



**Full Commission Meeting
March 28, 2023**

Commissioners Present:

Andy Toepfer	Athens
Ralph Meima	Brattleboro
Stanley Noga, Jr.	Brookline
Kevin Stine	Dover
Gabby Ciuffreda, Chair	Guilford
Cheryl Kaufman	Grafton
Eric Stevens	Grafton
Stephan Chait	Halifax
Edee Edwards	Halifax
Denis Pinkernell	Londonderry
Stephen Dotson	Putney
Bonnie North	Rockingham
Jessica Tobey	Searsburg
Tim Arsenaault	Vernon
Jack Cunningham	Wardsboro
Peter Barus	Whitingham
Bob Bois	Wilmington
Ann Manwaring	Wilmington

Commissioners Absent:

Lynette Hamilton	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Agriculture
Robert McBride	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Arts & Culture
Linda Hecker	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Conservation
Gretchen Havreduk	Citizen Interest Commissioner - Community Development
Laura Sibilias	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Economic Development
Elizabeth Bridgewater	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Housing
Kathy Urffer	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Natural Resources
Lynn Barrett	Citizen Interest Commissioner – Tourism
Bob Anderson	Athens
Sue Fillion	Brattleboro
Sarah Shippee	Dover
Bill Conley	Dummerston
Todd Davidson	Dummerston

Steve Lembke	Guilford
Andy Coyne	Jamaica
George Mora	Londonderry
Edith Mas	Marlboro
William Shakespeare	Marlboro
Shelly Huber	Newfane
Ann Golob	Newfane
Sue Bailey	Readsboro
Susan Hammond	Rockingham
Matthew Somerville	Searsburg
Rickey Harrington	Somerset
Renee Mulkey	Stratton
Will Bisonnette	Townshend
Andrew Snelling	Townshend
Jim Pinkerton	Vernon
Charles Goodwin	Weston
Jenepher Burnell	Whitingham
Bill Dunkel	Windham
Carolyn Partridge	Windham
Travis Dobson	Winhall

Guests/Members of the Public: None

Staff Present: Chris Campany, Executive Director

Guest Speaker: Andy French, Wildlife Refuge Manager of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

The meeting was held via Zoom and called to order by Chair Gabby Ciuffreda at approximately 6:05 p.m. There were no amendments to the agenda.

Administrative Items:

Approval of the January 31, 2023 minutes: On a motion by Commissioner Edwards, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham, the minutes were approved by a roll call vote with 2 abstentions.

An Introduction to the Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge: As part of an effort to help commissioners become more familiar with federal agency partners, Andy French, Wildlife Refuge Manager of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge provided an overview of the Refuge, highlight how the Refuge is an asset within the Windham Region and southeast Vermont communities, and welcomed commissioner and citizen engagement. He noted the pending acquisition of Glebe Mountain from the Nature Conservancy, which would permanently conserve 3,500 acres. The other existing Conte holding is a 125-acre section on Putney Mountain. He explained that the mission of national wildlife refuges is different than national forests, in that the refuges are focused on protection of habitats, flora and fauna. They do not have a timber harvest and sale function. He also explained that energy generation is not a compatible function with the purpose of national wildlife refuges.

Executive Director's Report: Chris explained that it appeared the legislature would include in the budget adjustment act a program through which regional planning commissions could provide direct assistance to rural communities to access eligible state programs, most of which are focused on wastewater, drinking water, and stormwater. The regional planning commissions are also requesting full funding per the statutory formula that authorizes funding for the commissions. The Executive Board signed onto a support letter with commissioners from other regional commissions that has been submitted to the House Appropriations Committee, among others. State officials have become increasingly aware of the challenges rural communities face in accessing programs. Chris explained that sometimes it can take years for towns to decide whether or not to even discuss an issue, especially infrastructure investments.

Chair's Report: None.

Public Comment: None was offered.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m. on a motion by Commissioner Arsenault, seconded by Commissioner Goodwin.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Campany