

## Windham Regional Commissioner

### *What to expect after you are appointed!*

#### **Part One, Full Commission Meeting**

As a new Commissioner, it is likely that your first official meeting after orientation will be a Full Commission Meeting. Here is what you can expect at that meeting.

- You will get an email with material including an agenda and other important documents about a week before the meeting. Review the package when you get it.
- If possible, get to the meeting a few minutes early. This will give you an opportunity to meet and network with other Commissioners.
- Most meetings start with administrative items. This includes the approval of minutes from the prior meeting and the Treasurer's Report.
  - The minutes from the prior meeting will be part of the package. You will not have time to review them at the meeting. This is one of the reasons you need to review the package when you get it.
  - The Treasurer's report includes a narrative and financial statements. One of the responsibilities of Commissioners is to approve the WRC Budget. A regular review of finances is important, but we realize not everyone is familiar with reading financial statements. The narrative was designed to help. You are encouraged to ask questions about the financials at the meeting.
- Guest speakers are often invited to present at full commission meetings. The speaker may cover a topic familiar to you. But the breadth of work the WRC does is wide. Listening to guest speakers gives all commissioners a chance to learn about new issues and opportunities in the region.
- As a representative from your town to the WRC, you may also be asked to vote to approve new appointments, changes to WRC policies or bylaws, and changes to the regional plan, budgets and workplans at full commission meetings.
- Annually, we also vote to elect new Executive Board members
- This meeting is also the opportunity for chairpeople of WRC committees to provide a report out of activity. And, the Executive Director will provide an executive report highlighting the work the staff at the WRC has been focusing on. This is an important part of the meeting. You represent your town's interest on the WRC, but you may only sit on one committee. These full commission meetings will help you learn about all the work of the WRC does, what operational issues staff and management are addressing, and will help you identify topics to pursue further or report to your town officials.
- The public is always welcome at any WRC meeting and Public Comment is always on our agenda before the meeting adjourns.

## **Part Two, Committee Meetings**

As a commissioner you will be asked to serve on at least one committee. By now, you may have already selected that committee. While each committee is slightly different, there are some things you can expect at most committee meetings.

- Before you attend your first committee meeting, meet with the WRC staff member assigned to work with your group. They are knowledgeable and can give you an overview of the topics the committee is working on currently. You are also encouraged to speak with the committee chair.
- You will get a package of information about a week before your meeting. It will include an agenda and a copy of the last meeting's minutes. It may also include materials that should be reviewed as 'prework' for the meeting. Some examples include links to pending legislation like Act 250 or reports from state agencies like a Draft Tactical Basin Plan. As with Full Commission meetings, it's important to review these materials before the meeting so you're familiar with the subject matter.
- At the meeting, your committee may state or federal policies or legislation to provide public comment. Sometimes the committee will comment, and other times commissioners may comment as individuals.
- Committees often invite guests to share information, or a person or organization might ask to attend a meeting to present a proposal as part of a request for support. When a committee is asked to provide a letter of support, that support is based upon the policies of the Windham Regional Plan. The policies of the Windham Regional Plan provide the foundation for all commission and committee decision-making.
- Commissioners update the Regional Plan. This must be done every 8 years but changes in regulations may cause a partial update to be done via amendment (the last one was the Regional Energy Plan). When its time to update or amend the plan, your WRC staff person and the Chair of your committee will guide you through the process.
- You may participate in 'field trips' and other educational events sponsored or coordinated by the WRC staff. You should invite town officials and/or residents of your towns to attend these events, too.
- You will feel like more of an expert at the committee level but, much like the full commission, you may be surprised at the breadth of topics discussed at the committee level. Ask questions, share your knowledge.
- There are a few committees that have an internal focus. These committees have an important role to support the business operations of the WRC. If you serve on these committees, the work will be different. Examples: Nominating, Personnel and Finance

## **Other Activity**

You will get some information outside of your normally scheduled committee meetings. The WRC staff works on projects and plans for towns. As a Commissioner for your town, you will be copied on key communications and reports so you are aware of what's happening and can provide feedback. You may need to reach out to your town officials like the Select Board or Planning Commission to discuss this information. If you are unsure about what action you should take, ask the staff member or another Commissioner.

While commissioners guide the operation of the WRC, the commission only does work in towns either at the request of or with the permission of the Select Board and/or Planning Commission, or sometimes other specific groups such as the town energy committee or conservation commission. You can certainly suggest how the WRC might be able to help your town, but you'll want to talk to both town officials and WRC staff.

You will also get invitations to meetings or seminars that are hosted by the WRC or our partners. Recent examples include the Emerald Ash Borer Educational meetings and Broadband meetings. You are strongly encouraged to attend these if you can. Invite your town officials and residents to attend, too.