Commissioners Present: Jodi French (Chair), Sam Battaglino, Tom Buchanan, Jenepher Burnell, Dick Clark, Tom Consolino, Jack Cunningham, Rod Francis, Jodi French, Mary Alice Herbert, Alan LaCombe, Jane Morano-Purdy, Bill Murray, O’Connor, Lew Sorenson, Eric Stevens, Roger Turner, Piet van Loon, Norm Wright

Citizen Interest Commissioners Present: Lynn Barrett, Greg Brown, Gretchen Havreluk

Guests Present: Pat Moulten-Powden

Staff Present: Chris Campany, Ashley Collins

Introductions: There was a not a quorum with only 11 towns present.

Convened: 7:05PM

Administrative Items & Reports: There was no action taken on the March draft meeting minutes, or the March Financial report, due to the lack of a quorum.

Brattleboro Town Plan Approval: The panel reviewed the town plan and reported their findings back to the Planning Coordination Committee (PCC). The PCC recommended approval of the plan, and confirmation of the town plan and process. N. Wright made a motion to approve the plan as presented, and was seconded by D. Clark. The motion was approved with one abstention; subject to ratification at the next Commission meeting. On the confirmation of the town plan and process, P. van Loon made a motion, seconded by L. Sorenson, motion was approved; subject to ratification at the next Commission meeting.

Windham Region Workforce Opportunities and Challenges: Pat Moulton-Powden, Workforce Development Director with the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, was present to discuss the workforce development challenges around the State of Vermont, and more specifically in our region. Windham County reportedly has the oldest population in the United States which has significant implications for employers, job seekers, and the regional economy as a whole. She showed comparisons between the Windham Region workforce and those of NH, MA and other areas of VT. Describing the demographic challenges, the change in workforce population is decreasing in the younger age groups. Quality of life in southern Vermont is a potential asset for recruiting and retaining younger workers as younger generations are thought to be looking for community first and a job second. The region needs to leverage its community assets to bring the younger generation workforce back into our local economy. Pat outlined the 2017 SeVEDS Goals and Objectives including: to increase the population proportion of younger employees, create an entrepreneurial
environment, increase the size and quality of the region’s workforce, and improve wage parity within the local labor shed. The SeVEDS Workforce Group has a committee which consists of higher education, employers, and the Vermont Department of labor; they are currently working together to develop a hiring inventory and are looking out over the next five years of what the top twenty-five employers will be seeking for occupations and different departments. Career ladder mapping is a useful tool that will be used to provide data for recruitment of talent, and to inform schools and colleges of what is available and needed in the workforce. The SeVEDS Workforce Group is also developing a Windham Higher Education Cooperative (WHEC), and recognizes the need to start discussion with the K-12 community to give more understanding and opportunities in school, such as apprenticeship programs.

**Committee Chair Reports:**

**Brownfields:** Norm mentioned that they started the first group of loans and grants through the RLF program, and there are a number of active sites in several communities in the region.

**Community Development:** The Committee is currently reviewing the regional plan, and will begin to explore opportunities to bring together different groups to explore regional agricultural initiatives that might be developed.

**Emergency Planning:** Currently working on the Regional Plan Update, and how hazard mitigation plans can inform planning generally.

**Planning Coordination:** The Committee has been working with towns seeking regional approval of their town plans, as well as the Committee’s own processes.

**Project Review:** Spent a significant amount of time working with the review of Haystack and Stratton master plans. The Committee is also reviewing applications for cell towers, gravel pits, as well as solar operations, hydro plants, and other land use issues, and they’re reviewing the regional plan.

**Public Policy & Legislative:** The weekly meetings have concluded with the State Representatives. The Committee will plan to meet again to review what they have learned thus far, and will convene after the close of the Legislative Session to work on improvements for next year.

**Regional Plan Update:** Currently restructuring the current plan, and would like to have conversations with the community about specific topics such as: affordable housing, development in flood and fluvial erosion hazard zones, and other specific topics of importance to the region.

**Transportation:** The Committee has been prioritizing projects and working on the Transportation Plan Update. Mollie Burke recently came and spoke to the Committee regarding the Transportation Budget.

**VY Study:** Tom B. explained the Committee represents the regional interest before the Public Service Board primarily on issues related to the eventual closure and decommissioning of the plant, and reminded Commissioners that the WRC has taken a neutral position as to whether or not the plant should continue to operate.

**Executive Director’s Report & Other Business:**

1. Executive Director, Chris Campany mentioned that the Executive Board is in need of two new members, and asked Commissioners to send nominations to Carolyn Partridge, or to him; the vote will take place at the June Commission meeting.

2. Norm Wright provided a brief report on the Audit that was accepted by the Executive Board at their April meeting.
3. Chris provided an overview of the feedback from the recent Commissioner Surveys. He outlined that we will have ten Commission meetings per calendar year with six of them being centrally located in the Townshend/Newfane area. WRC will offer a Commissioner Orientation in June if at least two Commissioners sign up. The general preference seemed to be that we have occasional social events in association with Full Commission meetings rather than an annual dinner or picnic. This will be revisited within a year or two.

4. Chris reminded Commissioners that the May Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 15th in Newfane, VT. The Executive Board will plan to meet just prior to the Full Commission meeting instead of their regularly scheduled meeting day on May 14th.

5. **Statewide Engagement Issues:** The Energy Generation Siting Policy Commission released findings. One common theme out of the study was the elevated status of regional and municipal plans. Chris covered the main points on what the recommendations could mean for the Commission and municipalities. He also mentioned the changes to the statute governing the downtown program, and the emphasis on neighborhoods within a walkable distance of downtowns. Regional Planning Commissions and Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security met to discuss follow-up on the Irene After Action Review. Last but not least, a Bill had just passed through the House (H. 450) into Senator White’s Committee, which would allow RPC’s to own their buildings, take out lines of credit, and hold accounts in escrow.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:06PM**

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Collins