



APPROVED – MINUTES
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
Held at the NRPC Office
9 Executive Park, Suite 201, Merrimack, NH
December 16, 2015

Members Present:

Susan Ruch, Amherst	Michael Croteau, Litchfield	Sarah Marchant, Nashua
Jill Adams, Brookline	Thomas Young, Litchfield	Mary Ann Melizzi-Golja, Nashua
Robert Larmouth, Hollis	Steve Brown, Lyndeborough	Dan Moriarty, Nashua
Venu Rao, Hollis	Karin Elmer, Merrimack	Dave Hennessey, Pelham
James Battis, Hudson	Tom Mahon, Merrimack	Hal Lynde, Pelham
George Hall, Hudson	Janet Langdell, Milford	Kermit Williams, Wilton
Richard Maddox, Hudson	Mike Fimbel, Mont Vernon	

Others Present: Patrick Happy, Hollis Energy Committee Representative Charlene Takesian
Nancy Mayville, NHDOT

Staff Present: Tim Roache, Executive Director Jen Czysz, Assistant Director
Karen Baker, Program Assistant

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Chairman Hennessey called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM. He pointed out there were a couple new Commissioners present Jill Adams, Planning Board member from Brookline and Venu Rao, Hollis Energy Committee. He then asked for introductions from the rest of the Commissioners present.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

The public present did not wish to speak.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 16, 2015

The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of September 16, 2015. Commission members pointed to a grammatical error on page 3, last sentence in the second full paragraph (DATE should be DATA) and on page 5, the motion in the middle should have “on the” removed. After further discussion, Maddox motioned with a second from Young:

THAT the minutes of September 16, 2015 be approved as amended.

The motion **carried with one abstention.**

PRESENTATION: VENU RAO – TOWN OF HOLLIS ENERGY COMMITTEE

Roache introduced Venu Rao, newly appointed Commissioner and Chair of the Hollis Energy Committee (HEC) who would be speaking about the efforts in Hollis to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and reduce the overall energy costs to the town.

Rao explained that his presentation would be 5 years of work compressed into 20 minutes. He stated that the Hollis Energy Committee started in 2009 with the charter “To promote energy conservation and energy efficiency through sustainable energy practices”. Rao showed a list of the HEC members and said goal was to meet our charter goals in 2 phases. Phase I: Convert all municipal buildings to be energy efficient and Phase II: Develop sustainable energy sources for electricity, heating/Hot Water, and transportation. Rao showed a slide of the earth’s atmosphere and explained the Karman line which separates earth’s atmosphere from inter planetary space and the fact that 75% of the atmosphere is only 0.08% of earth’s diameter and that this line

keeps the earth temperate.

Rao summarized the key steps taken for Phase 1 of the charter which were to create EPA portfolio manager, which enabled them to apply and receive grants for the upgrade of all electrical lighting systems in the Town of Hollis. Another key step was working with NRPC to sign a PPA, which combined yielded a savings of \$128K/yr. The final step of Phase I was to perform ASHREA Level III energy audits, which resulted in a road map to future energy efficiency & conservation activities for Hollis. Phase II efforts were related to sustainable energy strategies for heating and hot water and involved replacing existing aged oil & gas boilers in Town Hall & the Police Station with wood pellet boilers and a district heating system feasibility study using wood chips through a grant from NH Wood Energy Council. Also part of Phase II, electricity efforts consisted of the development of a PV solar solution for Hollis Town municipal buildings to address the electrical needs. Lastly, a transportation effort involving a feasibility study for the use of bio-fuels and emerging technologies and additional efforts related to heating and hot water using wood chips for two school boards and individual pellet burners for town buildings.

Rao stated the reasons for choosing wood heating systems as Hollis Tax payer dollar savings, keeps fuel dollars in local economy & helps create jobs in NH and it is renewable and sustainable. He noted some key points:

- Wood chips are a more stable fuel cost than gas and oil and 70% cheaper than oil. Additionally woodchip costs have remained stable for the last decade with only a 3% increase.
- NH is second most dependent state in the country on heating oil with Maine being #1 and over 80% of heating in NH is being supplied by imported fossil fuels. Also, NH exports over \$1 billion annually to import fossil fuels for heating.
- Scandinavian countries have been using wood chips/pellets for the last 35 years; it is a matured technology.

