



APPROVED – MINUTES
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
Held at the NRPC Office
9 Executive Park, Suite 201, Merrimack, NH
September 17, 2014

Members Present:

Martin Michaelis, Amherst	Thomas Young, Litchfield	Dan Kelly, Nashua
Robert Larmouth, Hollis	Charles Moser, Mason	Mary-Ann Melizzi-Golja, Nashua
James Battis, Hudson	Janet Langdell, Milford	Ed Gleason, Pelham
George Hall, Hudson	Mike Fimbel, Mont Vernon	Dave Hennessey, Pelham
Michael Croteau, Litchfield	Sarah Marchant, Nashua	

Others Present: Nelson Disco, Merrimack Nancy Mayville, NHDOT
Kevin Lynch, Litchfield

Staff Present:

Kerrie Diers, Executive Director	Jen Cysz, Senior Regional Planner	Sara Siskavich, GIS Manager
Tim Roache, Assistant Director	Karen Baker, Program Assistant	Mark Connors, Regional Planner
Kim Goddu, Environmental Planner		

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Chairman Hennessey called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM with introductions.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

The members of the public present did not wish to speak at that time but introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – JUNE 18, 2014

The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of June 18, 2014. Langdell referred to some grammatical corrections needed on pages 2, 3, & 5. Gleason motioned with a second from Young:

THAT the minutes of June 18, 2014 be approved with the grammatical corrections made.

The motion **carried**.

PUBLIC HEARING – THE NASHUA REGIONAL PLAN

Diers welcomed the group and summarized the Regional Plan process and the public information session held which included in-depth PowerPoints presented by staff. Very brief presentations will be conducted by staff tonight for this Public Hearing. Diers thanked all that participated on the subcommittees and for their support. She reminded the group that this was their plan and they need to be comfortable with the plan. She encouraged questions but asked that they be held until the end of the chapter presentations. A notice of the 30 day public comment period as well a hard copy of “The Nashua Region: A Story Worth Telling”, the executive summary, was sent to all libraries, as well as Planning and Select Board chairs. She also informed the group that the draft documents were also available on the Granite State Future website for the public comment period. Diers reviewed comments received from the LMRLAC and passed copies around to the group. She added that the comments will be responded to in the next draft of the plan. Tonight’s presentation is an overview of the chapters of the plan. Diers discussed the large amount of time spent listening to people and collecting data and reviewed the 6 major themes of “What We Heard” that came from the outreach: people really love it here; build on existing assets; flexible regulations; balanced choices; community character; and changing conditions. She reviewed the sections contained in the plan: Existing Conditions and Needs; Community and Economic Vitality; Environment; Housing; Transportation; Scenario Planning; and

Implementation. Diers introduced Mark Connors to provide a brief overview of the Community & Economic Vitality chapter.

Connors summarized the Comprehensive Strategy for Economic Development which includes a vision; economic data and trends; a needs analysis that incorporates data and public input; assets, weaknesses, opportunities, threats; and strategies for economic development. In addition, he touched on the Key Issues: a changing economic landscape; a highly skilled aging workforce; and a focus on quality of life. Lastly he pointed out the Vision, Goals & Strategies of the chapter as Job Creation and Workforce Development, Infrastructure Development, Quality of Place, Environmental Preservation and Regional Coordination.

Kim Goddu provided an overview the Environmental Chapter summarizing the Nashua Region:

Strengths:

- Abundance of groundwater and surface water supplies and Over 50,000 acres of forest acres

Challenges:

- One of the biggest issues is sustainable funding sources for preserving existing natural resources, conducting technical studies, implementing adaptation strategies for natural hazards and completing energy efficiency projects

Opportunities:

- Regional coordination can help pool resources. Example, the upcoming MS4 permit requirements and the NRPC Energy Aggregation.

She added that the chapter encompasses natural resources, water resources, infrastructure, climate change, natural hazards, energy efficiency and green building. In addition, all the sections have future conditions, opportunities and issues and tools for municipalities to provide resources for communities who want to complete a specific project.

