



APPROVED – MINUTES
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
Held at the NRPC Office
9 Executive Park, Suite 201, Merrimack, NH
September 21, 2016

Members Present:

Susan Ruch, Amherst	Thomas Young, Litchfield	Mary Ann Melizzi-Golja-Nashua
Michael Dell Orfano, Amherst	Louise Lavoie, Mason	Dave Hennessey, Pelham
Martin Michaelis, Amherst	William W. Boyd, Merrimack	Hal Lynde, Pelham
Tom Rogers, Brookline	Anant Panwalkar, Merrimack	Kermit Williams, Wilton
Venu Rao, Hollis	Janet Langdell, Milford	
James Battis, Hudson	Dan Kelly, Nashua	

Others Present:

Leigh Levine, FHWA	Nate Miller, Principal Planner-SNHRPC
Caroline Golja, Commissioner Daughter	Jenny Maxwell, Guest-Amherst

Staff Present:

Tim Roache, Executive Director	Sara Siskavich, GIS Manager
Julie Chizmas, Senior Transportation Planner	Karen Baker, Program Assistant

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Chairman Hennessey called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM with introductions.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

The public present did not wish to speak.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – JUNE 15, 2016

The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of June 15, 2016. Kelly noted that he was listed as in attendance but was not present. Lynde commented his statement under Commissioner Roundtable, bullet #4 that it should read about “1M”. Ruch noted that on page 3, 2nd paragraph, last sentence it should read ...“acknowledged” Boyd’s concerns... After further discussion, Battis motioned with a second from Young:

THAT the minutes of June 15, 2016 be approved as amended.

The motion **carried.**

STRATEGIC STATEMENT (DISCUSSION/ACTION)

Roache provided a presentation to the group on the NRPC Statement of Strategy included in the agenda packet. He summarized the information gathering process used in the development of the Strategy which started in September of 2015 with an online survey to Staff and Commissioners and also included the following:

- NRPC Commissioner and Staff All-Day Strategic Planning Retreat
- Internal NRPC Staff Meetings: Kickoff Discussion, Implementation Brainstorm and SWOT Brainstorm
- BOS Meetings with NRPC in all communities except Nashua
- Executive Committee Meetings: Regular Exec Committee Meeting w/Staff Attending, Executive Committee Meeting, and Executive Committee SWOT Work Session
- NHARPC Commissioner Convening: SWOT analysis, strategy discussion
- RPC Directors’ Retreat Discussion on Strategic Planning

Roache informed the group of the questions we asked: Why do we do what we do, why does staff come to work? And, why do you volunteer your time? The driving principle that came from this was to: *Provide excellent services to meet the diverse needs of our member communities.* Roache also noted that the recurring theme in our discussions beginning at the November retreat was to ensure that our members and

stakeholders understand what we do and why we exist and how we can support your needs. The key outcome from this was that NRPC, its member communities and stakeholders have an understanding of NRPC's role, programs, and the value of NRPC and how we can support the community's needs. To do that we identified three critical requirements:

Critical Requirement #1: Diversified and sustainable funding allows NRPC to match the range of community needs. Roache noted, we, like many of our members are faced with a shrinking pool of funding to support regional planning. One requirement is to identify diverse and sustainable funding sources to meet community needs. A concept under consideration is to establish a 501C3 making us eligible for a wider range of grants that may align with regional or community priorities. A CDEA grant to sell tax credits and develop economic development planning capacity would be an example of diversified funding.

Critical Requirement #2: NRPC workplace culture and resources empower employees to excel on behalf of our communities. Roache said our staff is our greatest asset and we need to provide an environment and opportunities that develops and empowers staff members to provide that excellent service articulated in the driving principle.

Critical Requirement #3: Communications between NRPC and communities is constant and mutually productive. Roache said that since he has been director he has stressed the importance of communication between Commissioners, town officials, and NRPC Staff. He added that we also want to make sure that we are pursuing opportunities that are consistent with the needs of your town and sharing that information between communities to provide efficiency from an economic standpoint.

Roache informed the group that with this driving principle and strategic critical requirements in mind, we completed a SWOT Analysis and identified a number of opportunity areas that align with the strategic goal of providing excellent services to meet the diverse needs of our member communities. Economic Development placed was pretty high opportunity area, but in order to launch a new economic development program at NRPC we would need to build our internal capacity. There are 4 major components to doing so:

- Identify community needs and possible NRPC services
- Staff training and mentoring
- Build experience through hands on pilot projects: Prepare a strategic action plan for the town of Wilton that includes specific and viable projects, and identifies key persons or organizations responsible for implementation, funding required and potential sources, and timeframe (ex. tax credits).
- Market new program services

Roache noted another major opportunity area as the Transportation Management Area Programming Authority which NRPC as an MPO may have more authority to program 3.5 million in funds. Roache added that we will be talking about this in detail under the next agenda item.

