



**APROVED MINUTES
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
Executive Committee
February 17, 2016**

Present:

Dave Hennessey, Chair
Karin Elmer, Treasurer
Mike Fimbel, Vice Chair
Jim Battis

Dan Kelly
Janet Langdell
Sarah Marchant
Tom Young

Absent:

Susan Ruch

Staff:

Tim Roache, Executive Director
Jennifer Czysz, Assistant Director
Karen Baker, Program Assistant
Julie Chizmas, Sr. Transportation Planner
Ryan Friedman, Sr. GIS Planner

Camille Pattison, Planning Manager
Tanya Reinert, Finance Administrator
Kristina Sargent, GIS Specialist
Sara Siskavich, GIS Manager
Matt Waitkins, Transportation Planner

1. Call to Order:

Hennessey called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm.

The meeting began with introductions of all in attendance.

2. Strategic Planning Session with Staff

Roache thanked all for attending the joint meeting of staff and the Executive Committee and Czysz gave a brief overview of work that was conducted since the last Committee meeting. Siskavich began by asking why each statement is identified as a goal. She suggested each have a need or purpose statement to help provide focus moving forward toward implementation. Langdell agreed. Hennessey added that we've been a transportation agency for a long time, but there are other areas we should be looking at. As we look to new efforts we need to ask how much time should be dedicated to each and what the relative priority is. Roache said transportation will dominate for the foreseeable future from a funding perspective. As such, Hennessey said transportation should lead the conversation.

Pattison said one of the challenges we face is our mission is very broad. We need a set of unified core values that we are all working toward that would help prioritize and ensure consistency. Roache added we exist at the will of the communities and as such we provide services to communities; that is part of our core values. We do this as both the RPC and the MPO, but being transportation driven, do we put the MPO first? Siskavich said we put our core values into what we undertake for projects.

Hennessey noted that while "leadership" is mentioned in the mission statement, it isn't always what is requested by all communities who are more often looking for support instead. Roache replied the

context in which “leadership” is referenced is in implementing the regional vision. Elmer added that communities expect high quality leadership from staff, a high standard that doesn’t always exist elsewhere. Because of this quality and leadership from NRPC staff the agency is able to support member communities. Fimbel said that the RPC has the big picture that communities wouldn’t otherwise have or know. Battis said there are others that want the RPC to be a leader that follows the communities’ direction. Pattison noted the level of leadership taken is largely project dependent. Hennessey recommend adding something to the 3 paragraph mission statement that highlights our “excellence” and high quality of work.

Roache, summarizing, said we need to create a set of core values and associated goals but also wanted to clarify whether there were any adjustments needed to the goals. Czysz said it was important to make sure we don’t forget about the things we already do well of high value. Langdell questioned whether there needed to be a conversation about the agency’s core values and reminded all that some were drafted during a strategic planning session facilitated by Kathy Hersh a few years ago. Czysz noted that the recent staff, commissioner’s and partners’ surveys posed core values based questions as well. As a next step, staff can merge responses from the different survey audiences and those from a few years ago. In regards to draft core values language, Chizmas was not sure if “facilitator” is the right word, perhaps “convener” is better. Hennessey suggested there be language in the final version of the core values that highlights “excellence.”

Returning to the draft goals, Langdell asked what the “dedicated services” would be as included in the draft goal to “identify funding sources for dedicated services to municipalities.” Consensus was to simply drop word “dedicated.” Hennessey noted alternate funding sources for services from private sector could help. This may prove challenging as Siskavich explained giving an example of GIS data where NRPC can’t charge a profit as the data is subject to 91-a. Langdell said there is definitely a menu of services we can ensure we have available cafeteria style for communities.

Hennessey asked if there is an opportunity to partner with the private sector to achieve common community goals? Roache provided the example of SNHPC partnering with Solar Up. Langdell noted we all are looking for alternate sources of funding, not just grant sources.

