

**APPROVED – MINUTES
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
September 21, 2022**

Held in-person and via Zoom, an in-person quorum was present

Members Present:

Jason Hennessey, Amherst
Will Ludt, Amherst (via Zoom)
Danielle Pray, Amherst (via Zoom)
Venu Rao, Hollis
James Battis, Hudson (Treasurer)
Brett Gagnon, Hudson (via Zoom)
Ralph Boehm, Litchfield
Kim Queenan, Litchfield (Vice Chair)
Charlie Post, Lyndeborough

Tim Tenhave, Merrimack (Chair)
Chris Costantino, Milford (via Zoom)
Janet Langdell, Milford (via Zoom)
Tim Berry, Mont Vernon
Camille Correa, City of Nashua
Jaie Bergeron, Pelham
Peter Howd, Wilton

Others Present:

Andrew Dorsett, NH Dept. of Business &
Economic Affairs
Justin Rosamilio, NH Dept. of Business &
Economic Affairs
Sarah Wrightsman, NH Housing

Staff Present:

Jay Minkarah, Executive Director
Camille Pattison, Assistant Director
Kristin Wardner, Administrative Assistant

1. Welcome and Introductions

Tenhave opened the meeting at 7:04 p.m. with introductions.

2. Privilege of the Floor

No members of the public were present to speak.

Tenhave moved agenda item 4 ahead of item 3.

4. Presentation - Sarah Wrightsman, Community Engagement Coordinator, New Hampshire Housing: InvestNH Planning & Zoning Grants

Sarah Wrightsman from New Hampshire Housing gave a presentation on the Planning & Zoning grants available through InvestNH. She explained there are two grant programs, and the objective of the grants is to increase housing supply by changing local land use regulations. The first is the Community Housing Navigator Program which grants to allow municipalities to hire staff to coordinate regulatory change and to conduct community engagement activities. While individual communities can apply, smaller communities can also apply with a joint application coordinated through the RPC. The second program is Housing Opportunity Planning (HOP) Grants which provides municipal grants to hire consultants to work on three phases of local regulatory change and to conduct community engagement activities. Within the latter program there are three different grants for Needs analysis and planning, regulatory audits, and regulatory development.

Berry asked what the policy of the state is to encourage workforce housing and what specifically the Housing Academy is. Wrightsman stated she cannot speak for the state and their goals, but NH Housing sees it as an opportunity for communities to look at their zoning and land use regulations and what steps need to be taken to change zoning. She stated the Housing Academy is training created specifically for municipalities that receive grants from these programs. In response to a question about what outreach has been done about the grant programs, Wrightsman stated although a press release had not been done, there has been outreach through the RPCs and social media. Minkarah asked if towns could use the grant for master plan update process and Wrightsman stated they could potentially be used for the housing portion, however consultants would need to be approved by the program steering committee.

The presentation can be viewed here: https://www.nashuarpc.org/agenda_detail_T30_R294.php

5. Presentation - Andrew Dorsett, Housing Finance Director, Department of Business and Economic Affairs, InvestNH Municipal Demolition Grant and the Municipal Per Unit Grant programs

Andrew Dorsett and Justin Rosamilio from New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs gave a presentation on the Municipal Demolition Grant and the Municipal Per Unit Grant programs. Rosamilio explained that the Municipal Per Unit Grant is an incentive program offering \$10,000 to municipalities for each unit of new affordable housing they permit. To be eligible, final permits for new affordable housing projects must have been applied for after 2/17/22 and issued within 6 months of application, all local permits must be issued within that time frame, and the project must meet the Affordability Requirements set. The project must include a minimum of 3 affordable units, be affordable to families at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) and have a planned completion date on or before 5/3/24. Dorsett stated the program will be open until the funds are gone. Gagnon asked/expressed frustration about projects labeled as affordable housing that only have a small percentage of affordable units that get the benefits of such for the overall project. Dorsett explained that if a project is 15 units or less than all the units must be affordable, and that for more than 15 units or \$3million or more, then the number of units is percentage based (20%). He stated that is a policy decision. He also stated that the money communities receive can be used to create green space. In response to questions from Bergeron and Minkarah, Dorsett clarified that workforce or senior housing would not be eligible; that it covers only permits necessary for construction and not certificate of occupancy; and it is possible that manufactured homes would qualify if it met the affordable housing criteria.

Dorsett explained the Municipal Demolition Grant provides funding to municipalities to use for the demolition of vacant and dilapidated buildings. The demolition must positively impact housing availability and must be part of a larger revitalization or greening plan. He reviewed all the requirements and stated it is a reimbursement program with an award cap of \$500,000 per municipality. In response to Minkarah, Dorsett stated a partial demo (i.e., interior demo) could qualify if doing so creates affordable units. In response to Ludt, Dorsett stated he doesn't know of a law that would penalize towns if they did not have a certain ratio of affordable/workforce housing. He said he looking to do several regional meetings and will be presenting at the NHMA conference.

The presentation can be viewed here: https://www.nashuarpc.org/agenda_detail_T30_R294.php

3. Approval of Minutes – June 15, 2022

Battis motioned, with a second from J. Hennessey,

THAT the minutes of June 15, 2022, be approved as amended and placed on file. A roll call vote was conducted. Bergeron abstained.

Amendments:

- Page 5, Mont Vernon update; fix tax rate statement by Berry

The motion **carried**.

