

1 **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING**  
2 **NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
3 *July 28, 2021 Draft Meeting Minutes*  
4

5 The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held in-person at Kill Kare State Park in St.  
6 Albans Town.

7  
8 **Attendance**

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

10 Staff: C. Dimitruk, B. Remmers, G. Brunswick, S. Coleman, A. Adams, E. Klofft, K. Lavoie, C.  
11 Porcaro, L. Briccetti, M. Valenta, A. Pierce, and J. Goodwin.

12  
13 Guest: Dean Pierce

14  
15 Chair B. Irwin began the meeting at 7:10 PM.

16  
17 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

18 None.

19  
20 **Welcome, Introductions, Opening Remarks**

21 Chair B. Irwin welcomed everyone and introductions were made.  
22

23 **Opportunity for Public Comment**

24 None.

25  
26 **Minutes of the May 2021 Meeting**

27 B. Irwin asked for any errors and/or omissions.

28  
29 *A. Voegele moved to accept the June 2021 meeting minutes. E. Nance seconded. Motion*  
30 *carried.*

31  
32 **Commission Reports:**

33  
34 Finance/Operations - H. Garrett reported that the Committee did not meet during month of  
35 July. He anticipates meeting within the next 6 weeks to address any needed adjustments to the  
36 budget.

37  
38 Personnel - L. Ruple reported that the Committee did not meet in July. D. Pierce accepted the  
39 position of senior planner and welcomed him to staff effective 8/1.

40  
41 Executive Committee - B. Irwin reported that the Committee met in June and decided to  
42 prompt the board to discuss the potential for NRPC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives at  
43 this board meeting.  
44

45 B. Irwin also mentioned that the construction occurring at the NRPC office was looking good.

46

47 Project Review - B. Buermann reported that there is a new sand shed planned in Fairfax for an  
48 existing home business. There are questions about whether the sand shed requires an Act 250  
49 permit. The review for this project has not been completed.

50 B. Buermann also reported that the Committee discussed a project involving Dorset Street  
51 Properties LLC in St. Albans Town. The company plans to put in a walking path along this  
52 property which will connect to the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail. The Committee would like to  
53 encourage the property owner to allow bikes on their walking path.

54 Additionally, two cell tower projects came up before the Committee - Bell Atlantic Mobile  
55 Systems of Allentown, Inc. and Cellco Partnership (Verizon), as well as Industrial Tower and  
56 Wireless, LLC. The Committee has requested that both applicants determine if it is possible to  
57 collocate their services on one tower.

58 B. Buermann also reported on a project at Franklin Park West LLC (auto dealership) in St. Albans  
59 Town. The dealership is currently in the process of establishing an additional shop across the  
60 street from the existing building. The Committee determined that the lack of sidewalks along  
61 the roadway does not conform with the regional plan, but that they don't believe the project  
62 has a substantial regional impact.

63

64 *K. Waite motioned for ratification of the Franklin Park West LLC decision. E. Nance seconded.*  
65 *Motion carried with two votes against.*

66

67 Transportation Advisory Committee - H. Garrett reported that the Committee did not meet but  
68 are planning to meet at the end of August. H. Garrett also mentioned that the state has said  
69 construction on Route 78 will be finished in 2025, and that they have been pushing the state for  
70 long term fixes on Route 78 for years. The need for this construction was highlighted by the  
71 recent Route 78 culvert collapse in Swanton which led to a 70-mile detour. R. Noel asked for  
72 clarification as to why TAC assignments were not made. C. Dimitruk responded that these  
73 assignments must be made by municipalities.

74

75 Energy Committee - B. Buermann reported that the Committee did not meet.

76

77 Brownfields Committee - G. Brunswick reported that the Committee did not meet in July, but  
78 will meet in August. The 2019 brownfields assessment grant is currently being spent down, and  
79 the Committee is looking forward to supplementing the assessment program with additional  
80 funding from the state. \$200,000 in funding for the Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund has also  
81 been received to replenish the loan and subgrant, and will be allocated to new sites soon.

82

83 Regional Plan Committee - E. Nance reported that the Committee did not meet but will meet in  
84 August.

85

86 Municipal Plan Review Committee - R. Brown reported that the Committee did not meet.

87

88 VT economic progress council - A. Voegele reported that the Committee did not meet.

89

90 GMT - C. Dimitruk reported that the Committee did meet. The majority of the meeting  
91 discussion was centered around an update that was given on union contract negotiations.

92

93 CWAC - Did not meet.

94

95 Healthy Roots Advisory Committee - The Committee did not meet but intends to find a meeting  
96 day soon.

97

98 NW VT regional foundation - Did not meet.

99

100

101 **Staff Reports:**

102 B. Irwin acknowledged the staff's great work and informed members to look through the  
103 accomplishments listed in the packet.