Rao noted that the Hollis PD, Town Hall, and School District use wood pellet heating systems. He showed the Hollis School District School cluster fuel cost analysis using life cycle analysis assumptions (acquisition cost, fuel cost and inflation for life (20 yrs.), O&M cost, and loan Interest of 5% for 20 yr. term).

As part of the electricity component of Phase II, Rao noted that HEC also developed a PV solar solution for Hollis Town municipal buildings electrical needs. He stated that 86% of the electricity consumed is by school buildings. Rao stated that in 2013, NH Passed a Virtual Net-Metering Law and Increased the renewable power generation to One Mega-Watt and that unlike Bio-fuel Heating Systems, PV Electric Systems can only get tax credits. Since Municipalities do not pay taxes, they have the option of going for PPA with Solar Vendors. As a PPA, Hollis can work with NRPC to have multiple towns cooperating for bargaining power with Solar Vendors. He noted the system requirements for a PV Electric System in Hollis are multiple smaller arrays (100KW) as well as 19 separate 100KW arrays – about 10 acres of land to meet 2.27GWh total demand. Rao added that the HEC plans to start with two 100KW capacity systems, one in Hollis School District and one in Hollis Brookline COOP School District with a plan to set up large display panels in all the four school buildings, Hollis Town Hall and at Hollis Transfer Station. This will enable them to show how much electricity is being generated using Sun and how much the school districts are saving, which can also serve as an educational piece for the schools. Rao concluded his presentation and emphasizing cooperation with Town Boards and the School District when taking on such a process. He also summarized the lessons learned and reviewed the timeline from beginning to end with the group. He asked the group if they had any questions. Questions were as follows:

Williams asked if Rao had taken into account what the State Legislature may do regarding fixed size arrays and the possibility of institution of aggregation. Rao did not think that would affect the efforts and referred to the federal grant that comes once a year for sustainable projects. There was some further discussion on net metering and sizing a system correctly. Moriarty commented that it was a good presentation. Langdell asked if there were warrant articles for March. Rao said yes, but there is no commitment for money; they are just

going for the bond. Roache talked about not re-inventing the wheel and sharing resources with other towns if they are thinking of doing something like this. Maddox said this could be a benefit for NRPC and they should follow these efforts from afar and pass the information along to the NRPC region towns on the savings over the next 3 years for warmth and fuzziness with the towns. It is helpful and does work to pass the information along regarding the savings. Larmouth referred to the Strategic Planning outcome of creating an energy committee through NRPC.

NRPC'S BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Czys referred to the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the Nashua Region Executive Summary included in the Commission agenda packet. She briefly summarized the plan by providing a few key points. The Plan Update marks the next phase of building pedestrian and bicycle connections in the Nashua Region and builds off goals and objectives outlined in the 2005 NRPC Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan as well as the 2014 Nashua Regional Plan. She touched on the background of the plan stating that pedestrian and bike infrastructure is improving but motorized travel still dominates the transportation network. She added that travel by foot and bicycle is an essential element even with our high dependency of motor vehicles. Czys summarized the purpose of the Plan to provide tools for local communities to enhance their walking and biking environment. The near-term focus is on local, short-distance trips of around three miles or less, which are the most likely trips to be made on foot or bicycle. She referred to the recently adopted Nashua Regional Plan public outreach efforts where residents repeatedly emphasized the value and importance of walkable and bikeable communities. She referred to a survey conducted during this time period where 83 percent of residents agreed that safe places to walk and bicycle should be expanded in their communities. She concluded saying that the Commission is hopeful this planning effort provides municipal officials and community leaders with a basic framework for implementing pedestrian and bicycle friendly improvements. Czys referred to the six simple ways to make your community more walkable and bicycle friendly and the advantages to pedestrian and bike improvements do for your community, as outlined in the Plan. Lastly, Czys referred to the example provided in the plan that shows how a more walkable and bicycle friendly region might allow for an average income family to reduce their expenses by \$7,300 a year by trading a motor vehicle in for a bike and sharing one modern and reliable car for longer trips. Czys asked if there were any questions and informed the group that they were looking for a motion to accept the plan.

