

# MONADNOCK REGION FUTURE LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING

## MINUTES

June 12, 2014

**Present:** Larry Robinson, Chair, *SWRPC Board of Directors*; Eileen Fernandes, Vice-Chair, *Cheshire Medical Center*; Dick Berry, *SWRPC Board of Directors*; Susan Ashworth, *Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services (HCS)*.

SWRPC staff members present were Tim Murphy, Executive Director; J.B. Mack, Principal Planner; Lisa Murphy, Senior Planner; Tara Germond, Senior Planner; Rebeckah Bullock, Community Development Specialist; Steve Waleryszak, GIS Technician/Planner; and, Henry Underwood, Planning Technician.

### I. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Larry Robinson called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m., welcomed those in attendance, and introductions were made.

### II. Minutes of May 20, 2014

The minutes of May 20, 2014 were approved by unanimous vote.

### III. Implementation Strategies Discussion

Tara Germond summarized the previous Leadership Team meeting, which had included a discussion on regional implementation strategies. Tara Germond noted that she shared a document, "Monadnock Region Future Draft Strategies - June 6, 2014," with group members in advance of the meeting. This document contained a list of proposed strategies organized around six category areas. She explained that the focus of this agenda item is to discuss and share thoughts on these draft strategies. In advance of the discussion, Tara Germond described criteria that staff used to review each strategy.

Susan Ashworth asked who would be deciding or proposing the groups that will implement specific strategies. Tara Germond noted that the plan will feature an implementation matrix that includes information on potential partners, timing (e.g. short, medium or long term), level of action (e.g. local, regional, state), and priority status for each strategy. Tim Murphy commented that the implementation matrix discussed will be similar to the one found in the Southwest New Hampshire Regional Broadband Plan.

#### A. Build Social Capital/Civic Engagement

Eileen Fernandes questioned whether Strategy A.v. on the handout, related to diversifying local boards and committees, should include examples beyond the inclusion of high school age youth. She suggested including the term "vulnerable populations" to the strategy. Tim Murphy noted that the intent of this strategy is to encourage boards to be more inclusive and representative. Chairman Robinson noted that unlike other populations, youth, who are not of voting age, are not always able to be involved in local government. Dick Berry stated that he feels the term "diverse" implies multiple populations and that including additional examples might be impractical. Attendees discussed strategies to encourage youth participation in government and civic engagement, in addition to serving on local boards.

Dick Berry suggested including a glossary in the Plan to clarify terms such as “social capital.” Dick Berry also questioned whether some strategies included examples that were too specific. Tim Murphy responded that there are times when an illustrative example can make a strategy more actionable or tangible.

#### B. Provide Diverse Housing Opportunities

Dick Berry questioned the example of HomeTown Portsmouth, included in Strategy B.x. Tara Germond briefly explained the program, which provides down-payment assistance to eligible first time homebuyers. Chairman Robinson mentioned a similar program in Boston, MA, which included benefits like reduced taxes and closing costs. Tim Murphy noted that the strategy is intended to support the goal of attracting younger households to the Region. Often, these households are less able to afford the upfront costs of purchasing a home.

#### C. Provide Access to Goods, Services, Employment, and Other Destinations

Attendees discussed the intent and meaning of Strategy C.iii., which proposes the formation of a regional transportation coordinator and call center. Susan Ashworth suggested defining the word, “multi-modal,” which appears in Strategy C.i. Tim Murphy suggested describing the concept in alternative terms and adding the word “multi-modal” in parentheses; thereby, educating the reader on the definition without requiring a glossary or footnote entry. The group discussed Strategy C.xx., regarding the development of a cooperatively owned transportation system. J. B. Mack explained that if the public is not willing or able to subsidize transit to the extent necessary for good performance, a cooperatively-owned system may be an alternate solution. Dick Berry suggested rephrasing the strategy by using the words “consider the development of.”

The group discussed Strategy C.xix., related to identifying and advocating for projects to be included in the New Hampshire Ten Year Transportation Plan. Staff explained that although the process is somewhat routine, not all municipalities are engaged. Tim Murphy noted that it is important to have towns nominate and advocate for projects on an on-going basis. He suggested rephrasing the strategy to “Pursue funding solutions through programs such as the New Hampshire Ten Year Transportation Plan.”

#### D. Protect and Improve the Quality of Natural Resources

Both Chairman Robinson and Dick Berry mentioned that encouraging municipalities to undertake natural resources inventories would be a valuable strategy to include in the Plan. Chairman Robinson asked for clarification on the role of Agricultural Commissions, which are referenced in Strategy D.ix. Tara Germond explained that the purpose of an Agricultural Commission is to advocate for the needs and interests of agriculture in a community. These groups might undertake activities related to protecting agricultural lands, assisting farmers, and encouraging agricultural activities. Chairman Robinson commented that most towns have in place conservation or open space committees that focus on land conservation and open space planning. He suggested including a strategy to encourage the formation of open space committees in a community. Attendees discussed other strategies including those related to the Greater Keene Air Quality Campaign. It was also suggested that the term non-point source pollution, as it appears in Strategy D.xii. be either defined or rephrased.

#### E. Increase Economic Competitiveness and Diversity

Attendees discussed the wording of Strategy E.xvii., related to raising awareness about competitive and living wages. Tim Murphy explained that the intent of this strategy is to educate others about the importance of having wages that enable workers to live in close proximity to employment, and to meet

their basic costs of living. Dick Berry raised the concern that employers may not be able to raise labor costs and stay in business. A second discussion concerned the connection between the ability of employers to attract skilled talent to the Region and the availability of affordable living opportunities and competitive wages. Attendees discussed rewording the strategy to reflect the need to understand the costs of living and working in the region.

#### **F. Emergency Response and Preparedness**

Lisa Murphy commented that cities and towns are paying increased attention to storm severity and infrastructure vulnerability. Rebeckah Bullock suggested the need to include the development of business continuity plans as a strategy or as part of an existing strategy. Staff discussed the use of tax increment financing for funding the improvement and maintenance of water infrastructure. Asset management was also discussed as a major need and concern. Attendees commented on the need for more clarification on the strategy concerning fluvial geomorphic erosion hazards and discussed the need for redundancy in infrastructure, especially broadband.

Susan Ashworth discussed the need to assist vulnerable populations in an emergency situation. She also noted that the need for emergency center staff could quickly exceed the supply if many towns were forced to open these facilities at the same time. It was noted that a growing elderly population makes this more of a concern. Eileen Fernandes emphasized that there is a need for increased coordination and information sharing between and among communities with respect to emergency management and hazard mitigation activities. She advocated for a strategy including awareness about volunteer emergency support teams, which are essential to disaster and emergency response.

#### **IV. Next Steps**

Tara Germond said that next steps will include submitting a draft version of the Regional Plan to the Nashua Regional Planning Commission at the end of June. Also during this time, staff will begin work to finalize drafts of the various technical plan components. Tara Germond noted that she would be asking Leadership Team members to rank and prioritize the draft strategies in advance of the next meeting. She will be providing more guidance to the Leadership Team on this task via email.

#### **V. Next Meeting**

Tara Germond said that she will send out potential dates for the next meeting to the group for their consideration.

#### **VI. Public Comments/Questions**

There were no members of the public present.

#### **VII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Henry Underwood  
Planning Technician