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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
March 31, 2021 Draft Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held virtually via Zoom.us.

Attendance

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

Staff: C. Dimitruk, B. Remmers, S. Coleman, K. Boynton

Guests: A. Wolf

Chair K. Waite began the meeting at 7:05 PM.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None.

Welcome, introductions, opening remarks

Chair K. Waite welcomed everyone and introductions were made. L. Scangas, B. Irwin and K. Boynton gave extended introductions.

Opportunity for Public Comment

None.

Minutes of the January 2021 Meeting

R. Noel made the motion to accept the January 2021 minutes. B. Irwin seconded. Motion carried.

Presentation: Northwest Vermont Economic Study

A. Wolf presented on the Northwest Vermont Regional Economy. Northwest VT in this context refers to the counties of Chittenden, Grand Isle, and Franklin. K. Waite thanked A. Wolf for the presentation to the board and guests and opened the floor for questions. Rep. Rosenquest asked if the equalization of per pupil costs was a result of Act 60. A. Wolf agreed that it was. T. Smith asked if A. Wolf could share the slides. A. Wolf confirmed that he would. L. Gamache asked if there was any data that would demonstrate the impact the pandemic has had on non-profits. A. Wolf responded no, data is scattered and it is difficult to pull out. Rep. Rosenquest asked about the rationale for grouping the 3 counties. A. Wolf responded that the goal was to move beyond individual county data and look at a region as a whole. A. Crossman asked how VT's economy compares to other states. A. Wolf responded that it is very similar and things such as income is right there with the national averages. K. Lavoie asked if A. Wolf found anything that he was not anticipating. A. Wolf responded that he did not expect the Northwest regional education spending would be in line with the rest of the state. Sales tax data was a surprise. Job loss due to the pandemic being in line with the rest of the state was also a surprise. K. Lavoie asked about A. Wolf statement regarding unemployment data does not provide a full picture and if any other data sets were being explored to provide a clearer picture. A. Wolf explained that the data was different during the pandemic because those receiving unemployment no longer need to be actively looking for employment. A. Wolf did note that a better number is to look at

47 the number of people getting unemployment insurance or applying for unemployment
48 insurance. The surprising thing with these numbers is that they have not moved in 6
49 months and it would be anticipated that they would be coming down. B. Irwin thanked K.
50 Waite, A. Wolf and Frank Cioffi (Greater Burlington Industrial Development Corp.) for
51 sharing the report and asked how much including Chittenden County skews the
52 information. A. Wolf pointed out that there is a table in the report attachments that breaks
53 out the information by county. B. Dubie asked if any data illustrated an increase in
54 population as a result of the pandemic. A. Wolf that there is no data yet to support that. L.
55 Scangas asked if data can tell why people don't stay or leave VT. A. Wolf noted that there is
56 no data to answer that. K. Waite thanked A. Wolf for the presentation.

57

58 **Commission Reports:** See attached handouts for written reports.

59

60 Finance/Operations – C. Dimitruk pointed out that the budget report and balance sheet is
61 included in the board packet. Currently, the do show a deficit but this is because of the billing
62 cycle and will be cleared up once the quarter billing cycle is complete. No actions needed. No
63 questions.

64

65 Personnel – C. Dimitruk reported that the committee met and the position of Planning
66 Technician/Zoning Administrator was advertised. Interviews were conducted. NRPC has
67 hired Michael Johnson for the position.

68

69 Executive Committee – K. Waite reported that the Ex. Committee did meet and a discussed
70 Brownfields loan request. The Executive Committee will meet again after tonight's meeting
71 to discuss this further.

72

73 Project Review – B. Irwin reported that they committee met to review 3 projects. The
74 committee has requested more information on Section 248- David & Peggy Howrigan- 100
75 kW Net-Metered Wind Farm and is waiting on that information. Section 248- BCAF GLC
76 Solar: 500 kW Net-Metered Solar was found to be in conformance with the regional plan
77 and has no substantial regional impact. No action needed. Act 250- PBM
78 Nutritionals/Perrigo Nutritionals was found to have substantial regional impact because it
79 will provide new jobs and double the current employer productivity. The project is in
80 conformance with the regional plan. Action is required.

81

82 *E. Nance made to motion to accept the ACT 250 – PBM Nutritional/Perrigo Nutritionals*
83 *project. L. Scangas seconded the motion. Motion carried.*

84

85 The board discussed the Act 250- Donald Vickers- Community Farm Event Barn project.
86 The business report states that it is not in conformance with the regional plan. B. Baermann
87 pointed out that this might be a mistake and a typo on the business report. C. Dimitruk
88 reviewed the February meeting notes, and confirmed that the project was found in
89 conformance with the regional plan and no further action was required from the board.