Siskavich said she likes the goal to “Maintain staff development to remain a leader on the cutting edge” and offered a few important reasons why, particularly we are a knowledge-based organization and our people are everything. The group brainstormed additional reasons to implement this goal including: keeps staff engaged, core value to commit to excellence, keeps staff up to date with new technology, and enables cross training.

The remainder of the conversation focused on developing concepts that will be used to draft a purpose statement for all other goals.

Relative to the Economic Development goal, most all communities want to have economic development programming and planning but don’t have the internal or financial capacity to do so. Economic development is a regional issue with regional solutions, it directly supports quality of life (a core value), and economic development initiatives are of benefit to all communities.

Relative to pairing services to meet community needs, this is the fundamental reason NRPC exists, communities pay dues that are to generate services for their benefit, doing so provides value to communities and is the general mission of the agency.

Relative to continuing existing programs, the group noted that all programmatic services should be driven by community needs. Perhaps this goal could be merged with the previous goal? None-the-less, NRPC should continue the many programs it currently excels at providing as these services, continue to add value and save our communities resources. There is an opportunity to build on our programs and make sure we continue to meet needs.

Exercising full TMA authority would provide our community's better representation of regional needs and transportation can knit this region together as a common resource to all communities. Being a TMA has the potential to equate to real financial resources for tangible projects in the region.

The goal to establish sustainable funding sources for municipal services recognizes that not all planning support requests can be supported entirely on dues. To be a sustainable organization we need to identify new sources of revenue. NRPC should avoid additional costs to communities and tax payers; often even where there is a documented value for a given service or project communities may not have the funding necessary to undertake that effort.

The goal to enhance NRPC's public image is an ongoing effort to build credibility and continued support, and ensure communities recognize the value of the organization and take advantage of the services offered.

Roache stated the next steps will be to draft a consensus statement of core values and add the purpose statements to the action plan draft. Czysz requested that staff and committee members send in any suggested actions to help provide a starting point for future conversations.

3. Audit Report – Melanson Heath Presentation

Roache introduced Sheryl Stephens Burke and Alyssa Simard, auditors with Melanson Heath and asked Burke to discuss the draft audit, which is largely the same as previous years.

Burke explained that the independent auditor's report presented this evening is a clean or unmodified audit, meaning that the findings are consistent with good accounting practices. Because NRPC is not part of the State Retirement system, balances look very good. Those that do participate are showing a liability for the projected future losses anticipated in the fund. Additionally, there were no material findings. This means internal management is consistent with best practices. There is an additional report included (Single Audit) because NRPC receives more than \$500,000 in federal funds. This threshold will increase to \$750,000 for FY2016. Another change for FY2016 that NRPC will need to act on prior to the end of the fiscal year is to develop written policies and procedures in place for cash management, travel, procurement, sub recipient monitoring, and others. NRPC's internal controls were reviewed for FY2015 and there were no findings, unfortunately there is no one template to develop written internal policies and procedures. Elmer suggested partnering with the other RPCs to draft procedures. Marchant added that the City of Nashua might have a set of internal policies and procedures that she could share.

Marchant made a motion to accept the audit report, second by Young. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Roache noted that the next steps to be taken by Melanson Heath are to finalize the document. He requested only one printed and bound copy to be placed on file and an electronic copy.

4. Business

i. Minutes – January 20, 2016

The Executive Committee reviewed the minutes from the January 20, 2016 meeting. Several grammatical corrections were identified. Langdell also requested that a note that no members of the public attended the public hearing. Motion to approve the minutes as amended by Langdell, seconded by Young. The motion passed 8-0-0.

ii. December/January Dashboard and Financial Reports

Roache reviewed the most recent Dashboard and noted that we continue to have a healthy balance that supports two to three months of operating expenses. A few additional grants and contracts have been added to the working budget for FY2016 including the Nashua Public Health Building Resilience Against Climate Affects and the Mont Vernon Town Center Zoning Phase 2 project. Both revenues and expenses are at approximately 50 percent, which is right on target given we are now half way through the fiscal year.

