Commissioners Present: Piet van Loon (Acting Chair), Maggie Bartenhagen, Nick Bartenhagen, Sam Battaglino, Heath Boyer, Tom Buchanan, Jenipher Burnell, Tom Consolino, Jack Cunningham, Charles Goodwin, Mary Alice Herbert, Brad Horn, Emily Kunreuther, Alan LaCombe, Ray Mara, Priscilla Margola, Jane Morano Purdy, Bill Murray, Cynthia Nau, Carolyn Partridge, Denis Pinkernell, Steve Skibniowsky, Eric Stevens, Roger Turner, John Whitman, Norm Wright

Citizen Interest Commissioners Present: Greg Brown, Gretchen Havreluk, Lynette Hamilton

Guests Present: Forrest Hammond; VT Fish & Wildlife, Lisa Kissell; Grafton Citizen

Staff Present: Chris Campany, Ashley Collins

Introductions: There was a quorum of 18 towns present.

Convened: 7:00PM

Administrative Items & Reports:

Secretary’s Report: On a motion by T. Consolino, seconded by C. Goodwin the minutes from the June meeting were approved, with one abstention.

Financial Report: On a motion by N. Wright, seconded by T. Consolino the July Finance report was approved.

Living with bears in Southeastern Vermont: Wildlife Biologist, Forrest Hammond, with the State of Vermont’s Fish and Wildlife Department, presented studies on the most common the North American Black Bear, which is found here in Vermont. He discussed the bear’s typical diet, which includes beech nuts and berries; their resourcefulness; the age of a mature adult female having cubs which is around 7 or 8; and how the troublemakers tend to be juvenile males. Bears are relatively healthy animals that don’t appear to have the external parasites that moose are known to have; they are also able make remarkable recoveries from injuries. Mr. Hammond explained that bears used to live in higher elevations but it is becoming more common to see them living in more urban areas as they pursue food. He explained that bears will almost always run if confronted, and that it does the bear and property owner a favor if they are aggressively scared away. This is especially true of young bears; they should view humans as a threat. Mr. Hammond also summarized Vermont’s Big Game Management Plan, and explained that the goal of this plan is to have a self-sustaining wildlife population and not be dependent on wildlife control. Mr. Hammond discussed the potential impacts that residential or resort development may have on black bears in Vermont, and explained Act 250 and Section 248a as it relates to black bears. Effective policy would restrict development within ¼ miles of bear habitat and corridors. The State of VT is trying to map and conserve areas where bears
cross, and have satellite GPS collars, which will help with land use planning. One of these efforts came about through the permit review of the Deerfield Wind project. Currently the study is just for Vermont with links between towns, but he’d like to see MA and NH linked with the study as well. A written report on this project will be produced by 2018.

**FY2014 Work Program & Budget:** N. Wright explained that the only significant change from last year is the work on the Economic Development Administration (EDA) project, which is scheduled to be completed by June 2014. Chris explained that the WRC will also receive funding to coordinate regional planning commission support for the development of applications to the second round of CDBG disaster recovery funding by towns. The Finance Committee recommends approval of the FY2014 budget, and the Executive Board voted to recommend approval of both the work program and budget; J. Cunningham moved approval, seconded by G. Brown, motion was approved.

**Executive Director’s Report & Other Business:**
1. Executive Director, Chris Campany explained that Entergy VY’s announcement that it will cease operations in 2014 will prompt more urgent discussion about decommissioning and the fiscal, social, and economic impacts that will come with the closure.
2. Chris Campany met with the Agency of Transportation who would like to see more regional commission participation in documenting damage to town roads from storms, and track where there is new and repetitive damage.
3. Regional Plan Progress: A majority of Committees have submitted comments to Cullen relating to each committee’s specific chapter and policies. The Committee will begin to schedule meetings and forums, and look at schedules to avoid conflicting meeting dates with other agencies holding public forums.
4. The September Commission meeting will be held in Readsboro and we will have a comprehensive update on the Regional Plan process, as well as have elections for Executive Board, Officers, and Citizen Interest Commissioners.

**Respectfully submitted,**
Ashley Collins