Full Commission Meeting  
March 26, 2013  
Putney Central School, Putney, VT

Commissioners Present: Jodi French (Chair), Maggie Bartenhagen, Nick Bartenhagen, Sam Battaglino, Dora Bouboulis, Heath Boyer, Tom Buchanan, Jenepher Burnell, Jack Cunningham, Brad Horn, Emily Kunreuther, Ray Mara, Edith Mas, Jane Morano Purdy, Bill Murray, Eric Stevens, Guy Tanza, Roger Turner, Piet van Loon, John Whitman  

Citizen Interest Commissioners Present: Lynn Barrett, Greg Brown  

Staff Present: Chris Campany, Ashley Collins  

Introductions: There was a quorum of 16 towns present.  

Convened: 7:05PM

Administrative Items & Reports:  

Secretary’s Report: On a motion by B. Horn, seconded by J. Cunningham, the minutes from the February meeting were approved with two abstentions.  

Financial Report: On a motion by P. van Loon, seconded by E. Kunreuther, the finance report was approved.

Votes Subject to Ratification:  

Secretary’s Report: November 27, 2012 and January 29, 2013, a motion was made by G. Brown, to ratify the vote, seconded by J. Cunningham; ratification was approved.  

Finance Reports: November 2012, December 2012, January 2013, a motion was made by G. Brown, to ratify the vote, seconded by E. Mas; ratification was approved.  

Brookline Town Plan: On a motion by J. Cunningham, seconded by J. Whitman, to ratify the approval of the Brookline Town Plan Confirmation and Planning Process at the February 26, 2013 meeting; ratification was approved.  

Bylaw Amendment: on a motion by P. van Loon, seconded by B. Horn, to ratify the approval of the bylaw amendment at the February 26, 2013 meeting; ratification was approved.

Affordable Housing in the Windham Region – What Affordable Housing Is, and What It Isn’t: Windham Windsor Housing Trust Executive Director, Connie Snow, was present to
discuss affordable housing in Windham County, stating its mission is to strengthen the communities in Southeastern Vermont. Housing Development, Homeownership Center, and Property Management are the three basic programs of the WWHT in the community. While their focus is primarily on affordable housing in the community, they do a lot of work with Towns on specific projects and have a property management program. The WWHT has housing counselors who are able to provide home buyer education, pre and post-purchase counseling, help with foreclosures, and assistance with low cost and low income loans. Ms. Snow explained that people are often skeptical because of fear of density in the region, and are concerned with what kinds of people utilize affordable housing versus the real issue of housing affordability. The cost for renters versus homeowners, homelessness, median wages and poverty levels, and the return on private investment in housing were some of the challenges facing not only the Windham Region, but most of Vermont. Ms. Snow explained that community trusts have flourished in the State of Vermont, helping to make single family homes more affordable with more funding options available from programs such as: Vermont Housing Finance Agency, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Vermont Community Development Program, and Vermont State Housing Authority.

Executive Director's Report & Other Business:

1. Executive Director, Chris Campany announced that the first WRC Revolving Loan Fund loan and grant application for funding remediation of the new Deerfield Valley Transit Authority site has been approved for $100,000 in grant money and $50,000 in loans over a 15 year period.

2. Senator Patrick Leahy came to Brattleboro to announce the initial receipt and disbursement of Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Funds, and the U.S. Economic Development Administration Disaster Recovery funding support for the southern Vermont business and community resiliency planning effort. The flood recovery officers are currently going through the orientation phase, and then will begin to work closer with business affected by Tropical Storm Irene.

3. Executive Director, Chris Campany reminded Commissioners that Basic Emergency Operations Plans for the Towns need to be updated. Commissioners were encouraged to follow up with their town’s Emergency Management Directors regarding the status of updating the plan. There was conversation that town officials are overwhelmed by the amount of information and communication they receive not only from the WRC, but from all levels of government and other entities. It was recognized that there are increasing demands upon the towns associated with timely communication. This may result in towns missing grant and other funding opportunities, and there are concerns that they may at times miss communications about regulatory and procedural requirements associated with state or federal programs.

4. Executive Director, Chris Campany announced that the Vermont Secretary of Transportation, Brian Searles, will likely be our guest speaker at the May Commission
meeting and polled Commissioner. He would like to meet with the Commission on May 15th, and Chris asked if there were objections to moving the May Full Commission meeting to that date. Chris asked for a show of hands as to how many would support moving the Full Commission meeting to May 15th. The show of hands overwhelmingly supported moving the Full Commission meeting to take advantage of the Secretary’s visit.

J. Cunningham moved adjournment.  
Meeting adjourned at 8:49PM

Respectfully submitted,  
Ashley Collins