



MINUTES  
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
Special Executive Committee Meeting  
July 5, 2004

**Present:** John Eresian, Chair  
Kathy Hersh, Vice Chair  
Andy Prolman  
Howard Dilworth, Jr., Treasurer  
Nelson Disco  
Bill Parker

**Members Absent:** Frank Bolmarcich, Marilyn Peterman, Mike Fimbel

**Others Present:** Stephen Williams, Executive Director

The chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**Letter Requesting that Congressman Bass Seek an Extension of New Starts Funds that will expire on September 30, 2004**

Williams explained that over the course of several years Congressman Bass earmarked appropriations of New Starts funds totaling slightly over \$10 million for the Lowell-Nashua Commuter Rail project. Those funds can only be spent on very specific purposes including required studies and on construction. Due to delays from the lawsuit brought by the NH Motor Transport Association, about \$4.1 million of those funds will expire on September 30, 2004. At this point, there is no eligible purpose that the funds can be spent for in the project and due to the way they were earmarked, the funds cannot be spent for other purposes. Therefore, at this point, the funds must either be extended or the funds will lapse and be lost. Extensions are obtained by the request of the Congressman who received the original earmark.

Williams stated that these same funds had already been extended by Congressman Bass once, but that he had refused to extend them when asked by NH DOT to do so this year. Williams noted that the Nashua Board of Aldermen had approved a resolution requesting the extension.

After discussion, Hersh made a motion and Parker seconded, to send the letter requesting the extension of the New Starts funds. Motion carried.

**Assistant Director/Land Use and GIS Manager Hiring**

Williams provided an oral report to the Executive Committee on the status of hiring for the Assistant Director/Land Use position. Williams reminded the members of the Executive Committee that at the June 16, 2004 meeting, the Executive Committee had directed Williams to interview the second potential Assistant Director candidate and that he should seek to fill the GIS Manager position from within the agency if possible.

He stated that members of the Assistant Director/Land Use search committee had interviewed the second candidate the previous week. At that time, they agreed that she was not suitable for the position. Hersh, Disco and Eresian all described their impressions and concerns. Williams said that after that interview, he and the members of the Executive Committee that were in the interview agreed that a special Executive Committee meeting should be held to reconsider whether the agency might hire both Susan Brennan, the #1 Assistant Director/Land Use candidate, and her husband Robert Brennan for the position of GIS Manager.

Williams distributed a brief description of some of the issues he felt would arise from hiring both the Brennans. Williams then provided the members of the committee with some information he had collected on Robert Brennan. He stated that he had a mid-management position with the Texas Government Land Office that provides GIS services to the State of Texas. He received an excellent



referral from Moni Sharma, the outgoing Executive Director at Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission in Manchester.

Williams also said that he knew of two situations at other RPCs in New Hampshire in which husband and wife were working together. He had talked to those Executive Directors and they indicated that there had not been a problem. Williams stated that he had discussed this possibility with the managers for NRPC's other programs and that they were not concerned about potential conflicts that might arise from a husband and wife working together. Their main concerns were getting the work done and filling gaps in the agencies personnel structure.

Williams also informed the Executive Committee about his efforts at filling the GIS Manager position with an internal candidate. He said that he had several conversations with the internal candidate, Ryan Friedman regarding his career and the direction he wanted to go in the agency. He had also discussed his readiness for the GIS Manager position. He had also had a meeting with John Vogl, the outgoing GIS Manager and with Ryan Friedman to go over Vogl's project list. He said that based on those discussions that he, Vogl and Friedman all agreed that Ryan had the potential to be the GIS Manager in the future, but that at this point, he did not have sufficient experience for the job. Williams stated that he would promote Friedman to a GIS Planner II level.

Williams stated that if the Executive Committee allowed him to consider hiring both the Brennans for the two positions that he would only do so after an interview had shown that Robert Brennan was an acceptable candidate. He also stated that he thought the best route might be to hire Brennan as a contractor with the understanding that the position would be re-advertised after a period of six or nine months. Williams also said that he had not yet discussed this option with the Brennans.

A discussion of the issues then ensued. Dilworth expressed several concerns regarding taking such an action. He stated that he felt that the proposed arrangement had the potential to result in an appearance of favoritism (we hired Robert Brennan because we had to get Susan Brennan) that would undermine the credibility of the agency. He also felt that hiring both Brennans could severely compromise morale within the agency. Other members of the Executive Committee agreed that the potential for problems existed in the situation. But they stated that they felt that the hiring process for the Assistant Director position was stalled and that the needs of the agency required that they consider this option. Hersh stated that she had agreed with Dilworth's concerns at the previous meeting, but felt there was no choice at this point.

After further discussion, a motion was made by Parker and seconded by Prolman to investigate hiring Susan Brennan for the Assistant Director/Land Use position and her husband, Robert Brennan, for the GIS Manager position on a contract basis. Motion passed.

Williams closed the meeting by stating that the applications for GIS Planner (Koren Melfi's former position) looked extremely good and he had high hopes that he would be able to hire a very good person for that position.

## **Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.