Kelly asked why Nashua was eliminated from the BOS visits. Roache said at the time that he was doing the BOS meetings; Mayor Donchess had just been elected. He still plans to meet with Mayor Donchess and the Aldermen. Dell Orfano asked about tax credits and what mechanism he would be using. Langdell asked if he would be funding staff at NRPC by selling the tax credits. Roache said that NRPC and CNHRPC received a grant for \$32,000 that they can use to sell tax credits to businesses and support developing an economic development program for NRPC and the Wilton Economic Development project. Williams asked if there was analysis at the Rivier Planning Retreat. Roache said there is a good summary that will go as an appendix to the Strat Plan. Rogers noted that in his experience with tax credits, you can go back the next year and increase if you sell your quota; is that the case here. Roache said he was not sure and that Jen Czys is heading up the project.

Hennessey noted that the Strategic Statement is an action oriented plan and the reason why we are looking for input. He added that we are working on the best interests of the NRPC and the focus is over the next 3-5 years for implementation. Roache added that the group can take action on the plan and move forward as is by accepting it as the direction for NRPC.

Kelly was unsure of what the group would be voting on and asked what action. Hennessey referred to the table at the end of the document. Langdell added that it is a higher level strategic plan; the umbrella to guide us. Lynde asked of the focus items, if there is anything that drops out. Roache said no, that it is a living document; just maybe adjustments would need to be made. Hennessey noted that the biggest change is the economic development piece being added into the top 3 to focus on and that it was a different direction that was added. Langdell noted her many years on the EC and this document get it started moving forward.

There was discussion on taking action on the Strategic Plan. Williams commented that the only time he saw a problem with taking action on a document with NRPC and their advisory role was when it had to do with the pipeline. Roache said it has come up with transportation issues, such as rail.

Dell Orfano questioned the economic development list which included mechanical sources and ideas, but no results. He asked who benefits or gains and how; he felt this was a valuable conclusion but did not see it in the document. Roache said that it is too specific for this document. He also asked if there is a specific issue identified, does it extend to communities on how they benefit. Hennessey noted that NRPC is a clearing house and mechanism for support; local communities taking initiative with NRPC for support. Dell Orfano asked about quantifying economic impacts to other communities as he did not see that in the document. Roache remarked that as we build capacity and produce outcomes we will be shared amongst the region.

Lynde felt the strength of NRPC was the data gathering on the pipeline. Boyd commented that the outline of what NRPC did for the Town of Merrimack sent to Town Council was helpful to show NRPC's strengths. Boyd also commented in regards to the Strategic Outcome saying he was hard pressed to vote in support and felt we needed to advocate to towns and give legislative bodies an opportunity to vote or look at it. Hennessey if the group wanted to take it to their towns first and maybe have Roache meet with each town, and then re-take it up at the December meeting for vote. Boyd said he would like to do that. Langdell felt it was the role of the Commissioners to bring this back to their town and was unsure if Roache would have time to visit all the communities before December. She added there need to be direction and engagement going both ways; quantify value and disseminate to towns. Panwalkar agreed.

There was further discussion on the need to build staff expertise and that NRPC is not quite there from an economic development standpoint. Williams added, it is a chicken and an egg problem that will resolve itself over time. What is missing is what is done well; plan support and circuit rider services, just to name a few and they are no on the list. Hennessey said it would be added to the December agenda to revisit. Per the request of Langdell and the group, an electronic copy of the Strategic Statement and a pdf of the presentation with instructions will be sent to the Commissioners.

FHWA/STAFF PRESENTATION (DISCUSSION ONLY)

Leigh Levine of FHWA and NRPC Staff will discuss the potential benefits and responsibilities of the Nashua Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Management Area status.

FHWA Presentation-Leigh Levine –NRPC TMA Certification Review Corrective Action

Levine provided a presentation on NRPC's TMA Certification Review Corrective Action. He started off by informing the group that a TMA is a Transportation Management Area designated to Urbanized Areas (UZAs) with populations greater than 200,000 as defined by Bureau of the Census and designated by Secretary of Transportation. Currently, NRPC's population 226,000.