Maddox wanted to see the survey used to come up with the 83% of residents agree that safe places to walk and bicycle should be expanded in their communities. He also asked if they were told the cost. Mahon added that maintenance is another issue and the towns having to plow the sidewalks in the winter. There was discussion on who maintains bike paths currently in the Concord area. Mahon said the cross country skiing group maintains that path. Williams was happy to see the rail trails were being used for bike & pedestrian but said he would prefer they use them for rail. There was also talk about DOT releasing information on unused rail trails especially over bridges and the plan to negotiate for bike and pedestrian for the unused rail corridors. Moriarty was very impressed with the layout of the Plan and said it was the best presentation he had ever seen and referred to the STRAVA heat map he uses when he races bikes and how you can download your workouts using this software and compete with people all over the country. He noted the lack of bike and pedestrian activity in downtown Nashua. Roache commented that he has seen folks deviate from busier roads and saw a chance for improved infrastructure on those less used roads. Mayville commented she would advocate on doing Bike/Ped plans for grants when DOT is doing projects related to CMAQ or TE dollars. After further discussion, Moriarty motioned with a second from Langdell:

THAT the Regional Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan for the Nashua Region be accepted by the NRPC Commission.

The motion **carried with one opposed.**

Mahon asked if we could look into the changes regarding sidewalks and bike paths that will take effect in relation to the transportation authorization act. He felt it could possibly make things easier if there was no requirement for curbs. Happy commented that in Hollis, the snowmobile club maintains the recreational trails which bikes and horses can use and they do this using money from the state and grants.

UPDATES:

Mid-Year Budget Update (motion to accept): Roache reviewed the mid-year budget update included in the agenda packet with the Commissioners. He started with resources and noted the 3 new grants recently awarded: Farmers Market, PHMSA, and the HNH Foundation and gave a brief explanation of each. He also referred to new work with some of the towns, specifically, an Economic Development project with Amherst and Tax Maps for Lyndeborough and several other communities. He also stated that towns only get charged for the initial creation of the tax maps. Updates to the maps are covered by the dues. Roache moved onto expenses pointing out that salaries were up due to the rehire of Chizmas and increased hours for Pattison, Reinert and Longval. Roache also noted the grants with additional pass thru, the additional license for GIS software for Chizmas and the miscellaneous line items for the strategic planning workshop and the legislative forum. Roache stated that the Executive Committee made a recommendation that the full Commission adopt the mid-year budget. Moriarty asked for clarification on the reason the expenses and resources were both up. Roache explained the salaries are up and a result of the additional grants received to help NRPC to deliver on the grants. After further discussion, Williams motioned with a second from Mahon:

THAT the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) approve the mid-year budget.

The motion **carried.**

Energy Facilities Advisory Committee Update: Roache briefly summarized the history of the EFAC and what has been going on since the Commission voted not to take a position on the pipeline. He noted some of the sentiments from EFAC and the mixed reactions to the NRPC decision and comment letter submitted. He added some were disappointed by the lack of a position, some felt the letter didn't adequately represent the work of the EFAC, while others felt it was the correct decision and that NRPC should remain a neutral fact finding body. Roache referred to a letter from members of the EFAC to the NRPC Executive Committee calling for a re-examination of the committee and its leadership and the discussions he had with the EFAC Chair Williams regarding the content of the letter. Williams said he would let Tim take over as interim chair and he would continue to represent Wilton on EFAC.

Roache summarized with the group some of the other important items to note in regards to the pipeline. He informed them that the Northern Middlesex County of Governments recently voted to oppose the pipeline projects and become an intervenor and this status keeps them in the loop and party to timely information pertaining to the project. He noted that the NH RPC's are considering being intervenors. By doing so, they will be in a position to comment and answer if the project impacts the orderly development of the region.