Goddu reviewed the key issues and trends:

- The most noticeable trend is that residents like the region the way it is. They enjoy the rural and suburban character, the groundwater and surface water resources, the rivers, forests and farms.
- Stormwater costs and aging infrastructure will cost the region millions of dollars in the future. Stormwater has the potential to damage existing wastewater infrastructure which could increase the cost of maintenance and repair over time.
- One participant at the Climate and Energy workshop suggested incorporating the effects of climate change into all sections of planning. Municipalities will need to prepare for raising temperatures, increased precipitation and an increase in the number of storms. Adaptation projects such as culvert assessment is one tool for communities to prepare for increased flooding.
- 78% of residents in the region support expanding incentives for home energy efficiency improvements. There are a number of programs for residents, businesses and municipalities to install energy saving retrofits and weatherization programs.

Goddu concluded her presentation by summarizing the Vision, Goals and Strategies and referring to the outreach from residents and assistance from the natural resources committee that helped shape the four goals of the chapter:

- The preservation of natural resources and maintaining rural and suburban character was the largest issue and goal we heard from outreach and municipalities and it was also not unique to the environment chapter.
- The outreach also revealed that municipalities and other organizations wanted more public outreach and education to all audiences such as homeowners, public officials, children, tourists and others on a wide range of issues: stormwater education, climate change, fertilizer and pet waste and recycling.

- Lastly, the lack of technical studies and resources was identified as an information gap. Communities expressed the need for assistance with resources and studies due a lack of time and staff capacity.

Jen Czysz provided an overview on the Housing Chapter and touched briefly on the Nashua region Strengths (One of the most diverse housing supplies and the large mix of multi- and single family housing); Challenges (Not affordable for all – foreclosures, young adults, seniors and 2/3 of all rentals are in Nashua); and Opportunities (Ensure affordable choices near jobs and transportation and regulations need to be flexible – adapt to changing demographics and the market).

She added that the chapter is 2 documents in 1: The Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) and the Fair Housing Equity Assessment. The chapter includes sections on Data and Trends Analysis, Projected Need and Preferences, and Opportunities and Barriers. She added that per RSA 36:47, II RPCs are required by State Statute to prepare a HNA and update it every 5 years. Housing Demand, Costs and Affordability, Housing Supply and Condition and Resources for Affordable Housing are components included in the HNA's. Generally, RPCs coordinate their HNA's with each other and New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority (NHHFA) that is also required to prepare a HNA for the state which all follow a common framework. Czysz also referred to the Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA), a new planning component for RPCs which is defined as an assessment of fairness within our housing universe. NH's RPCs, working together to create our regional plans, will be looking to the state Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, to look closer at fair housing opportunities across the state.

She reviewed the key issues and trends:

Big Homes, Smaller Budgets:

- High household incomes, low purchase prices = more affordable choices
- Access to housing limited by transportation and credit worthiness

Shifting Demographics:

- Broad range of stock but not necessarily a good match for projected population
- Elderly looking to age in place, but who will buy their home if they sell?

Location, Location, Location:

- Residents love the region's mix – urban to rural, small town feel with city amenities
- Split opinions - want walkability, but residential only neighborhoods- we have both, but fewer walkable neighborhoods that are newer development or redevelopment and affordable

Lastly, Czysz summarized the Vision, Goals and Strategies pointing out the 6 main goals developed through the process collecting outreach, data, and input from housing committee:

Affordable and Workforce Housing Development

- Encourage opportunities and include housing options near jobs, transit, and amenities.

Diverse Housing Supply

- Range of choices to support community vitality, evaluate and respond to demographic trends, and identify housing needs and barriers to support young professionals to support a strong workforce.

Manage Fiscal Impacts

- Impacts not just from growth, but low to no growth, decaying older housing stock and identify strategies to balance growth that supports local tax base.

Community Character

- Development or redevelopment of housing consistent with neighborhood, community or rural character.

Environmental Preservation

- Housing does not need to come at the expense of the environment and preserve high quality features that make the region a desirable place to live, work and play.

