



**APPROVED – MINUTES
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
September 22, 2021**

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

Members Present:

Mike Dell Orfano, Amherst
Tamara Sorell, Brookline
Bob Larmouth, Hollis
Venu Rao, Hollis
James Battis, Hudson
Kara Roy, Hudson
Kim Queenan, Litchfield
Mike Croteau, Litchfield
Karin Elmer, Merrimack

Lon Woods, Merrimack
Tim Tenhave, Merrimack
John Shannon, Milford
Tim Berry, Mont Vernon
Camille Correa, Nashua
Dave Hennessey, Pelham
Hal Lynde, Pelham
Peter Howd, Wilton
Kermit William, Wilton

Others Present:

Tim White, NHDES
Robin LeBlanc, Plan NH
Tom Christensen

Staff Present:

Jay Minkarah, Executive Director
Sara Siskavich, Assistant Director
Matt Waitkins, Senior Transportation Planner
Caleb Cheng, Regional Planner III
Emma Rearick, Regional Planner II
Kate Lafond, Business Manager

Welcome and Introductions

Battis opened the meeting at 7:01 p.m.

Privilege of the Floor

No members of the public were present to speak.

Approval of Minutes – June 16, 2021

Hennessey motioned to approve as amended with a second from Berry.

Tenhave commented on Page 5 it should state 250th anniversary, not 275th.

THAT the minutes of June 16, 2021, be approved as amended and placed on file. A roll call vote was conducted. Williams, Woods, Sorell, and Larmouth abstained.

The motion **carried**.

Presentation

Robin H. LeBlanc, Executive Director, Plan NH: Charrette Program

NRPC Commission Meeting Minutes
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Minkarah introduced LeBlanc as Executive Director of Plan NH. LeBlanc informed that she is no longer Executive Director of Plan NH. She chose to step down and believing it was time for new energy. The role has been filled by Tiffany Tononi McNamara from the Midwest who moved to Portsmouth. McNamara's background in community development and programming.

LeBlanc provided a presentation about Plan NH's Community Design Charrette program which is in its 25th year. Two charrettes are planned for the end of October, one in Wolfeboro which is the 70th charrette conducted. The other charrette is for Castle in the Clouds.

LeBlanc explained that the charrette program is primarily for municipalities but occasionally they will be done for a non-profit that has support from the community. LeBlanc indicated that Plan NH is a non-profit and described the vision, mission, and strategy of the organization. LeBlanc went on to explain the charrette program. Communities identify a problem or a need and apply to the charrette program. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. The program is a series of brainstorming sessions with the community and a team of interdisciplinary volunteers. Once a community applies it takes 8 to 12 weeks to complete. A team is established, the charettes are marketed through community outreach. Community involvement is important. Charrettes are always held on a Friday and Saturday. LeBlanc explained in further depth what can be expected on the day of the charette and the 2nd day which includes a solution reveal.

Williams indicated that Plan NH held a charette for the town of Wilton and it was an eye-opener. 18 professionals, 100+ residents participated, and NRPC. Williams went on to explain Wilton's scenario which resulted in a plan for a Riverwalk. The town has built 3 portions of the Riverwalk so far. Williams highly recommends the Plan NH charrette program to other towns.

Berry asked if Plan NH only conducts the charrette if there is support from the town. LeBlanc noted that often there is a great divide in ideas but as long as there is support from the Board of Selectmen Plan NH can conduct the charette program and facilitate dialogue.

Tenhave asked if there are metrics on how many plans come to fruition. LeBlanc noted that Plan NH has not tracked that but encourages people to visit the Plan NH website and check out past charrettes.

Minkarah asked about the cost of the charrette program. LeBlanc stated that the base cost is \$6,000, depending on the complexity of the problem it can be more. LeBlanc added that the interdisciplinary professionals that volunteer their time to participate in the program save the towns \$50,000 to \$200,000 in professional service fees. Funding of the charette can come directly from the town or by grant, donation.

MPO Policy Committee

Public Hearing: Approval of TIP Amendment #2 to the adopted Nashua Metropolitan Area 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Battis opened the public hearing at 7:40 p.m.

No members of the public were present to speak.

Battis closed the public hearing at 7:41 p.m.

Waitkins referenced the memo provided in the meeting agenda packet and summarized that amendment #2 was received from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT) and NRPC is expected to amend the TIP to account for changes to projects within the Nashua region and to maintain consistency with the Statewide TIP (STIP). NRPC would also amend the 2021 – 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) project list and fiscal constraint analysis to maintain consistency with the amended TIP project list. Waitkins noted a public comment period was held Sept 10th through 21st. Waitkins proceeded to summarize the changes to the TIP described in the memo.

Minkarah explained that in order for federal dollars to be spent on the outlined projects the State TIP and the NRPC TIP need to align.

Williams motioned with a second from Hennessey

THAT the TIP Amendment #2 to the adopted Nashua Metropolitan Area 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) be approved and to amend the 2019-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) project list and fiscal constraint analysis to maintain consistency with the amended TIP project list.

