



**APPROVED – MINUTES  
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
Held at the NRPC Office  
30 Temple Street, Suite 310, Nashua, NH  
December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**Members Present:**

Susan Ruch, Amherst  
Tamara Sorell, Brookline  
Robert Larmouth, Hollis  
Venu Rao, Hollis  
James Battis, Hudson  
Kim Queenan, Litchfield  
Tim Tenhave, Merrimack  
Janet Langdell, Milford  
Chris Constantino, Milford

Tim Berry, Mont Vernon  
Mary-Ann Melizzi-Golja, Nashua  
Ed Weber, Nashua  
Dave Hennessey, Pelham  
Hal Lynde, Pelham  
Kermit Williams, Wilton  
Jim Kofalt, Wilton

**Others Present:**

Tim White, NH DES  
Michael Croteau, Town of Litchfield  
Camille Pattison, NTS  
Suzanne Fournier, Brox Environmental  
Citizens

**Staff Present:**

Jay Minkarah, Executive Director  
Sara Siskavich, Assistant Director  
Kate Lafond, Business Manager  
Matt Waitkins, Transportation Planner

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Battis opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

**Privilege of the Floor:**

No members of the public wished to speak.

**Approval of the Minutes – June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

Minkarah noted that the minutes from the June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting were tabled in September as no one was identified as having made or seconded the motion to adopt the Public Involvement Process. The meeting notes were reviewed however they provided no additional information.

Ruch motioned with a second from Hennessey,

THAT the minutes of June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 be approved as written and placed on file.

The motion **carried** with abstentions from Constantino, Queenan, Rao, and Williams.

### **Approval of the Minutes – September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

Battis suggested that the presentation slides noted on page 2 of the minutes be attached to the minutes. It was agreed that listing the URL where the slides can be accessed would be sufficient.

Tenhave motioned with a second from Ruch,

THAT the minutes of September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019 be approved as amended and placed on file.

The motion **carried** with abstentions from Larmouth, Lynde, Queenan, and Rao.

### **Public Hearing - Proposed adoption of the 2019 Regional Housing Needs Assessment**

Battis opened the public hearing at 7:10 p.m.

Minkarah presented an overview of the draft NRPC Regional Housing Needs Assessment. Minkarah noted that a presentation was given at the September Commission meeting since that time additions and changes were made based on comments received.

Presentation slides can be accessed at:

[https://www.nashuarpc.org/files/6915/8143/9237/2019\\_Regional\\_Housing\\_Needs\\_Assessment.pdf](https://www.nashuarpc.org/files/6915/8143/9237/2019_Regional_Housing_Needs_Assessment.pdf)

The floor opened to questions and discussion:

Hennessey commented that the statistics understate the problem and noted that seniors aren't moving into 55+ housing as fast as we thought they would, and we are seeing more out of state people moving into these units. Hennessey thinks that age-restricted housing should be inventoried. Hennessey continued to talk about absorption rates noting that the housing market is seeing historic listing lows. The lack of inventory is driving the cost of housing up.

Lynde commented that residents in Pelham voted on eliminating 55+ housing.

Williams noted that this presentation speaks to the low vacancy rates for rental housing but shows the need for more single-family houses rather than rentals. Minkarah noted that there is not enough historical data to reflect the need for rental housing however towns should consider changing their regulations to allow for it.

Weber noted that Nashua has increasing rental housing on Groton Road which also connects to trails, so this is a plus-plus.

Minkarah reviewed comments received from the City of Nashua and the Nashua Soup Kitchen and noted changes that would be made to address some of the comments.

It was asked if HUD takes into account property taxes. Minkarah stated that as he understands it yes, averages.

Langdell asked that the plan be updated with the most recent data prior to publishing.

Hennessey urged that the document be reviewed and updated when we have next year's census data.

Battis closed the public hearing at 7:43 p.m.

Ruch motioned with a second from Hennessey,

THAT the Regional Housing Needs Assessment be adopted with the proposed amendment.

The motion **carried** unanimously.

**Presentation – Matt Waitkins, Senior Transportation Planner: Nashua Region Transit System Service Expansion Study**

Presentation slides can be accessed at:

[https://www.nashuarpc.org/files/6515/8048/9368/Nashua\\_Regional\\_Transit\\_Expansion\\_Final.pdf](https://www.nashuarpc.org/files/6515/8048/9368/Nashua_Regional_Transit_Expansion_Final.pdf)

Waitkins presented an overview of the Nashua Region Transit System Service Expansion Study.

Hennessey asked if the surveys given to Hitchner Manufacturing were given to all three shifts. Minkarah stated yes and noted that employers like Hitchner and Alene Candles are very interested in transit services to their location.

