Full Commission Meeting
April 24, 2018
Newbrook Fire Department

Commissioners Participating via Conference Call: Tom Consolino, Carolyn Partridge
Commissioners Absent: Elizabeth McLaughlin, Cynthia Nau, Kevin Stine, Sarah Shippee, Edie Mas, Deborah Wright, Matthew Somerville, Michael Johnson, Renee Mulkey, Will Bissonnette, John Lonardo, Kristine Sweeter
Guests: Teddy Hopkins (Readsboro)
Staff Present: Chris Campany, Marion Major
Introductions: There was a quorum of 17 towns present.
Convened: 6:05PM

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jodi French at approximately 6:05 p.m. Jodi asked if any guests were present and if they would like to make a public comment at that time. Teddy Hopkins of Readsboro expressed concern that he believed the regional energy plan would create a blanket prohibition against wind power generation and explained that deliberations about wind power in Readsboro took a long time.

Administrative Items & Reports:
Secretary’s Report: The February 27, 2018 minutes were amended to reflect that Tim Arsenault had seconded a motion. On a motion by Tim Arsenault, seconded by Stephan Chait, the minutes were adopted by a roll call vote with 2 abstentions.
Financial Report: On a motion by Charlie Goodwin, seconded by Jack Cunningham, the Treasurer’s Report was approved by a roll call vote. Treasurer Lew Sorenson said the WRC remains solvent. Executive Director Chris Campany noted that operations continue to be on budget and that the audit had been reviewed and accepted by the Finance Committee and Executive Board at their April meetings. There were no findings in the audit, but the WRC does need to establish a policy regarding
the reuse of funds repaid to the brownfields RLF to make it clear that those funds are to be used to support the WRC’s brownfield program projects.

Adoption of the Windham Regional Energy Plan as an Amendment to the Windham Regional Plan:
Chair Jodi French explained that our bylaws require that a quorum of at least 75 percent of towns in good standing be represented in order for a vote on the regional plan or amendment to be held. Furthermore, statute requires that a regional plan or amendment shall be adopted by not less than a 60 percent vote of the commissioners representing municipalities. Twenty-three towns had appointed a total of 39 commissioners as of the meeting, which meant 18 towns had to be represented in order for the quorum requirement to be met, and a minimum of 24 commissioners would have to vote in favor of adopting the regional energy plan as an amendment to the regional plan. It was noted that we were one town short of having a quorum to vote on the adoption of the plan amendment. It was decided that discussion about the regional energy plan should begin as Executive Director Chris Campany attempted to contact other commissioners not present. WRC Planner Marion Major summarized the comments received during the two public hearings held on the regional energy plan, as well as written comments. Energy Committee Chair Greg Brown provided an overview of what the plan contains and why it was developed. There was discussion about ongoing concerns with the data that form the basis of the statewide standards around which energy use and targets were developed for the regional energy plan. There was also discussion about the need to update the Windham Regional Plan Proposed Land Use maps, especially the Resource Lands boundary, as the regional energy plan states that development of utility-scale wind in Resource Lands is incompatible with the land use policy for those lands. It was noted the policy within the regional plan directs the WRC to, “strongly discourage all development in Resource Lands for purposes other than forestry and agriculture,” and Commissioner John Whitman felt this did not create an outright exclusion.

Executive Director Chris Campany explained that the WRC is in the process of beginning an update of the Windham Regional Plan and Windham Region Transportation Plan, which includes revisions to all related maps. He also noted that revisions to the Regional Energy Plan could be part of that process as well, as the entire regional plan would be open to review. Commissioner Guy Tanza of Brookline arrived, thereby fulfilling the regional plan amendment vote requirement. Commissioner Whitman said that he felt the regional energy plan should be adopted with the caveat that the WRC should not strictly apply the boundaries of Resource Lands in its project review deliberations should a utility scale wind proposal come before the Commission before the Proposed Land Use map boundaries are revised. Commissioner Whitman made a motion to adopt the regional energy plan with the understanding that the WRC would not apply strict Resource Lands boundary in deliberation to utility scale wind projects that come before the WRC until the land use maps are amended. Commissioner Lew Sorenson seconded the motion. There was discussion as to whether or not this constituted an amendment to the regional energy plan itself, and Commissioner and Natural Resources Committee Chair Gabby Ciuffreda expressed concern that such a constraint on the application of the land use map boundaries could compromise WRC engagement in project review across the board. Commissioner Bill Dunkel explained that the regional energy plan already contains language that expresses the need to update the Proposed Land Use maps when the regional plan is next updated. Commissioner Tom Consolino called the question, seconded by Commissioner Tim
Arsenault. The motion to call the question passed on a roll call vote of 25 ayes and 1 nay. The vote on
the Whitman motion failed on a roll call vote of 18 ayes, 7 nays, and 1 abstention. Executive Director
Chris Campany again explained that a consequence of not having an adopted regional energy plan
with determination of energy compliance by the Department of Public Service by July 1, 2018 would
mean that Windham Region towns would not be able to have their town plan energy elements
approved for Act 174 compliance as statute makes no alternate provisions for review after July 1,
2018. Prior to July 1 towns have the option of having their plans reviewed by the Department.
Commissioner Gabby Ciuffreda made a motion that the regional energy plan be adopted, seconded by
Commissioner Jack Cunningham. The motion failed on a roll call vote of 22 ayes, 3 nays, and 1
abstention. Commissioner Charlie Goodwin expressed his opinion that the Commission was letting
down its member towns by not giving them the option of having their town plan energy elements
approved. Planner Marion Major explained that three towns are in the process of adopting Act 174-
compliant energy elements as amendments to their towns and would likely ask for regional approval.
She also noted that she is currently working with 6 additional towns on town plan energy elements.
Executive Director Chris Campany noted that while the discussion had been dominated by concerns
about utility scale wind, that many towns are developing town plan energy elements to have greater
input on solar developments. He further noted that if history was an indicator, the time it would take
to develop a new utility scale wind proposal would likely take much longer, years longer, then the
proposed Windham Regional Plan update that is getting underway. Commissioner and Project
Review Committee Chair Jack Cunningham noted that in the last 10 years the Project Review
Committee has received no utility scale wind projects but it is now common to deliberate upon at
least two solar project proposals at each Committee meeting. Commissioner Tim Arsenault made a
motion that the Windham Regional Energy Plan be adopted as an amendment to the Windham
Regional Plan. The motion passed on a roll call vote with 25 ayes, and 1 nay.

Executive Director’s Report & Other Business: Executive Director Chris Campany commended the
Commission for their hard work and vigorous, substantive and civil debate about the regional energy
plan. The Commission commended the hard work of Planner Marion Major on shepherding the
development of the plan. He explained in greater detail the beginning of the Windham Regional Plan
review process that the Executive Board had approved. Over the next six months the WRC
committees would identify what underlying information and maps they’d like to review and update,
and what plan topics and policies should be revisited. From this input a report would be prepared for
the Executive Board outlining the scope of the regional plan update going forward.

On a motion by Charlie Goodwin, seconded by Tim Arsenault, the meeting was adjourned at
approximately 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ashley Collins