The motion **carried**, all in favor

Presentation – Matt Waitkins: Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Update

Minkarah indicated that the Board may recall the draft 2021 Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan update was presented at the June meeting. Since that time NRPC staff, the Regional Complete Streets Advisory Committee, and the TTAC have reviewed the plan and provided final comments.

Waitkins referenced the memo provided in the meeting agenda packet and summarized the changes to the draft plan which include

- The phrase “Active Transportation” has been added to the Plan title to clarify that the Plan attempts to address the needs of bikers and walkers, as well as other self-powered transportation modes, users of rolling motorized devices for the disabled, E-bikes, and E-scooters.
- The existing conditions chapter has been updated to include additional information.
- A proposed regional active transportation network has been identified.
- An implementation strategy with goals, objectives, recommendations, implementation timeline, and responsible entities has been fleshed out

Waitkins noted that this plan’s purpose is to guide the planning, development, and implementation of safe, usable facilities for walkers, bicyclists, and other motorized alternative transportations such as motorized wheelchairs and e-bikes/e-scooters.

Discussion ensued regarding what types of motorized devices are allowed on multi-use paths.

Dell Orfano motioned with a second from Roy.

THAT the Regional Bicycle, Pedestrian & Active Transportation Plan for the Greater Nashua Region plan is adopted.

Tenhave suggested that the plan be disseminated through the region.

The motion **carried**, all in favor

Presentation – Caleb Cheng: Nashua Inter-Regional Transit Expansion Study

Minkarah introduced Cheng and the study which looks at the feasibility of transit in and out of the region into Massachusetts.

Cheng presented the study and explained how prior studies have informed this study. Additionally, Cheng noted NTS customers and UMass Lowell students, and employees were surveyed. Cheng discussed the input analysis methodology and findings then presented proposed routes and services to be studied. Routes include Nashua to:

Lowell Gallagher
Alewife MBTA
UMass Lowell
Bedford/Burlington

Elmer noted that there is not enough parking at the Park & Ride at Exit 8. Cheng acknowledged that as an impediment and noted that travel time can be another impediment if there are too many stops along the way. Hennessey proposed another route to connect to Lowell/Gallagher. Cheng thanked Hennessey for input and noted that there are other opportunities to explore. Cheng went on to discuss ridership and cost estimates which include fare pricing. Cheng noted that anticipated fares come close to covering operating costs on some routes but that additional funding would be necessary. He concluded that in addition to funding, further strategies for implementation need to be explored. Minkarah commented that employer contributions could help subsidize the routes.

CSX/Pan Am Merger

Minkarah stated that the merger is in the process, there is not much in the way of updates at this time. This agenda item will remain as a placeholder as the process continues.

General Updates

Regional COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan

Minkarah stated that a steering committee is in place and NRPC is nearly halfway through the planning process and noted that a lot of data is being pulled together. Minkarah pointed out that a standalone page on the NRPC website has been created which includes three surveys (workforce, entrepreneurship, and restaurant/retail) that have been developed to glean feedback from the community.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

Minkarah informed the Commission that funding has been awarded to update the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). NRPC's RHNA is currently up to date however the Governor has established a council on housing stability and all nine RPCs are receiving \$100,000 over two fiscal years for the update effort. Minkarah noted that there has never been this level of funding before which

will allow for a deeper comprehensive assessment. Additionally, all the RPCs are working together on this effort for consistency in data inputs which has not been done before.

Commissioners Roundtable

Pelham – Lynde noted that two major road projects are commencing that are funded with federal grants. Additionally, there is one final historic bridge repair that needs to be completed. That process is moving along.

Wilton – Kermit stated that Wilton’s largest employer is closing, and the property is for sale. Another tiny piece of land close to Riverwalk has cyanide buried. With NRPC assistance through the EPA Brownfields grant, an analysis was completed. DES is interested in the project and is bringing in the EPA to look at the site for potential clean-up.

Nashua – Correa noted that the City finished a housing study and will be presenting financial feasibility to the City Council. The Imagine Nashua Master Plan is going to the Planning Board and then the City Council for approval. Additionally, the federal mask mandate has been extended to January 18th, 2022, both in the transit center and on the busses. Finally, paving is being done at the transit center and interior renovations are upcoming all of which should be complete by April.

Amherst – Dell Orfano explained that the now elected Planning Board has had an appeal of one of its decisions and they will need to rehear that case.

Brookline – Sorell noted that fiber optic internet is coming to town.

Pelham – Hennessey indicated that there have been 3 remands from the Housing Appeals Board in the last 5 months.

Merrimack - Tenhave updated that a roundabout is being constructed in town.

Litchfield - Queenan noted that the Planning Board is focusing on updating the 30-year-old land use laws in the commercial sector for warrant articles.

Hudson – Roy explained that the Selectboard once again has 5-members. Also, the Planning Board has been busy, have gotten through the Amazon project, and are starting to update the Master Plan

Litchfield – Croteau followed up on Queenan’s comments adding that the town is working on amendments to the zoning ordinance. Some of the issues have to do with warehouses and commercial/ industrial land. On the Conservation Commission side, the town is working with NRPC on a conservation master plan.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made by Williams with a second from Berry. The meeting ended at 9:01 p.m.

The next Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 15, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jay Minkarah, Executive Director