Williams asked how frequently the bus would run? Pattison spoke to how NTS currently runs and noted that some routes are under-performers which are evaluated by NTS but not all routes are going to be high performers as some are bringing riders in to connect with busier routes.

Hennessey discussed transit going into Massachusetts in order to receive some additional funding and long-range transit to Manchester Airport could be a benefit. Minkarah noted that another transit study will kick off in January which will look at connecting to the MBTA Commuter Rail/Lowell Regional Transit station (Gallager Terminal) in Lowell, UMass Lowell and the Alewife MBTA station in Cambridge.

It was noted that community and employer buy-in would be necessary to expand the transit expansion routes identified in this study. Minkarah agreed and noted that the lack of transit impacts economic development.

Weber suggested that it might behoove employers to change shifts to align with existing route times.

Hennessey asked if the bus route schedule links to Google. Pattison stated yes but not in real-time. NTS has a grant application in for a real-time app component. The benefit of increased ridership as a result of real-time technology was discussed.

Rao suggested that bike stands at bus stops could increase ridership. Minkarah noted that riders can store their bikes on the bus. Pattison indicated that NTS buses have racks that can hold two bikes.

**Transportation Project Updates**

Minkarah indicated that the Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) has finished the Ten-Year Plan (TYP) public hearing process. At this point, the draft will go on to the Governor and Legislature for review and recommendations before final approval by the Governor. Minkarah identified projects in the region included in the draft TYP and noted that most projects have been advanced by one or two years. Some projects identified include an Amherst rail trail, Brookline Route 13, Nashua sidewalk and bike lanes, and Taylor Falls Bridge rehabilitation.

Minkarah described the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funded projects. Two sidewalk projects in Milford and a traffic reconfiguration in Nashua. Minkarah stated that he hopes more projects are applied for in the next round.

### **General Updates**

- At the last meeting, amending the Bylaws to comply with Transportation Management Area (TMA) requirements was discussed. Minkarah hopes to receive input in January from the recent TMA review process regarding our composition.
- The Annual Forum will be held Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup> at Labelle Winery. The theme for this year's event is entrepreneurship.
- NRPC is in the process of updating the Regional Plan.

### **Commissioner's Roundtable**

Milford: Langdell is pleased that the town has received CMAQ funding for the two projects earlier identified. These projects will improve pedestrian mobility.

Nashua: Melizzi-Golja reported that after 20 years, funding for an update of the Master Plan was approved and the RFP has been put out. Also, Planning Director Roger Houston is retiring.

Amherst: Ruch reported that NRPC will be working with the town to complete their Master Plan update. She is looking forward to the process.

Pelham: Hennessey indicated that there is a Warrant Article that will essentially do away with cluster housing. Hennessey commented that this is disheartening given the housing needs in the region. Lynde expressed that he was happy with the projects that the town has taken on including the double stone arch bridge. Lynde continued that when people hear affordable housing, they think section 8 but Pelham is taking steps to loosen the regulations.

Hollis: Larmouth commented that Hollis' taxes have gone up as a result of school improvements and land purchases.

Brookline: Sorell attended the statewide meeting of commissioners. She found it interesting that some of the issues that our region is experiencing are statewide issues.

Wilton: Williams indicated that there is an interesting project developing with NRPC and the town's Economic Development Committee. Williams also noted that the town is addressing emergency dispatch services, he wishes that this was something that NRPC had a hand in but if other towns in the region are also dealing with contracting dispatch services and want to collaborate, he would like to talk. From his State Rep perspective, Williams added that there are several bills that will have an impact on towns, he encourages all to take a look.

Hudson: Battis reported that NRPC is assisting the town with its Master Plan update. He has been very encouraged by the community input.

Merrimack: Tenhave indicated that the town is still dealing with PFAs. There is also a large housing project (77 homes) going to the Planning Board. As part of this housing project, a sewer line that has

had problems in the past would be corrected. Additionally, the town's Conservation Commission is kicking around the idea of creating a Conservation Officer as the town of Londonderry has.

Mont Vernon: Berry noted that the housing development that was reduced by 4 lots due to watershed protection requirements is going on to the ZBA.

Litchfield: Queenan reported that NRPC has assisted the town complete the Master Plan Transportation Chapter. Open space subdivisions have been a big topic like in other towns. The town's Capital Improvement Committee is updating its Capital Improvement Plan and the town has added five properties to the state historic register.

NHDES: The clean diesel program (DERA) solicitation received nine applications of which seven will be funded. This leaves funds available for another round of solicitation. Also, the RFP for charging stations can be found on the OSI website.

### **Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn was made by Ruch with a second from Constantino. The meeting ended at 9:15 pm. The next Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Jay Minkarah, Executive Director: \_\_\_\_\_