90

91 Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) – B. Remmers reported that the committee did
92 meet in March. Official report and action will be needed in the future but not right now.

93 Energy Committee- B. Buermann reported the committee has nothing to update at this time.
94 C. Dimitruk pointed out that the state is working on updating the Comprehensive Energy
95 Plan and that should be released this year.

96
97 Brownfields Committee – L. Scangas reported that the Brownfields committee did meet. The
98 committee approved an equal split loan and grant for a project in Morrisville. This decision
99 was made to ensure that some grant funding remains for projects that will be coming up.
100 This decision will be further discussed in Executive Committee.

101
102 Regional Plan and Policy Committee- C. Dimitruk pointed out the updated regional plan will
103 be due in 2023 and the committee has begun to discuss indicators that will be presented to
104 the board at an April or May meeting.

105
106 Municipal Plan Review Committee- R. Brown reported that the Fairfield Town Plan is an
107 action item that is scheduled for later in the meeting.

108
109 Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC) – Did not meet

110
111 Green Mountain Transit- B. Buermann reported that there is a change in service but it will
112 not impact service greatly. The bus stop is moving from Collins Perley to the Park and Ride.

113
114 Clean Water Advisory Committee- B. Remmers reported that the committee did meet and
115 reviewed the Missisquoi Bay Tactical Basin Plan.

116
117 Healthy Roots Advisory Committee- Did not meet.

118
119 Northwest Vermont Regional Foundation- Nothing to report.

120
121 Office- B. Remmers reported that she is working on the new VTrans project selection and
122 prioritization process. C. Dimitruk pointed out that staff has been working on many grants
123 and letters of support. C. Dimitruk also reported that legislation that will support
124 Communications Union Districts has moved forward. This bill would provide significant
125 funding and in combination with municipal funding that is coming through the relief funds
126 will support CUDs.

127
128 **Intermunicipal Services: Zoning Administration**

129 C. Dimitruk pointed out that the Intermunicipal Zoning Administrator Service Agreement is
130 in the board packet. She asked that the board take action to approve the agreement
131 pending final legal review. It was pointed out that this will be the first agreement enabled
132 by the bylaw changes. NRPC will hold the Zoning Administrator position for the towns of
133 Highgate and Sheldon, stabilizing the position while providing professional support and
134 training. The towns of Highgate and Sheldon will take on the full cost for the time the
135 Zoning Administrator is working for them and NRPC is able to add additional hours for
136 NRPC related projects, providing a full-time position. This will be a 1-year pilot with a
137 potential for extending the agreement, if things go well. R. Noel asked how many days per
138 week for each town. C. Dimitruk responded that it will be 16 hours per week for Highgate

139 and 5 hours per week for Sheldon. R. Noel pointed out that there would be room for
140 another town to utilize the position. C. Dimitruk agreed but also pointed out that NRPC has
141 filled out the position to make it full time. E. Nance asked how many towns would you want
142 managing this position. C. Dimitruk that 3 to 4 would be the max, with 3 being the more
143 comfortable range. E. Nance asked if Intermunicipal Services could include other positions
144 such as a Fire Marshall. C. Dimitruk agreed that it could. S. Kio pointed out that Enosburgh
145 will likely be calling to discuss the Intermunicipal Services.

146

147 *E. Nance made the motion to approve the Intermunicipal Zoning Administrator Service*
148 *Agreement pending legal review. C. Steen seconded. Motion carried.*

149

150 **Town of Fairfield Town Plan:** R. Brown reviewed the Fairfield Town Plan history and the
151 Municipal Plan Review Committee’s findings and recommendations.

152

153 *B. Irwin made a motion to approve the Fairfield Town Plan as submitted. B. Dubie seconded.*
154 *Motion carried.*

155

156 *C. Steen made a motion for regional approval and confirmation of the planning program in*
157 *accordance with section 4350 of Title 24 VSA Chapter 117. 2. R. Noel seconded. Motion*
158 *carried.*

159

160 *D. Dubie made a motion that the plan receives a determination of energy planning*
161 *compliance with the enhanced energy planning standards set forth in 24 V.S.A. §4352. R. Noel*
162 *seconded. Motion carried.*

163

164 **Commissioner Announcements:** Yvon of Franklin asked if the Solid Waste District would
165 be supporting tire removal for Green Up Day. B. Buermann pointed out that there is money
166 in the budget to help but it will not cover everything. This will be put on the agenda for
167 April Board meeting. E. Nance thanked K. Waite for effective meeting facilitation. Many
168 other commissioners agreed.

169

170 *E. Nance made a motion to adjourn. R. Noel seconded. Motion carried.*

171

172 **Meeting Adjourned at 8:53 pm**

173

174