



NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
Executive Committee
February 16, 2005

Present: John Eresian, Chair
Mike Fimbel
Howard Dilworth, Jr., Treasurer
Andy Prolman
Bill Parker
Marilyn Peterman

Absent: Kathy Hersh, Vice Chair, Nelson Disco, Frank Bolmarcich

Staff: Stephen Williams, Executive Director

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Executive Committee chair John Eresian at 6:00 pm.

Approval of the Minutes of January 19, 2005

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted by Peterman, second by Parker. Motion passed.

Closed Session to Discuss Personnel Issue

Williams stated that issues had arisen necessitating a closed session. Motion by Dilworth, second by Parker to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II(c). Roll call:

Dilworth - Aye
Prolman - Aye
Fimbel - Aye
Parker - Aye
Peterman - Aye
Eresian - Aye

Motion by Dilworth, second by Peterman to seal the minutes of the non-public session. Motion passed.

Report on Commuter Rail Contract

Williams summarized recent developments with regard to the Lowell-Nashua Commuter Rail project. He stated that the project was going very well and making rapid progress. Williams stated that on February 9 the Executive Council approved a contract with NRPC. Under this contract NRPC will have the lead role for the technical studies conducted this year for the commuter rail project. The total contract is for \$750,000 with \$600,000 coming from federal New Starts funds and \$150,000 from the state general fund. Staff is currently negotiating a scope of work and contract with Parsons Brinkerhoff to conduct the required studies. Williams expected to sign the contract within the week. Under the terms of the contract Parsons Brinkerhoff will undertake nine tasks required to advance the commuter rail project. These will include, ridership forecasting, engineering design studies of the trackage and station, completion of the environmental studies, development of financial plans for both construction and on-going operations, support for the city for negotiations with the site developer and establishment of the TIF district, and submittal of materials to FTA for New Starts ranking. Williams stated that the consultants work on this contract would be complete by December and that he expected a follow-up design contract for approximately \$2.5 million.



Proposal to City of Nashua for Commuter Rail Project Support

Williams stated that he discussed with Kathy Hersh the possibility of receiving a contract from the City for support and project management activities for the Commuter Rail project. He submitted to the Executive Committee a brief proposal and scope of work. The proposal called for NRPC to carry out project management tasks between July 2005 and December 2008 at a total cost of \$250,000. Of this sum, \$200,000 was proposed to be FTA 5307 transit grant funds and \$50,000 to be matching funds provided by NRPC.

Motion by Peterman, second by Parker to approval submittal of the proposal to City of Nashua for Commuter Rail Project Management. Motion passed.

Finance Report for January 2005

Williams presented the January 2005 Finance report. He noted that the agency was in very good condition financially and was anticipating

Legislative Forum Program

Williams distributed a revised Legislative Forum program. He said that at this point everything was on track for the event. He had not received any definite answer regarding attendance of the Governor but was assuming that he would not attend. Williams also said that Executive Councilor Debora Pignatelli had accepted an invitation and noted her time in the program.

Training of Staff

Williams stated that he had included this item on the agenda at the request of Howard Dilworth. Williams described in general terms his approach to training staff. He indicated that in most cases staff members had the technical knowledge required for the jobs they were performing. He pointed out that the agency has a training budget and that he encourages the members of the staff to take advantage of such training opportunities as are available. Williams also stated that most often the training that actually takes place is not so much with regard to technical issues, but more in the area of issues of organizational dynamics, personalities and local politics that arise in dealing with the municipalities. In such cases, the main teaching was in the area of interpersonal skills and of understanding local governments and that the main training was in the area of judgment. Such training is necessarily on a case by case basis and as a result, training at an agency like NRPC is more like an apprenticeship than anything else. Williams said that his plan was that he and Assistant Director Roger Hunt would do most of that training on a one-on-one basis with the staff members. He stated that his plans had been somewhat upset by the staffing issues the agency has been dealing with for several years, but that he still thought that was a valid model.

Dilworth stated that his concern was that some current and former staff members were not sufficiently familiar with the operations of local governments and the local political context to understand how to deal with specific situations. Williams acknowledged that was a difficult thing to teach and pointed out that all 12 municipalities functioned differently. As a result, what was true in Hudson was not necessarily true in Pelham. Williams stated that as the personalities and issues in the municipalities changed it was a constant battle to keep up with each of the 12 communities.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

Williams directed the attention of the Executive Committee members to the Regional Housing Needs Assessment that was distributed with the packet. He described the purpose of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment and the method of development. Williams stated that the document was developed



under the direction of the Regional Housing Needs Advisory Committee that had met seven times in 2004/05 to work on the report. He also reviewed the main findings of the report with the members of the Executive Committee. Williams was asked who the target audience of the report was. He stated that for the most part the target audience was planners and planning board members in the region and the purpose was to facilitate local planning for the region's housing needs. But he acknowledged that there were certain sections in the report that were aimed at New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority. He stated that this was done to address issues on which the advisory committee did not think NHHFA policies were consistent with the needs of the region.

Several members of the Executive Committee had specific questions or minor changes to request. Dilworth specifically requested that the term "median household income" be defined specifically in the report. Williams stated that he would make all the requested changes. The Executive Committee agreed by consensus that the report should be submitted to the full Commission at the March meeting for adoption.

Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

Williams directed the attention of the Executive Committee to the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan that was included in the packet. He said that the plan was an update of the adopted 1995 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Williams described the purpose of the plan as to establish a process whereby bicycle and pedestrian transportation modes would be developed in the region through improved facilities, but also through changes in maintenance and enforcement strategies and by encouraging appropriate sectors of society to utilize bicycle and pedestrian modes. Williams said that in some ways this plan was the most radical plan NRPC had because it anticipated and planned for a long term change in the transportation choices in the region. He noted that it took America about 60 years to move to a point of almost exclusive dependence on the private auto for transportation and moving society back toward a true multi-modal transportation system would probably require a similar length of time.

Members of the Executive Committee asked several question about the plan which Williams answered. Williams described the extensive review of the draft document by the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee and stated that the TTAC was recommending adoption. The Executive Committee agreed by consensus that the report would be submitted to the full Commission at the March meeting for adoption.

Review of Legislation

Williams provided a summary of current legislation for review by the members.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:38 pm by Prolman, second by Fimbel. Meeting was adjourned.