Staff attended several events in December and January including the Nashua Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Lunch, NHARPC legislative breakfast and the Ten Year Plan legislative hearing and work session. Pattison and Freidman presented their work from the Nashua Plan4Health project as part of a national APA webinar. Roache and Czys attended the final board of selectmen meeting, Hollis, in their effort to reach out to all 13 communities in the region. Roache still needs to schedule a time to visit the Nashua Board of Mayor and Aldermen and Planning Board to complete the circuit. The Committee recommended that once complete, Roache consider starting the outreach process over for annual check-ins with each community. Marchant attended the Nashua Chamber's State of the City event and noted that the Mayor spoke about several initiatives of potential interest to NRPC including promoting rail, housing downtown, and workforce development.

Young made a motion to accept and place the report on file, second by Elmer. The motion passed 8-0-0.

iii. Legislative Forum Discussion

Roache noted that plans are underway for the forum to be held on March 2nd. Invitations have been sent out and all should have received them. Three panel speakers will address energy options and opportunities for the future. The presentation will be posted as open to the public. Attendees will need to RSVP for dinner.

iv. Transportation Initiatives

Roache noted there are a couple updates to ongoing NRPC transportation initiatives. The first is an update of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan's (MTP) project list. The objective is to ensure the regional transportation projects are aligned with the most current plan's strategies and goals. To do so, staff is organizing three meetings across the region to discuss initiatives of importance to local decision makers and what projects are needed. These meetings are expected to bring about high priority larger projects and lead to subsequent events and discussions such as the the north bridge summit.

Elmer asked if the EC could see the draft list of transportation projects before the December Commission meeting. Czys replied yes and explained that as an update to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the draft will need to be complete by the October or November meeting

for the Committee's review and before posting of the updates, opening the 30-day comment period, the public hearing, and adoption. This will be scheduled for the December meeting.

The second transportation initiative update was the Ten Year Plan (TYP) process. Roache stated that the TYP has been submitted to the NH Legislature by the Governor as draft legislation and has begun to move through the committee process. The \$4 million rail study project is in the draft TYP. Roache inquired as to the Committee's preference on how NRPC should respond to the proposed inclusion of rail in the TYP. Do we have a position on the rail project? Most Committee members asked why we wouldn't support the rail study. The Committee members recommended that Roache address any questions relative to the rail from the perspective of the MPO and note the reasons to support rail and its importance to the region. Hennessey felt it was fair to say there is overwhelming support for rail in the region. Elmer added that as the MPO we are to maintain the transportation system and the data overwhelmingly supports rail as integral to a multi-modal transportation system. Hennessey said we haven't taken a vote to be able to directly state NRPC supports rail, but suggested we could instead say there is overwhelming support in the region. Langdell asked whether we should we take the question to the full commission. Hennessey replied yes. Elmer expressed concern that a vote might be influenced by personal opinion rather than community wishes. The Committee discussed the need to continue to improve communication between commissioners and their communities. Marchant stated we are an MPO, rail is transportation, and this is essential to our core mission. The proposed \$4 million rail study project in the TYP is proposed to be funded with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds with toll credits provided as match; no New Hampshire transportation funds are proposed to be expended. The data that would be generated by the study is essential to being able to decide whether we want to build the rail project or not. The final consensus of the Committee was that we do not need a vote at this time, but an update should be included as an agenda item for the March commission meeting.

v. NHARPC Legislation

Since the last EC meeting, NHARPC has drafted a Legislation Review Process where the focus is on those items that affect the core functions and interests of regional planning in NH. Policy level directives were drawn from the Granite State Future Snapshot that represents the consensus of all nine regional plans in the state.

vi. Staffing Updates

Roache announced Mark Connors departure from NRPC. Connors has accepted a position at the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments.

5. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made by Langdell with a second by Kelly. The motion passed 8-0-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:40.