Roache informed the group of the recent EFAC meeting where NHMA Attorney Stephen Buckley presented on Eminent Domain in relation to Natural Gas Pipelines. He added that going forward, EFAC will continue to meet and his plan is to have more experts in to present information on all aspects related to energy and pipeline. EFAC will also continue to gather information on the need and be a fact finding body. Roache anticipated an update by the March meeting where EFAC may ask the Commission to take a position. Maddox stated that he read the minutes of the September meeting and that he supports that NRPC voted to take the position to be neither for or against the pipeline and remain a fact finding body. Williams agreed that the EFAC should continue as information gatherers and also go in the direction of pursuing other energy efforts. Williams asked

if the EC had discussed this. Roache said briefly and that this will eventually find a way into our standard programs through NRPC. Hennessey felt update should also include an overview of the coordination of powerline and the mapping difficulties due the many Kinder Morgan (KM) changes. He added that this all costs money which comes from the dues as there are no grants to support this work. Mahon commented on the many route changes for Merrimack from KM and the value of the mapping from NRPC.

Strategic Planning Initiative: Hennessey referred to the November 13th day long Strategic Planning Session held at Rivier College with the NRPC Executive Committee member and NRPC staff. He said he was looking forward to the robust report that will be the result of the session. Roache further explained that the planning initiative was to build off the Regional Plan and that one of the key items that come up was the need for NRPC to help the towns with economic development. Other items that came out of the session were regional transportation and broadband for towns to the west. Czys noted that enhancing our public image and the value we provide was another key item. She added that another exercise was for the group to come up with a “wish list” of what they would like to see for NRPC going forward and funding opportunities was an important item. Langdell elaborated saying communication between communities for the same ideas and multiply towns applying jointly for funding. Additionally, group purchasing for energy was another key item.

Quarterly Program Highlights: Roache referred to the Quarterly Program Highlights included in the agenda packet and briefly summarized the TMA Certification Review Process and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Counter install along the Nashua River Rail Trail. Fimbel commented on Household Hazardous Waste and the December 9th bi-annual meeting where there was discussion about having a 7th collection in Pelham. He added that it looks like it may happen and this will be good for the folk east of the Merrimack River.

8:49 PM - COMMISSIONER’S ROUNDTABLE

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

- Merrimack - Mahon: Merrimack School District filed motion to intervene. Town Council exploring.
- Hudson – Maddox: Benson’s train station moved to new home.
- Hollis – Larmouth: New signs at Hollis borders.
- Pelham – Lynde: Forestry Committee actively working on creating trails along Rte. 128 & Sherburne Rd. with connection to Londonderry trails, met with Londonderry to discuss.
- Wilton – Williams: Comment – sees value of energy aggregation, but would like if NRPC would revisit the communities that did not participate initially to see if there is interest when the aggregation goes to re-up for the group purchasing.
- Nashua – Moriarty: Eastern Gateway of Nashua, breaking ground in 2016, big changes to come.
- Milford – Langdell: Heritage, Historic and Conservation Commissions raising funds to save swinging bridge through a grass roots effort. Bridge is part of a pedestrian network.
- Nashua – Melizzi-Golja: Seasonal bus loop for Nashua (1 hour loop) for south Nashua Community. Hoping will be the start of walkability for the area.
- Amherst – Ruch: As a result of Roache’s visit with the Board of Selectmen, Amherst has invited the Commission to a future BOS meeting to tell what NRPC is doing and how to improve communication.
- Brookline – Adams: Town looking for economic growth along Route 13, lot of vacant buildings.
- Litchfield – Croteau: 66 acres of forest land purchased by Conservation Commission, Planning Board working on MP to include section to protect the very large prime habitat.

ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn came from Young with a second from Maddox. The meeting ended at 9:08pm.

Respectfully submitted

Tim Roache, Official Recorder: _____