



**Executive Board Minutes
November 14, 2023**

Location: Remote meeting via Zoom.

Members Present: Gabby Ciuffreda, Chair; Steve Lembke, Bonnie North, Stephan Chait, Jack Cunningham, Tim Arsenaault, Ann Golob

Absent: Jim Pinkerton, Carolyn Partridge

Staff present: Chris Company, Executive Director; Matt Bachler, Senior Planner

Public/Guests: none

Presenter: none

Call to Order: Commissioner Gabby Ciuffreda, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Additions/Changes to Agenda: none

Secretary's Report: On a motion by Commissioner Lembke, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham, the September 12, 2023 minutes were approved with one abstention.

Readsboro Town Plan Approval and Planning Process Confirmation: Senior Planner Matt Bachler reviewed the Planning Coordination Committee recommendation for approval and comments on the plan. On a motion by Commissioner Golob, seconded by Commissioner Arsenaault, the Readsboro Town Plan was approved by a unanimous vote.

On a motion by Commissioner Arsenaault, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham, the Readsboro planning process was confirmed.

Guilford Town Plan Approval and Planning Process Confirmation: Senior Planner Matt Bachler reviewed the Planning Coordination Committee recommendation for approval and comments on the plan. On a motion by Commissioner Pinkerton, seconded by Commissioner Arsenaault, the Guilford Town Plan was approved with Commissioners Ciuffreda and Lembke abstaining as they are Commissioners appointed by the Town of Guilford.

On a motion by Commissioner Arsenaault, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham, the Guilford planning process was confirmed with Commissioners Ciuffreda and Lembke again abstaining.

Review of Proposed Municipal Delegation Framework Report: Senior Planner Matt Bachler reviewed this report which outlines a proposed process for Municipal Delegation whereby municipalities with high quality bylaws and other statutorily authorized ordinances that are functionally equivalent to the criteria of Act 250 can pursue an agreement with the Natural Resources Board (NRB) to delegate review of development to the municipality and exempting development within the municipality from Act 250 review. There was some concern expressed that local delegation might result in a more highly-politicized permitting process but other members of the board disagreed. It was explained that while this framework report was included as part of a housing bill, it applied to all permitting that would normally fall within the jurisdiction of Act 250. While most in attendance felt the framework was a good idea, there also seemed to be agreement that this delegation should not be extended to towns without a high level of capacity to implement their bylaws. Sentiment was expressed that this delegation perhaps stemmed from the legislature's inability to effectively reform Act 250. There seemed to be general agreement that delegation could lead to more predictable outcomes, more efficient process, and reduced time and costs and regulatory duplication that currently exists.

Review of Regional Plan Future Land Use Map Proposal: Senior Planner Matt Bachler explained that The HOME Act (Act 47 of 2023, Section 15) required the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA) to report on statutory recommendations to better integrate and implement municipal, regional, and State plans, policies, and investments by focusing on regional future land use maps and policies by December 15, 2023. VAPDA is the statewide association of regional planning commissions. Chris noted that the proposed land use categories were very consistent with what our current plan and map already uses, albeit by different names. Matt noted that the proposed changes would not be very significant for the WRC. Sentiment was expressed by the Board that this would not affect the WRC very much, and that the Commission has a strong record of being active in regulatory processes in representing regional plan policies. Sentiment was also expressed that this was functionally the state turning to the RPCs to create a statewide land use map. A board member noted that while the maps and categories may be consistent, there may be substantial variation in the plans and policies among the RPCs. Chris noted that the plans will remain the creations of the respective regional commissions.

Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) Request to Support Act 250 Appeal: Executive Director Chris Campany explained that TRORC is appealing a District 3 Environmental Commission decision related to the application of the regional plan, specifically to criterion 9(L). They are asking if other regional commissions are willing to join the appeal at no cost as they feel the decision might establish precedent that would diminish regional plan policy standing as 9(L) is applied. The Board authorized Chris to participate in deliberations about the appeal and to participate in the drafting of an amicus brief if such should be created, but that it should be brought back to the Executive Board for review before signing on. The Board noted that it may need to convene an emergency meeting should the timing necessitate such.

Appointments: The Board appointed Commissioner Matthew Hoffman of Dummerston to the Natural Resources and Emergency Planning committees.

Executive Director's Report: Chris updated the Board on the expansion of Municipal Technical Assistance Program, and that the expansion of the number of qualifying towns from 6 to 17 presents capacity and timing challenges. He will reach out to the towns to see if they have identified specific projects with which they would like assistance. It seems the consultants hired to support the initial 6 towns will have some capacity in the new calendar year. He also updated the Board on the convening of

the regions selectboards in collaboration with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns in Townshend, his presentation to the Vermont Association for Civil Engineering Geotechnical Institute held at Norwich University about town capacity to plan for and implement flood and climate resilience measures, his leading of a panel on the Staying Connected Initiative at the conference of the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association held in Portsmouth, his participation in discussions about the formation of a Connecticut River Watershed Partnership and related legislation and his organization of RPC support for the partnership in the four states, and his meeting with Associate Director Sue Westa with the UMass Amherst planning and landscape architecture program about support for a possible intermunicipal housing planning effort among 5 towns in the northwest corner of the region.

Committee Chair Updates: Commissioner Arsenault noted that he was named the legislative committee chair of the Vermont Municipal Clerk/Treasurer's Association.

Review of Action Items: Chris will bring a proposal to move the intermunicipal services outreach effort forward at the January Executive Board meeting. Separately, he did not feel there was a need to convene the Personnel Committee and Chair Ciuffreda agreed. Commissioner Lembke asked if staff had moved forward with giving staff the option of moving to Plan B offered by the Vermont Municipal Employees Retirement System (VMERS) and Chris explained that VMERS has reached out to all staff, noting that any decisions are to be between staff and VMERS.

Public Comments: None.

Adjournment: On a motion by Commissioner Arsenault, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham, the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.