Full Commission Meeting
June 26, 2018
Newbrook Fire Department

Commissioners Present in Person: Jodi French (Chair), William Bissonette, Sarah Shippee, Lise Fortin, Steve Lembke, Stephan Chait, Tim Arsenault, Bobbi Kilburn, Eric Stevens, Roger Turner, Everett Wilson, John Whitman, Gabby Ciuffreda, Jenepher Burnell, Prudence MacKinney, Charlie Goodwin, Lew Sorenson, Edie Mas, Jack Cunningham

Commissioners Participating via Conference Call: None.


Guest Speaker: Shyla Foss, Vermont Department of Health

Guests: Andrew Snelling (Townshend Citizen)

Staff Present: Chris Campany (Executive Director), Susan McMahon (Associate Director)

Introductions: There was a quorum of 14 towns present.

Convened: 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. No public comments were made by guests.

Administrative Items & Reports:

Secretary's Report: The April 24, 2018 minutes were approved on a motion by Tim Arsenault, seconded by Jack Cunningham, with two abstentions.

Financial Report: On a motion by Charlie Goodwin, seconded by Tim Arsenault, 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 the development of the FY 2019 budget was underway and that the outlook was similar to the current year. The Personnel Committee will meet Wednesday to discuss staff compensation to inform the Finance Committee’s budget decisions. The Executive Board will consider the draft budget at its meeting on August 14th, and the Full Commission will vote on the Work Program and Budget at its annual meeting on August 28th.
How to engage towns in the VT Department of Health 3-4-50 Campaign led by Citizen Interest Commissioner for Healthy Communities, and Vermont Department of Health Brattleboro District Director, Prudence MacKinney (with Shyla Foss, VT Department of Health) – Commissioner MacKinney and Nutritional Health Specialist Foss presented the 3-4-50 campaign, which seeks to address the 3 behaviors that lead to 4 chronic diseases that lead to 50 percent of death among Vermonters. The principle solutions are better nutrition and more physical activity. The campaign includes a heavy focus on the built environment and ways to make walking and bicycling preferred means of mobility, as well as access to physical recreation opportunities. After reviewing the initiative, those in attendance were asked what was happening in their towns to improve nutrition and physical activity. Commissioners in attendance provided several examples from Readsboro, Weston, Dover, Vernon, Dummerston, Putney and Guilford. Commissioner MacKinney also described the collaboration between her office and the WRC.

Associate Director Susan McMahon’s Presents Planning for Housing/Homes for All – Susan presented a case for the importance of knowing what a community’s housing needs are, what information informs housing needs assessments, what common needs and issues are, and how to translate these needs into plans and action. Commissioners shared housing initiatives in their regions, noting that there is sometimes a public and political bias against “affordable housing,” re-characterization of the issue as “workforce housing,” and other challenges municipalities face in planning for housing for all. One of the chief issues raised was the need for smaller homes into which older residents can “downsize,” and larger homes into which growing families can “upsize.” Limited housing availability can make housing choice difficult throughout the Windham Region.

Executive Director’s Report & Other Business:
Chris noted that the Department of Public Service held its hearing on the Windham Regional Energy Plan and that the WRC was notified that the plan was given a determination of energy compliance by the Commissioner for Public Service. This will allow the WRC to review town plans and amendments for Act 174 energy compliance. The Executive Board approved the process by which the WRC will review town plan energy elements. This will be brought to the Full Commission for consideration. The Nuclear Decommissioning Citizens Advisory Panel is undergoing change as number of long-serving members go off of the panel. Regulatory approval of the sale of Vermont Yankee from Entergy to NorthStar is still awaiting final orders from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Vermont Public Utilities Commission. Chris is now the Chair of the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies. Chris and Associate Director McMahon both spoke at recent regional and state economic development forums. Southern Vermont has garnered attention as it has taken economic recovery and development into its own hands. The WRC Brownfields Program, and specifically the brownfields revolving loan fund, was awarded $500,000 from the US Environmental Protection Agency. The May staff activity summary was distributed and Chris asked that Commissioners read and share the summary with their town officials. An Open Meeting Law forum organized by the WRC is to be held Wednesday evening in Townshend. Massachusetts will pilot two additional round trip trains between Springfield, MA and Greenfield for
three years beginning next summer. The Franklin Regional Council of Governments has been advocating for commuter rail. Chris suggested that the update of the Regional Plan could explore what it would mean for the Windham Region to have commuter rail service within 10 years.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Ashley Collins