



**Full Commission Meeting
January 31, 2023**

Commissioners Present:

Stanley Noga, Jr.	Brookline
Todd Davidson	Dummerston
Cheryl Kaufman	Grafton
Eric Stevens	Grafton
Gabby Ciuffreda, Chair	Guilford
Stephan Chait	Halifax
Edee Edwards	Halifax
Andy Coyne	Jamaica
George Mora	Londonderry
Edith Mas	Marlboro
Ann Golob	Newfane
Stephen Dotson	Putney
Jessica Tobey	Searsburg
Jim Pinkerton	Vernon
Tim Arsenaault	Vernon
Jack Cunningham	Wardsboro
Charles Goodwin	Weston
Peter Barus	Whitingham
Bob Bois	Wilmington
Bill Dunkel	Windham
Gretchen Havreluk	Citizen Interest Commissioner - Community Development

Commissioners Absent:

Andy Toepfer	Athens
Bob Anderson	Athens
Sue Fillion	Brattleboro
Ralph Meima	Brattleboro
Sarah Shippee	Dover
Kevin Stine	Dover
Bill Conley	Dummerston
Steve Lembke	Guilford
Denis Pinkernell	Londonderry
William Shakespeare	Marlboro
Shelly Huber	Newfane

Sue Bailey	Readsboro
Bonnie North	Rockingham
Susan Hammond	Rockingham
Matthew Somerville	Searsburg
Renee Mulkey	Stratton
Erica Reynolds	Stratton
Will Bissonnette	Townshend
Andrew Snelling	Townshend
Jenepher Burnell	Whitingham
Ann Manwaring	Wilmington
Carolyn Partridge	Windham
Travis Dobson	Winhall
Lynette Hamilton	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Agriculture
Robert McBride	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Arts & Culture
Linda Hecker	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Conservation
Laura Sibia	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Economic Development
Elizabeth Bridgewater	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Housing
Kathy Urffer	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Natural Resources
Lynn Barrett	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Tourism

Guests/Members of the Public: none

Staff Present: Chris Company, Executive Director; Sue Westa, Associate Director; Mike McConnell, Senior Planner; Colin Bratton; Transportation Planning Program Coordinator

Guest Speaker: none

The meeting was held via Zoom and called to order by Chair Gabby Ciuffreda at approximately 6:00 p.m. There were no amendments to the agenda.

The meeting began with an introduction of Mike McConnell, the WRC's new senior planner who joined the staff in November. He provided noted he is working on regional and municipal planning, is the staff lead on the WRC's electricity resiliency project, will be working with Margo Ghia on the Municipal Energy Resilience Program, is supporting the Westminster town plan, and is working with Alyssa Sabetto on local hazard mitigation plans.

Administrative Items:

Approval of the October 25, 2022 minutes: On a motion by Commissioner Arsenault, seconded by Commissioner Manwaring, the minutes were approved by a roll call vote with 1 abstention.

Transportation Committee to Transportation Advisory Committee Proposal Transportation Committee Chair Stephan Chait and Transportation Planning Program Coordinator Colin Bratton presented a proposal from the Transportation Committee, and endorsed by the Executive Board, that it be reconstructed to become a Transportation Advisory Committee. Currently there are five commissioners representing four towns on the committee. This number is insufficient for the committee to effectively address its purpose to provide robust review of transportation plans and projects proposed by VTrans and support towns in their transportation objectives. The Transportation

Advisory Committee is intended to expand town and transportation stakeholder representation in the transportation planning and project development process and bring the Windham Regional Commission closer in line with the Transportation Committee structures of our RPC counterparts around Vermont. Final decision-making authority would continue to lie with the Commission. The Transportation Advisory Committee would function only in an advisory capacity to the Executive Board and Full Commission. Commissioner Bois suggested the Energy Committee be specifically referenced in the draft Purpose and Objectives Statement to highlight that the transportation sector is the largest consumer of energy, especially fossil fuel energy, in the state and that transportation and energy policy are linked. Commissioner Stevens asked if non-town appointees would be able to vote on the committee and it was explained that the same WRC Rules of Procedure would apply to this committee as they would any other, as is required by the WRC Bylaws. Per the Rules of Procedure all committee members have the ability to vote. Commissioner Dotson asked if towns would have the capacity to successfully make appointments. Executive Director Campany suggested that transportation-related items are among the most popular points of engagement with the Commission and this may not be an issue. Commissioner Mas asked if other regions have had success with this model. Colin explained that the Rutland and Mount Ascutney regional commissions had gone through a similar transition and have had very positive results. Commissioner Chait moved that the Commission support the transition of the Transportation Committee to a Transportation Advisory Committee as proposed in the draft Purpose and Objectives statement. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Arsenault. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

Summary Presentation of Windham Senior's Health Collaborative Report Through a community-driven research and analysis process, guided by the Windham Regional Commission, the *Windham Aging* report, prepared for the Windham Region Senior's Health Collaborative, provides an overview of critical data sets and public reports to better understand trends related to aging within southeastern Vermont. Associate Director Susan Westa reviewed the report process and summarized its contents. The Windham Region is one of the most rapidly aging regions of the state and in New England, which has major implications for many aspects of life in and the economy of the region including workforce composition and demands, community health needs, transportation, and housing. Commissioner Chait noted this has implications for those in the building trades sector in terms of both demand for services and the aging of that sector. Commissioner Mas suggested the data related to those age 65 and above be broken down into 10-year increments as changes may be more pronounced as aging progresses. Commissioner Arsenault asked if the report looked at senior mental health and Sue explained it did, including substance abuse and risks associated with social isolation. Executive Director Campany noted the importance of compact settlements as they relate to aging as they can promote greater social interaction and mental well-being, as well as the opportunity to walk to local goods and services. Commissioners Dotson and Pinkerton noted the challenges and costs associated with changes in the energy sector for the aging population. Sue explained the next steps were the development of the plan, noting that the WRC would continue to participate in the collaborative.

Executive Director's Report: Chris provided an update on the status of open meeting law and the continuation of remote meeting flexibility adopted by the legislature in response to the pandemic for at least 2 additional years. He also explained that the state's regional commissions were being discussed in the legislature and by the Governor's administration in relation to heightened awareness about the capacity of rural towns to pursue once in generations funding for critical infrastructure and other community needs. He explained that it is an opportunity to reiterate to the legislature that RPCs need substantial and sustained funding that would provide the flexibility needed to act on town needs and pursue regional projects critical to the well being of the region. To that end he felt the regional commissions should ask for full funding as is directed by the regional planning enabling statute. Commissioner Goodwin expressed support for Chris' perspective.

Chair's Report: Chair Ciuffreda thanked Commissioners for their continued engagement and robust attendance.

Public Comment: None was offered.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:10 p.m. on a motion by Commissioner Arsenault, seconded by Commissioner Goodwin.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Campany