



**APPROVED – MINUTES
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
December 15, 2021**

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

Members Present:

Mike Dell Orfano, Amherst
Susan Ruch, Amherst
Tamara Sorell, Brookline
Bob Larmouth, Hollis
James Battis, Hudson
Kara Roy, Hudson
Ralph Boehm, Litchfield
Kim Queenan, Litchfield
Burton Reynolds, Lyndeborough
Karin Elmer, Merrimack

Tim Tenhave, Merrimack
Chris Costantino, Milford
Janet Langdell, Milford
Dave Hennessey, Pelham
Hal Lynde, Pelham
Peter Howd, Wilton

Others Present:

Tim White, NHDES
William Rose, NHDOT

Staff Present:

Jay Minkarah, Executive Director
Sara Siskavich, Assistant Director
Gregg Lantos, Principal Transportation Planner/MPO Coord.
Matt Waitkins, Senior Transportation Planner
Camille Pattison, Special Projects Manager
Kristin Wardner, Administrative Assistant

Welcome and Introductions

Ruch opened the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

Privilege of the Floor

No members of the public were present to speak.

Approval of Minutes – September 22, 2021

Battis motioned to approve with a second from Hennessey,

THAT the minutes of September 22, 2021, be approved and placed on file. A roll call vote was conducted. Ruch, Lynde, Reynolds, Boehm, Langdell, Costantino, and Rose abstained.

The motion **carried**.

Election of Commissioner to the NRPC Executive Committee to replace current vacancy

Minkarah explained that there are two vacancies on Executive Committee due to Sarah Marchant leaving position at Nashua and Ruch having to step down. Camille Correa (not present) has expressed

interest. The Executive Committee made recommendation to nominate Correa. Hennessey then expressed interest.

Battis motioned to appoint both with a second from Elmer,

THAT the Nashua Regional Planning Commission approve the recommendation to appoint Correa and Hennessey to the Executive Committee. A roll call vote was conducted, all in favor.

The motion **carried.**

Election of Executive Committee Officer to replace current Vice Chair vacancy

Minkarah explained there are now two vacant officer positions due to Ruch stepping down as Chair. Queenan has volunteered to serve as Vice Chair and Tenhave has volunteered to serve as Chair. The Executive Committee recommends both for the remaining unexpired terms that run until the June annual meeting.

Battis motioned to appoint both with a second from Elmer,

THAT the Nashua Regional Planning Commission appoint Queenan as Vice Chair and Tenhave as Chair of Executive Committee for the remaining unexpired terms. A roll call vote was conducted, all in favor.

The motion **carried.**

Election of NRPC Foundation Board Officer to fill vacant NRPC Commissioner position

Minkarah stated there is one vacant Commissioner position and explained the Foundation isn't active yet, but they hope to change that in the future. There are two Commissioner at-large positions, one currently held by Hennessey. Howd volunteered and was recommended by Executive Committee.

Lynde motioned to appoint with a second from Battis,

THAT the Nashua Regional Planning Commission appoint Howd to the NRPC Foundation. A roll call vote was conducted, Howd abstained.

Minkarah noted there is a still a citizen at-large vacancy.

The motion **carried.**

MPO Policy Committee

Public Hearing: Approval of TIP Amendment #3 to the adopted Nashua Metropolitan Area 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). NRPC will also amend the 2019-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) project list and fiscal constraint analysis to maintain consistency with the amended TIP project list.

Minkarah opened the public hearing at 7:21pm.

No members of the public were present to speak.

Lantos presented the details of TIP Amendment #3 (https://www.nashuarpc.org/files/7116/4001/3286/TIP_A3_MTP_Update_Document.pdf). Minkarah explained that there is a federal requirement to have a 4-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for all federally funded transportation projects and the State also has a similar 4-year plan (STIP). Federal transportation dollars cannot be spent on projects not in the TIP and STIP. Amendments are common due to changes to dollar amounts or start year of projects.

Regarding the Sherburne Road Pelham project, Hennessey questioned Federal funds from Boston UZA that go directly to NH DOT and can they be directed specifically to that project. Lantos stated the money is pooled. Lynde expressed frustration with the project and Rose stated he would speak to the project manager to see about accelerating process.

