Dimitruk extended a welcome to Dea Devlin, who is NRPC's newest ECO-AmeriCorps service member.  
155 She will be focusing primarily on water quality matters. C. Dimitruk also noted the prior discussion of  
156 Clean Water Service Providers and went on to say that D.Pierce will be busy coming months working on  
157 CWSP related issues. C. Dimitruk also reported that field work for the NRPC's financial audit had been  
158 completed. Lastly, the communications union district (CUD) is moving forward in the process of hiring  
159 staff and applying for and receiving grants that will help them expand broadband access in the region.

160  
161 B. Irwin acknowledged the staff's efforts and encouraged members to look through the nearly three  
162 pages of accomplishments listed in the packet.

163  
164 **American Rescue Plan Act**

165  
166 C. Dimitruk provided members with a slide presentation and overview of funding that will be available  
167 to communities as a result of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The act was passed into law in  
168 march of 2021. Under the law, \$350 billion was set aside for state local territorial and tribal  
169 governments nationwide. In all 1.25 billion dollars coming to Vermont under ARPA, with \$16.9 million  
170 coming to the municipalities in Franklin and Grand Isle counties. Initial funding available through ARPA  
171 was meant to address immediate needs and be spent quickly. The deadline for obligating funds is  
172 December 31, 2024. NRPC staff's overall advice is to be patient, deliberate, and strategic and to leverage  
173 where possible. Projects in four general areas are eligible: pandemic response, premium pay, lost  
174 revenue, and water=sewer-broadband infrastructure. Funds can be pooled across municipalities. They  
175 can also be transferred to other eligible entities. Statewide, RPCs will be available to assist communities,  
176 including by holding one-to-one conversations about projects that might be eligible and helping with  
177 outreach or communication or prioritization. The Vermont League of Cities and Towns will be  
178 conducting an ARPA workshop in mid-October where the state agencies will be presenting their plans  
179 for ARPA dollars. NRPC is trying to set a date (potentially October 20 or 21) where Katie Buckley the  
180 VLCT staff person specializing on ARPA will do a virtual session for our community specifically to hear  
181 any questions and provide additional guidance. VLCT has helpful resources on their website (VLCT.org).

182  
183 During a question and answer session, C. Dimitruk reiterated the categories of projects for which ARPA  
184 funds are eligible and addressed the general level of awareness among municipalities in the region. In

185 her opinion most selectboards and Town clerks are aware and most are observing the advice to take  
186 things slow. H. Garrett reported he is aware of at least two municipalities discussing the possibility of  
187 pooling funds. Y. Dandurand reported that the Town of Franklin has created a special committee  
188 focusing on identifying projects in time for presentation at Town meeting. R. Noel noted that Highgate  
189 has a group looking at water and sewer projects. As the session concluded, B. Irwin noted that VLCT's  
190 Town Fair may provide another distinct opportunity to learn more about ARPA in the future. A link for  
191 the registration will be shared.

192

### 193 **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

194 Chair B. Irwin reported that after scheduling delays the Executive Committee met last week and  
195 discussed this topic. What the Executive Committee focused on was the need to learn rather than trying  
196 to draft a mission statement regarding justice, equity, and diversity. Commissioner Irwin added the  
197 committee recognized we are in many ways privileged and have things to learn about what it is like to  
198 have suffered some injustice. The Executive Committee wishes the Commission to embark on a journey  
199 over this coming year. Initially we need to learn what we are seeking to address relating to justice,  
200 inequity, and diversity. We need to understand what it means for those who have suffered. Then we  
201 need to engage the broadest community possible to identify strategies. These strategies will be aimed at  
202 righting past wrongs and finding the most appropriate path going forward. Any mission statement and  
203 plans would be based on those specific strategies.

204

205 For the next six months a portion of each meeting will include time to hear from individuals in the  
206 community who can help the Commission understand these issues. After educating ourselves then  
207 together we can take a few more months develop a plan for incorporating justice, diversity, and equity  
208 in our ongoing efforts. The Chair added this timing meshes well with other responsibilities of the  
209 Commission, such as the updating of the Regional Plan. C. Dimitruk added that the process just outlined  
210 doesn't mean the Commission must wait before taking actions, and some have already been taken. She  
211 noted one example is that a member of the Healthy Roots staff is being provided with access to Spanish  
212 language classes so when she conducts farm visits she will be able to speak with everyone on the farm,  
213 not only those who are proficient in English. She added that the Executive Committee has plans to  
214 discuss budgeting funds for a consultant to assist the Commission with this initiative. Commissioner  
215 Irwin indicated such a consultant can help the Commission tackle these issues in a way that is helpful for  
216 all of us and for our communities. Discussion concluded with the Chair noting he believes this work will  
217 be important "to see what we can do to make life better for us all."

218

### 219 **Commissioner Announcements**

220 None

221

### 222 **Adjournment**

223 *R Noel moved that the meeting adjourn. H. Garrett seconded, and the meeting concluded.*

224

225 Meeting adjourned at 8:48 PM.