Next he explained that a TMA Certification Review is conducted with the MPO to certify that a process is in place. He noted that there is a public meeting component to the process. He continued saying that the FHWA/FTA review the MPO process to certify TMA compliance & a “3-C” approach. This certification review is conducted every 4 years to maintain certified status & flow of federal funds. A Final Report is produced with findings, commendations, recommendations, and corrective actions if any. Levine noted that NRPC only had one corrective action and this was pretty good for a first time review.

Levine explained that a corrective action is to correct non-compliance within a specified timeframe and can involve MPO, State DOT, and others. This must be a matter of law or regulation; otherwise it is issued as a recommendation.

Next a TMA Certification Review Report is issued (NRPC’s was issued on June 28, 2016). They ranked good in the 3-C process satisfying 23 USC 134, 49 USC 1607 and associated requirements. Certification will be pending until NRPC addresses the one Corrective Action issued: TMA Programming/Project Selection Authority. Levine added that in TMAs, federally funded projects shall be selected by the MPO in consultation with State and public transportation operators with the exception of NHS projects, Bridge, Interstate Maintenance, and Federal Lands Highway programs.

Levine said that the Nashua TMA Corrective Action is to implement the process to ensure that MPO maintains programming & project selection authority that by law is theirs, monitor and facilitate implementation of MPO’s programming authority, and document the process that NHDOT and MPO will follow for the 2017-2020 STIP Update and beyond. Levine noted that in the past, the project selection process has been very state driven. This concluded Levine’s presentation.

NRPC Presentation-Tim Roache: NRPC’s Corrective Action

Roache started off by saying that NRPC is being asked to do something that MPO’s all over the country already do. This is new for New Hampshire’s MPO/RPC process. Roache wanted the group to understand what is meant by programming authority and why this is different from what we have done in the past, the potential benefits and risks, and how we might go about exercising programming authority.

Roache noted that NRPC has to work with the Southern NH planning Commission (SNHRPC) and the New Hampshire DOT to comply with this corrective action. He explained how past Ten Year Plan Processes have run. Roache continued, as already noted, under federal transportation regulation the MPO has the authority to prioritize and program projects into the regional Transportation Improvement Program in cooperation with the NHDOT. The DOT is then supposed to compile the regions TIPs into a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. But, in New Hampshire we have the Ten Year Plan. He proceeded to explain the difference. In the past there were varying efforts to prioritize projects in the region. NRPC would solicit and identify new projects, prioritize projects and then submit them to DOT and wait for the outcome. The results did not always reflect the needs/requests of the region.

The last few Ten Year Plan cycles featured all RPC’s working together using a consistent statewide project scoring criteria, technical support to decision making, and quantifiable results which seemed to be better than previous processes. This time with this corrective action requirement we are talking about placing projects directly into the TIP (the first 4 years of the Ten Year Plan).

Roache reviewed the hierarchy of the plans:

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): Federal Requirement, long range looking out 20 years (2017-2040), intended to inform policy level decisions, and the pool of project for the TYP and TIP.

The Ten Year Plan (TYP) – New Hampshire RSA 228:99 and RSA 240 requirement that (NHDOT) propose a plan for improvements to the State’s transportation system every two years, MTP includes projects from the TYP and lists state and federally funded projects expected to be constructed in the next ten years.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): Federally required document listing projects that are programmed or in the pipeline for construction in the next 4 years (programming authority will allow us to include/prioritize projects in TIP and result in getting federal aid projects on the ground and built).

Roache explained that the geography is now different as well. There are 4 MPOs, 5 Urbanized Areas, 2 States, and 17 Communities (adding Auburn, Derry, Londonderry, Windham), with a total population of 226,400. Roache said this will require a significant level of coordination and cooperation between NRPC, SNHPC and NHDOT. Roache showed a map with the eligible roads in the Nashua TMA which consists of just under 300 miles of roads. He added that in general, funds can be used on roads that are **NOT** on the National Highway System and are not classified as local roads. Roache noted that the potential benefits are greater influence over what gets built in the TMA Area with \$3.5 to \$3.9 million annually. Roache provided information on how he planned to do this, which would include a cooperative agreement between NRPC, SNHPC and NHDOT, establish an MPO/TMA subcommittee and develop a project prioritization process and select projects for implementation. He concluded his presentation and reminded the group that they want to make sure prioritized projects are ready to move forward. He asked if there were any questions.

Kelly wanted to know where rail fits in; it feels like the lost cousin. Roache reminded Kelly that there are different categories of funding for rail and highway projects. Levine did not think there was that kind of flexibility with this funding category. Kelly asked why the FRA was not part of this and if the objective is to move people effectively and efficiently, rail should be included.