Langdell questioned the status of Milford's projects and Lantos stated the construction is going to be moved outside the STIP timeframe, but the projects are still within the Ten Year Plan.

The public hearing was closed.

Motion by Howd and seconded by Battis,

THAT TIP Amendment #3 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. A roll call vote was conducted, all in favor.

The motion **carried.**

Minkarah moved discussion of Draft Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan to before Safety Performance Targets.

Transportation Project Updates

Minkarah explained that every 2 years the State creates a new Ten Year Plan for transportation improvements. For a project to be funded, it must be in that plan. Process kicked off about a year ago and at the last GACIT meeting a revised draft of the plan was approved and will be put forward to the Governor and then the legislature. A new Ten Year Plan will likely be adopted in June 2022. One big change between draft and approval was the major infrastructure bill that was passed. Minkarah discussed the additional funding to the Ten Year Plan from that bill: About \$300 million came in and of that, about \$225 million is going into the bridge program (\$45 million for state bridges and \$6.75 million for municipal bridge program), \$17 million for EV charging, \$15 million for public transit, and \$45 million for airports. This frees up money in the Plan for other projects and provides increased funding for alternative transportation.

Administratively, some projects need to be moved to current Ten Year Plan from the prior plan: Merrimack – exit toll plaza removal moved from 2022 to 2023 with funding unchanged; and Nashua – intersection improvements at East Hollis Street and Bridge Street moved from 2022 to 2024. The draft Plan proposes to eliminate both Milford CMAQ projects entirely. Safety improvements on Rt. 101

from Wilton to Bedford will be getting a \$7 million increase - the project manager will be at the upcoming February TTAC meeting to discuss further. In addition some bridge projects will be advanced: Amherst - bridge replacement over Thornton Ferry Road over Beaver Brook is advanced one year to 2024; Brookline – Bond Street over Nissitissit bridge rehabilitation advanced to 2025; Merrimack – US3 over Baboosic Brook bridge replacement is now fully funded at \$6.3 million; Pelham – Old Bridge Street over Beaver Brook bridge replacement is delayed to 2023; and Wilton – Old Country Farm Road over Blood Brook bridge replacement is advanced to 2025. Hudson Circumferential Highway is removed entirely from plan. Anyone with concerns about any projects at this point can seek a change through the legislative process. Langdell asked what then happens to funds from Milford’s CMAQ projects and it was stated they are reallocated into the program.

FY 2022 Safety Performance Target

Lantos stated that safety performance measures are required to be updated annually per Federal regulations. He reviewed the specific categories and statistics for each and stated it was a good year, with numbers down in all categories. He discussed that targets are determined by either the two year trend if rates are in decline or the five year moving average if rates are increasing. There was discussion over the meaning of non-motorized fatalities or injuries.

Motion by Elmer and seconded by Roy,

THAT the Nashua Regional Planning Commission adopt the 2022 Safety Performance Targets as presented. A roll call vote was conducted, all in favor.

The motion **carried**.

Transportation Project Updates (continued)

Minkarah stated the NH Capital Corridor Passenger Rail Project is currently in the project development phase which is critical to take the project to 30% of engineering, to do preliminary environmental assessments, and to develop a financial plan for project to get it where the state can decide on whether to move forward. The goal is for this phase to be completed the beginning of 2022.

Presentation

Camille Pattison, Project Manager: COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan Update

Minkarah stated NRPC staff is working on a COVID-19 Economic Development Recovery Plan through a significant grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and are about ¾ of the way through. Pattison gave a presentation with a status update on some of the initial findings regarding demographics, commercial and restaurant markets, data from the UNH Small Business Recovery survey, the identification of opportunity sites, survey results and key findings, case studies and what the next steps are. The project will need to be completed in February 2022. Minkarah explained the end goal is a micro-site that will connect people to the resources they need to make their businesses successful. Dell Orfano asked if there was any feedback on the impact of online businesses to brick and mortar stores. Pattison stated that it did not appear to be a factor because most businesses they are dealing with are smaller and unique. Minkarah stated one issue that is being looked at is strategies for how to reuse vacant commercial and retail space.