104

105 S. Coleman thanked the Commission for their support of emergency management over the  
106 years and credited the Commissioners with making a difference in the success of the region's  
107 response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

108

109 **Committee Assignments**

110 B. Irwin stated that the Committee assignments were listed in the packet and noted that  
111 Committees are the most important working arm of this Commission. A. Voegele asked why the  
112 Energy Committee isn't listed in the Committee Assignments portion of the packet. C. Dimitruk  
113 responded that the Energy Committee members are appointed by the municipalities. Y.  
114 Dandurand added that the change from the Commission to the municipalities appointing  
115 Energy Committee members occurred around 2008. A. Voegele stated that he thinks the  
116 Commission should look into appointing Energy Committee members again.

117

118 *C. Steen motioned to ratify Committee assignments. R. Noel seconded. Motion carried.*

119

120 **Healthy Roots Advisory Committee Representative:**

121 B. Irwin explained that the Commission is looking to fill a seat on the Healthy Roots Advisory  
122 Committee. L. Douglas was brought forth as a nominee. No additional nominations were  
123 proposed.

124

125 *A. Voegele motioned to close nominations. C. Steen seconded. Motion carried.*

126

127 *Vote appointing L. Douglas to Healthy Roots Advisory Committee carried.*

128

129 **Transportation Planning initiative:**

130 B. Remmers reported that the TAC has reviewed the FY2022 work program and motioned for  
131 approval in May and June, pending NRPC board ratification. B. Irwin questioned why language  
132 on restoring passage to Montreal was removed from the work program. B. Remmers responded  
133 that although this language has been removed it is covered in other areas of the workplan and  
134 it is still a priority for the region.

135

136 *K. Waite motioned to approve the FY2022 work program. A. Voegele seconded. Motion carried.*

137

138 A. Voegele asked if there were any plans for the TAC to encourage tourism from Canada once  
139 the border is reopened on August 21<sup>st</sup>. B. Remmers responded that the TAC recognizes the  
140 importance of this connection and would like to get a speaker at their next meeting to discuss  
141 this issue. A. Voegele added that he was concerned by the increased federal agent presence  
142 and the number of cameras at the border and would like to voice these concerns to the federal  
143 government. B. Irwin clarified that the federal border presence is beyond the Commission's  
144 scope but that the Commission should feel free to express complaints. S. Coleman noted that  
145 the Commission was directly involved with saving the Morses Line Border Crossing when  
146 approached by the Town of Franklin and Highgate. The federal government had plans to close  
147 it. C. Steen asked for clarification on whether border land use is subject to Act 250 review. H.  
148 Garrett said that border matters are exempt, and added that border towns could ask federal  
149 representatives to attend a public meeting so that residents can express their concerns. A.  
150 Voegele suggested turning this question over to the Executive Committee to discuss further. B.  
151 Irwin affirmed that the Executive Committee would look into the situation.

152

### 153 **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:**

154 B. Irwin reminded the Commission that representatives from across Vermont spoke at the last  
155 meeting about their DEI initiatives. Following this conversation, the Executive Committee met  
156 and thought that it would be appropriate to consider specific community engagement and  
157 other actions in addition to releasing a statement of inclusion which could be drafted prior to  
158 the board's September meeting. He added that the Executive and Regional Plan Committees  
159 can work to produce a draft.

160

161 *A. Voegele motioned to endorse this approach. E. Nance seconded.*

162

163 A. Voegele stated that VLCT has a committee to discuss these issues, and that it is clear to him  
164 from his experience on the committee that there are serious challenges inherent to being a  
165 minority in Vermont. He also added that more BIPOC people in Vermont can help to expand  
166 both Vermont's industries and the perspectives of white Vermonters. S. Jensen and R. Noel  
167 shared their hardships as French-speaking children and how they were treated by others. C.  
168 Dimitruk stated it is important to discuss not just people who may move to Vermont but people  
169 who are already here, and that it is important to think about income, education levels, disability  
170 status and other perspectives in addition to race and nationality. L. Douglas stated that the  
171 Executive Committee would like to adjust the regional plan to highlight equity issues, including  
172 issues facing the region's indigenous population. K. Waite added that change starts with the

173 members of the Board, and then the change can go broader. B. Irwin reminded the Board that  
174 this will be a long-term effort and that the immediate vote is for the initial steps.

175

176 *B. Irwin motioned for a vote to have a DEI statement and additional action items drafted before*  
177 *the September meeting. Motion carried.*

178

179 **Commissioner announcements**

180 Y. Dandurand thanked the Executive Committee for accepting the draft letter he had sent on  
181 reopening the US/Canada Port of Entry.

182

183 **Adjournment**

184 *E. Nance motioned to adjourn. H. Garrett seconded. Motion carried.*

185

186 Meeting adjourned at 8:17 PM.