Roache answered that the money is federal dollars with match of 20% non-federal when asked by a member. Another member asked if Hudson & Litchfield came up with the match, could they do something about the bridge. Roache said the cost of the bridge is much larger than the available funds in this category. There was further discussion between Langdell and Panwalkar on what types of projects the money can be used for. Williams referred to the Exit 36 project which crosses borders and asked how that gets done. Levine said the program does not exclude state boundaries. He added that if the project is in the Nashua TMA, a portion of the money would go to the State. There was further discussion on the Exit 36S project and getting the project design funded.

Dell Orfano asked for a definition on toll credits. Roache explained that the turnpike system collects revenues, reinvests them in the turnpike system. You get credit from the FHWA because they did not have to spend to make improvements. There was further discussion on how money is dispersed on toll credits.

Panwalkar asked if the funding was for the whole region or just NH. Chizmas said just the NH portion. Chizmas noted that get money from the Boston urbanized area (UZA) because of the overlap into NH which is a small amount and based on the population. Panwalkar asked if a project is selected for the 4 year TIP, is there any say from DOT about not matching. Roached hoped not but that was a big question. Miller said that most roads are State roads and it behooves them to keep those roads up, efficiently spending or improving infrastructure. Miller added that he would be working closely with NRPC to iron out the details at the state level. Williams asked if there was any value in proposing legislation. Roache said he didn’t think we need to go there. Langdell asked if more details would be available for the December meeting. Roache said maybe and he will provide an update, but the programming authority would not be for the current TIP.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Roache reviewed the NRPC MPO Transportation Workshops Summary of the Program Highlights, noting that the Hudson workshop was recorded and a link of the meeting is on the Hudson Cable TV website. Siskavich summarized the GIS projects in the Program Highlights which included Trail Mapping for Merrimack Conservation Commission, Wilton NH Tax Mapping, and GIS Support for the Nashua Transit System. Roache reviewed Land Use and Environmental Projects including the Climate & Health Adaptation, Household Hazardous Waste, and the Water Resiliency Action Plan.

8:40 PM - COMMISSIONER'S ROUNDTABLE

The Commissioner's Roundtable was held. Below is a brief summary of what each community had going on:

- Litchfield – Young: Engineering done for 140 PFOA residents going on Pennichuck Water. Spooky World opens this weekend, be prepared for traffic on 3A.
- Mason – Lavoie: Toying w/voluntary water ban mostly wells but residents seem ok. Looking into town facilities as option for emergency location for showers. Successful Old Home Day Sept. 10th. Looking at other towns for ideas for 250th for Mason in 2018. Looking for new building inspector.
- Merrimack – Boyd: No problems with primaries this year at polling locations but Baboosic Middle School has parking challenges. Heard on NPR that users on the MVD Water will be randomly tested. Merrimack is happy with level of response on PFOA. No exemption on solar yet but will be on TC Agenda October meeting. Make sure solar exemption language accurately represents what solar companies are selling. Panwalkar: Route 3 paving finally done.
- Pelham – Lynde: Open house for addition to High School & property valuations are up by 5% from last year. Town wide water ban voted by selectmen on 09/20.
- Wilton – Williams: Eco Dev Grant went thru. Hired new Town Administrator. Looking into assistance for MS4. 1 town leaving the Regional Recycling group; will have to manage better.
- Milford – Langdell: South St. construction and oval brick project should be completed by Pumpkin Festival Oct 7-9th. Looking at playing fields for Brox Area.
- Nashua – Melizzi-Golja: Appointed 2 students to Conserv. Comm. Legacy Playground Ribbon Cutting was last week. Lot of work on the part of Chamber leadership.
- Amherst – Ruch: Selectmen and NHDES meeting on PFOA at Town Hall on 9/26 at 6PM. New Community Development Director Gordon Leedy.
- Hudson – Battis: Conservation Commission actively looking at conservation land first time in 15 years. Town pushing for sales pitch for new fire station. NRPC contributed valuable response time data.
- Hollis – Rao: A 100 Kilowatt power grid is being set up and they are more than halfway through their analysis.
- Brookline – Rogers: Sidewalk trail connectivity survey online. Project presentation at last night's meeting, half of the construction starting. Public meeting on conservation acquisition of 27 acres of conservation land which puts the town at 23%. Brookline voluntary water ban.

ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn came from Young with a second from Langdell. The meeting ended at 9:06pm. The next Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 21, 2016 at 7:00pm.

Respectfully submitted

Tim Roache, Official Recorder: _____