Presentation: https://www.nashuarpc.org/files/4216/4002/7911/Commission_Meeting_12-15-21.pdf

General Updates

Staffing Updates

Minkarah stated that there are three new staff members at NRPC: Kristin Wardner, Administrative Assistant; Sylvia Nassy, Business Manager; and Tyrel Borowitz, GIS Specialist.

Website Update

Minkarah explained that NRPC is doing a complete overhaul of its website. It will be completely new, and the project is about midstream right now. He asked for input or recommendations on anything that may need to be changed.

HB 1275 Relative to Municipal Representation on Regional Planning Commission

Minkarah said HB 1275 would dramatically change representation to regional planning commissions. The bill as presented would provide one representative for every 10,000 people. Currently, every community gets two representatives; if you are over 10,000 people, you get three; and if you are over 20,000 people, you get four. Under this bill, Merrimack and Hudson would drop to two representatives, every other community would drop to one and Nashua would jump to nine. The State Association of Regional Planning Commission is planning to meet with the sponsor to understand what the motivation is.

Commissioners Roundtable

Brookline – Sorrell mentioned a new business in town, *Brookline's Finest*.

Litchfield – Queenan stated the Planning Board is looking at land use laws. The Conservation Master Plan is pretty much done. She mentioned the Pennichuck water rates increase and said that customers will be getting a 22-25% increase in rates and hydrants are going up 16%. They are exploring a potential new elementary school.

Lyndeborough – No update.

Pelham – Lynde expressed frustration with funding issues of road projects that have dragged out for about 2 years.

Hudson – Roy talked about approved projects starting to get under way and that they are looking forward to NRPC assisting with an Impact Assessment project in the Spring of 2022. A lot of zoning changes are expected on the next ballot.

Wilton – Howd stated it is budget season. Planning and Zoning are busy right now. There has been a big boom in home occupations.

Hollis – Larmouth mentioned workforce housing construction going on right now on the site of the former Alpine Ridge Golf Course. December 16th was the first public hearing on the first pass of the Hollis/Brookline School district budget. Had a Luminary celebration on December 11th with a pretty

good turnout. Said that what was previously Harvest Market, has been repurposed as an ambulatory surgical center.

Amherst – Dell Orfano said the Town has gotten an offer for a grant for solar and is contemplating putting solar panels on the fire station.

Merrimack – Tenhave stated the town's first rotary is complete and mentioned a lot of visible development when driving north to south through town. He mentioned a cancer study that was released about rates for kidney and renal cancer in town being above average.

Milford – Langdell noted that the Heritage Commission applied through the NH Preservation Alliance and the Milford Bandstand was added to the “Seven to Save” list for this year. Planning Board has been busy. A few years ago the town enacted a new solar ordinance and are now getting a large number of residential projects coming through that exceed the limits from the model ordinance. They are in the process of revamping that so people can move forward with projects without variances. Amherst has approached the BOS to potentially look at a grant to extend the new side path on Amherst Street coming from “downtown” Amherst to Milford border where there is a section of road with no sidewalk or path. The question is whether they will be looking to just complete that section or extend it all the way into downtown Milford. Conservation Commission is doing great things with their trails. Costantino mentioned the town got an \$80,000 RTP grant and combined with donations from the running community, they were able to construct a 9x9’ pedestrian culvert/tunnel under Melendy Road. Langdell highlighted Alene Candle who donated \$25,000 to a candle factory devastated by tornados in Ohio.

Lynde stated they were looking into installing solar on town hall/buildings and the question was raised about whether solar panels interfere with police and fire communications. Minkarah mentioned that Nashua has solar panels on some of their fire stations. Lynde mentioned the town's increased assessed values and the group stated it was similar everywhere.

Boehm stated he was on the PFOA Commission and referred to the cancer study in Merrimack. He stated that a whole area needs to be done, not just one town and they have told DHHS to do that.

Dell Orfano inquired about the status of the Workforce Housing Project that multiple regional planning commissions were involved with. Minkarah stated it is progressing slowly and is early in the process and have reached a consensus on a template. There are nine subcommittees working on it.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made by Battis.

Langdell thanked Ruch for her service on the Executive Committee.

Motion to adjourn was unanimously passed. The meeting ended at 9:06 p.m.

The next Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 16, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jay Minkarah, Executive Director