Regional Coordination

- Support continued collaboration between communities

Tim Roache provided an overview of the Transportation chapter of the Regional Plan adding that the Transportation chapter is serving a dual role: Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Regional Plan Transportation Chapter. He referred to the MTP as a policy level document designed to and intended to guide transportation investment in the region through a 20 year planning horizon. It contains analyses of future travel demand and a fiscally constrained project list to guide implementation. The MTP is required under Federal law in urban areas over 50,000 populations and will serve as the transportation component of the Regional plan and represents a holistic approach to the transportation planning problem. Roache continued saying that implementation will focus on the specific projects that have been identified in past plans and discuss the relative priority in the region and will include the project list and fiscal constraint analysis. He referred to the Vision, Goals and Strategies (mobility, quality of life, system sustainability, and implementation), pointing out that we have gotten away from the travel mode per chapter approach and used the Goals of the plan to develop the chapter. This approach allows us to discuss all modes of transportation to build on strengths in the region, address weaknesses, and identify opportunities and threats.

Diers provided a brief summary of the Scenario Planning portion of the plan and the process and tools used for this chapter. Scenario Planning is designed to assess potential impacts of changing conditions and outcomes and performance goals of various land use, economic development and infrastructure investments. Nashua Regional Planning Commission prepared several population forecasts based upon varying future migration scenarios. Because fewer people have moved to the region in the last few decades than historically, there are a large number of aging baby boomers, and the region expects deaths to soon outpace new births, the region is on the precipice of a demographic shift. The scenarios test what would be the impact of an optimistic uptick in migration compared to a continued decline or stagnant levels of people moving out of the region.

The land-use modelling exercise conducted by NRPC was intended to conceptualize the near-term growth potential in our region. This analysis examines whether the region's existing land-use regulations are consistent with desirable growth as described by values and priorities identified in the NRPC Regional Plan update, and as measured by a common set of impact indicators that examine the relationship between growth and demand for resources. Also utilized was NRPC's travel demand model to evaluate the impacts of transportation infrastructure improvements on traffic patterns and air quality. The process results in future traffic forecasts are based on anticipated future land use patterns, population projections, projected housing units, employment, and school enrollment. Scenarios were developed for the no build condition and two future or build conditions for the years 2025 and 2040.

New Hampshire Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau utilized its REMI econometric model to simulate the impact to regional economy due to changes in sector employment. One concern identified in the planning process is the ability to attract young talent to the region. There is also a large concentration of highly educated baby boomers living in the region that may retire in the next decade. The question posed in this scenario is "what will happen to the region if the high tech companies in the region are not able to attract younger workers to replace the current experienced workers?"

The Southern New Hampshire Climate Assessment was prepared by Carbon Solutions New England and the University of New Hampshire Sustainability Institute for NH's regional planning commissions. It provides decision-relevant information as municipalities and the region face challenging choices regarding future investments. NRPC utilized the scenario planning results to help identify regional issues, trends, goals, and priorities that were incorporated throughout the regional plan's many chapters.

Diers summarized the purpose of the Implementation Chapter as identifying realistic and achievable actions that may be taken to further the regional plan vision. Outcomes occur only when plans are implemented. Diers reviewed the process informing the group of the implementation strategies developed over the three year planning process beginning with outreach efforts and recommendations as to what is best and what could be better about the region. Members of the region's communities through a series of workshops brainstormed actions that NRPC could take to address identified issues and opportunities.

The NRPC Commissioners at their March 2014 meeting utilized key pad polling technology to identify project types of greatest benefit to their communities to help identify project priorities. These results, combined with a review of the potential impact and feasibility of each action, formed the ranking of whether individual strategies were a high, medium or low priority. From this process, 8 overarching tasks were identified as well as 82 strategies and 27 projects:

- Build Strategic Partnerships
- Focus our Transportation Planning Program
- Provide Regional Coordination
- Develop and Analyze Data
- Produce Outreach and Educational Resources
- Create Planning Tools
- Deliver Technical Assistance
- Assist with Local Projects

Diers concluded the Nashua Regional Plan presentation. Per RSA 36:47, III, Elmer opened the Public Hearing for The Nashua Regional Plan at 7:52pm.