6. MPO Policy Committee

a. Vision Zero Resolution

Proposed resolution: It is the policy of the NRPC Commission & MPO to prevent traffic related deaths and significant injuries by emphasizing a systemwide approach to safe mobility for all users.

Minkarah explained that Safe Streets for All grants are federally funded and that communities that have developed a safe streets action plan are eligible to apply to make improvements to their infrastructure, with safety being at the core. You cannot apply unless you have an action plan. He explained NRPC, along with the 3 other MPOs in the state have jointly filed for funding to create action plans for each region and required with that is a commitment towards Vision Zero. He further explained that the MPO is required to adopt performance measures and traditionally fatalities and serious injuries are considered inevitable; The basis of Vision Zero is that fatalities and serious injuries are preventable through a safe systems approach. He stated that although there are less cars on the road post-pandemic, there are more accidents. Pray asked about using “reduce and prevent” in the resolution instead of “prevent” and there was further discussion. It was stated that “prevent” is stronger language and although it is aspirational, it is the goal. The Vision Zero literature in the packet uses the term “eliminate”.

J. Hennessey motioned to “reduce or” before “prevent” in the resolution. The motion failed.

Battis motioned to approve the Vision Zero resolution as follows, with a second from Berry,

THAT it is the policy of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission and Metropolitan Planning Organization to prevent traffic related deaths and significant injuries by emphasizing a systemwide approach to safe mobility for all users.

The motion **carried**.

b. TYP Project Solicitation

Minkarah explained Ten Year Plan (TYP) project proposals were due on August 5th. He stated that each RPC has a funding allocation and projects are vetted by NRPC and submitted to NH DOT and any state or federally funded project must be in the TYP. There were 18 projects received with 14 being bike/ped related. Currently, the projects are being reviewed by NRPC’s on-call engineer team and then the scoring team will review and score projects. There will be a vote to prioritize projects at

the October TTAC meeting, and then they will be submitted to NH DOT for review. Minkarah stated there is not enough funds for all the projects, so not all will move forward in the process. Project summaries and video of the 9/14 TTAC meeting with presentations are available on the NRPC website.

c. Transportation Project Updates

Minkarah stated NRPC staff is in the middle of field work season: traffic counts, turning movement counts, RSMS. In response to Berry, he stated NRPC has not looked into getting a new van yet, but the money is in the budget.

7. General Updates

a. NRPC Regional Housing Needs Assessment

Minkarah stated staff is mid-stream with current regional housing needs assessment. He explained that all RPCs are required to have one and update it every 5 years. The completion target date is December 31st, but the goal is to bring it to the December commission meeting for adoption. He stated the Fair Share Housing Analysis is a key piece of the report and that is being developed at the state level. He stated that the NRPC website has a Housing page with information that will be updated as needed: https://www.nashuarpc.org/land_use/housing.php

b. Revision of the Statement of Strategy

Tenhave said the most recent NRPC Statement of Strategy was approved for 2016-2020 so it needs to be updated. He said the hope is to discuss the revision process at the October Executive Committee meeting before bringing it to the full Commission.

c. Staff Changes

Minkarah said NRPC is at full staff right now with recent additions:

- Kate Lafond is back as Finance Director (she left last November)
- Vince Noga – Transportation/Planning Analyst
- Payton Hoyt – Regional Planner
- Donna Marceau – Regional Mobility Manager

8. Commissioners Roundtable

Milford – Langdell stated the Board of Selectmen approved using ARPA funds for the Master Plan update. Planning Board is busy. The Pumpkin Festival is coming up (10/7-9).

Amherst – Pray said the Planning Board has been busy. The state is requiring a focused PFAS investigation and that has started. The town has a Town Planner opening. They are in the final stages of their Master Plan update.

Wilton – Howd stated Planning Board has also been busy. The town's new Land Use Administrator is starting. He said he is a member of SoRLAC (Souhegan River Local Advisory Committee), and they

are working on updating the Souhegan River Corridor Management Plan and thanked Jay for his assistance.

Hollis – Rao stated that Larmouth would like to step down from the commission. Rao stated he is on the town's Energy Committee and explained the energy data collection tool (developed by the EPA) they have been using. Since 2010, the town has become 1/3 more energy efficient with \$1.256 million in savings.

Pelham – Bergeron stated the Master Plan update is in process. The town has hired a new police chief (Chief Anne Perriello).

Litchfield – Queenan stated the CIP is in process. They are redoing impact fees, updating zoning ordinances, and updating three Master plan chapters.

Lyndeborough – Post said Lyndeborough is experiencing growing pains and has engaged NRPC to help with the workload. Their Master Plan update has started – it hasn't been updated in 20 years.

Mont Vernon – Berry stated the town's Master Plan is currently being updated; there was a committee formed earlier this year. He stated the town has a new town administrator and there has been a movement towards changing the BOS to 5 members and changing to SB2 meeting.

Nashua – Correa stated the Transit Center is nearing completion after being under construction for over a year.

Hudson – Battis stated there is a new logistics center proposed at the Green Meadow site with 1 large building. The Planning Board has declared it a project of regional interest.

Merrimack – Tenhave said the town is currently in the CIP process. He said that MVD rates have increased, in part due to PFAS filters that needed to be put on wells. There is an Assistant Planner opening.

9. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made by Boehm with a second from Battis, all in favor. The meeting ended at 8:51 p.m.

The next Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 21, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristin Wardner, Administrative Assistant