Nelson Disco, Merrimack: Is walkability addressed in the Transportation Chapter?

Roache: Yes, NRPC is simultaneously working on the update to the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Plan.

The Merrimack River is an asset that has been overlooked in the Region. Comments provided by Gene Porter, Chair of the Lower Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee equally apply to the Souhegan and Nashua River.

Diers: Further review will definitely be done for the chapter to ensure all river corridors are adequately addressed. The technical chapter will also be looked at to ensure rivers are not overlooked or under represented.

Goddu added that the Corridor Management Plans were reviewed heavily and some of the recommendations were similar in all. Nashua has no corridor plan and said the goal is to get it designated as a river and identified.

Kevin Lynch, Litchfield: To what degree has the NRPC looked at neighboring regions, particularly the water infrastructure and this should be shared with towns, not the other way.

Diers: It is a good idea for regional coordination to coordinate with neighboring regions. She referred to the joint water infrastructure study done in 1990 that needs to be updated.

Czys: Southern NH RPC is working on their Regional Plan, so there will be the ability to compare apples to apples. Roache said that NRPC coordinates with SNHRPC on Transportation, sharing data and models.

Janet Langdell, Milford: Towns should look at their affiliations, referring to Mason; maybe there should be some movement of communities between regions.

Diers: Stay tuned – some towns from SNRPC will be coming to the table at NRPC for voting on transportation projects; i.e. TAP Projects in Derry, Londonderry, Windham. Roache: Urbanized area extended moving forward and is going to change and will need folks at table for towns that will be in the Nashua urbanized area.

Martin Michaelis, Amherst: There is no list of towns in the NRPC.

Diers: Yes, there are pages missing, and the list of NRPC Region towns is one along with a page of acknowledgements with the NRPC Commissioners.

MaryAnn Melizzi-Golja, Nashua: Referring to the Nashua Region: A Story Worth Telling on page 15, Melizzi-Golja mentioned the previous night's Planning Board meeting which included a presentation from the Nashua Community College. Demonstrated were the employment opportunities in the region. When community college students move to a 4 year program, they go to UMASS Lowell due to the transportation limitations in the Nashua Region. She added that this runs counter to keeping kids here.

Diers: These are good pointers for conversation that we should be having and identifying what our role should be. Is it helping to form partnerships to align transit to needed destinations?

Dave Hennessey, Pelham: Need to get our politicians to sit in with the Commission to have a factual discussion about current conditions in the region (after the elections). Still hearing arguments on the gas tax increase and the lack of infrastructure.

Langdell: Should be a focus for the February legislative forum.

Melizzi-Golja: Frequently get questions about the senior tax exemption. While we want to keep our youth here, we want to make sure seniors can stay too. She referred to the inconsistencies on senior exempt with government and state and the need to have conversations with the legislators on this also.

Hennessey: Felt this was a demographic discussion. Langdell referred to the over 55 housing that was repealed in Milford last year. After further discussion Gleason motioned with a second from Young.

THAT Public Hearing for the Nashua Regional Plan is closed at 8:17pm.

The motion **carried**.

Diers reviewed the next steps. More work would be done on the Transportation chapter and another draft would be coming in a month. Diers asked the group to look at the implementation section. She added that revised chapters will be reposted. Marchant felt the implementation chapter would be good to use for the legislative session.

Diers also mentioned that she would be seeking adoption of the Regional Broadband Plan at the December meeting.

8:20 PM - COMMISSIONER'S ROUNDTABLE

The Commissioner's Roundtable held at 8:20pm.

ADJOURN

The next NRPC Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 17, 2014 at 7:00pm at the Nashua Regional Planning Commission office in Merrimack. Motion to adjourn came from Gleason with a second from Langdell. The meeting adjourned at 8:47pm.

Respectfully submitted

Kerrie Diers, Official Recorder: _____