

SOUTHWEST REGION PLANNING COMMISSION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MINUTES

March 16, 2021

Staff member Rich Clough announced that today's meeting will be conducted using a Zoom format and read a document entitled *Authority for Conducting a Meeting Electronically* (attached). He indicated that all votes would be conducted by roll call.

Present: Tom Mullins, Chairman, *Peterborough*; Gus Lerandeau, Vice-Chairman, *Swanzy*; Larry Robinson, Secretary, *Marlborough*; Jill Collins, Treasurer, *Hinsdale*; Sara Carbonneau, *Winchester*; Brian Barden, *Dublin*; Camilla Lockwood, *Temple*; Leandra MacDonald, *Peterborough*; Cheryl Mayberry, *Walpole*; Ed Merrell, *Jaffrey*; Butch Morin, *Richmond*.

Staff members present include Tim Murphy, Executive Director; Rebecca Baldwin, Office Manager; Rich Clough, Office Support Specialist; Todd Horner, Planner; Terry Johnson, Senior Project Manager.

Guest: Christine Robidoux, Temple resident.

Absent: Chris Coates, *Cheshire County*; Jay Jacobs, *Harrisville*; John Snowdon, *Westmoreland*; Gary Spykman, *Keene*.

I. Welcome

Chairman Mullins called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

II. Advisory Committee Reports

- a. Transportation Advisory Committee**
- b. Energy & Natural resources Advisory Committee**
- c. Economic Development Advisory Committee**
- d. Brownfields Advisory Committee**

Mr. Murphy reported that with the exception of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) advisory committees have not met since reports were provided at the February 9, 2021 Winter Commission meeting. Since a significant part of the TAC report contains recommendations for the NH 2023-2032 10-Year Transportation Improvement Plan update, this will be addressed under the Discussion Topic portion of today's meeting. Chairman Mullins suggested moving on to the Consent Agenda.

III. Consent Agenda

- a. Minutes of February 9, 2021 Meeting**
- b. Agreement with Cheshire County - Grant Administration Services**
- c. Highlights of Commission Activities - February 2021**
- d. Financial Report - February 2021**

Motion: To accept the consent agenda as presented.

Motion by Director Lerandeau, seconded by Director MacDonald. Approved by unanimous roll call vote.

IV. Executive Director's Report

- a. Agreement with NHDES - Spofford Lake Watershed Management Plan Implementation**
- b. Agreement with NHDES - Ashuelot River Corridor Plan Update**

Mr. Murphy reported that SWRPC has become more active over recent years in sponsoring projects in conjunction with the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). Projects utilize federal funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to support watershed management planning activities. Two proposals have been approved for funding by NHDES. He recognized staff member Lisa Murphy to provide a brief overview of the projects.

Lisa Murphy explained that the Ashuelot River Corridor Plan update will focus on updating the existing Plan. Since it was last updated in 2006, there have been erosion problems within the corridor that includes the towns of Gilsum, Harrisville, Keene, Marlow, Sullivan, Surry, Swanzey, and Winchester. Updating the Plan will allow it to remain eligible for future funding to conduct an implementation phase. The Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) and an environmental consultant will assist in data collection.

Lisa Murphy stated that the Spofford Lake Watershed Management Plan Implementation project represents the third award received from NHDES for Spofford Lake. This project will involve implementing stormwater best management practices at four locations that were identified in the Spofford Lake Watershed Management Plan as well as the public boat launch and parking lot area. Also included in the project is an educational component directed at residents and users of the Lake to help improve water quality. Mr. Murphy asked for clarification as to why attention was being given to a boat ramp and parking lot and Lisa Murphy explained that these two areas have been identified as priorities since they serve as direct conduits for contamination entering the Lake through surface water runoff. Mr. Murphy added that the Lake is currently considered as impaired by the State of NH and it is hoped that these efforts will help to improve the health of the Lake.

It was noted that both projects will require the procurement of services from environmental consultants and approval of this action will be brought back to the Board for their consideration at a future date. Chairman Mullins asked what the compensation to SWRPC would be for the Spofford Lake project and Lisa Murphy replied approximately \$17,500.

Director Lerandeau questioned if these would be voted on as one item or two and Mr. Murphy suggested they be handled separately since they are presented as individual agenda items.

Motion: To authorize the Executive Director to enter into an agreement with NHDES to conduct phase II of a Watershed Management Plan implementation for Spofford Lake.

Motion by Director Lerandean, seconded by Director Carbonneau. Approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Motion: To authorize the Executive Director to enter into an agreement with NHDES to conduct an update of the Ashuelot River Corridor plan.

Motion by Director Lerandean, seconded by Director MacDonald. Approved by unanimous roll call vote with Director Merrell abstaining.

V. Discussion Topic - Recommendations for NH 2023-2032 10-Year Transportation Improvement Plan Update

J. B. Mack explained that, in addition to this being a discussion topic for today's meeting, we would also be looking for the Board to take action on the TAC recommendations for the NH 2023-2032 10-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TYP) update. J. B. Mack provided background on the process for updating the TYP every two years. During the odd numbered years, the RPCs make their recommendations to NHDOT by March 31st on their priority projects to be considered for inclusion in the Plan. NHDOT prepares a draft Plan during the summer to be presented to the Governors Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) who holds public hearings throughout the state during the fall and presents their recommendations to the Governor. During the even numbered years, the Governor and Legislature develop a final Plan and in the summer the cycle begins again with the solicitation of nominations for the next TYP update. He recognized the efforts of TAC members participating in this process including Directors Barden, Lerandean, MacDonald, and Mayberry.

He explained that new criteria and a standardized application were developed for the TYP this year and NHDOT released their guidance in June 2020. As in past years, \$50 million is made available statewide to be apportioned among the RPCs based on their populations and number of federal aid eligible miles. This equates to \$4.27 million for the southwest region that can only be used for federal aid eligible highways.

During July and August of 2020 SWRPC staff solicited project nominations and received three responses: one from the City of Keene to redevelop West Street; a request from the Town of Swanzey to extend the Route 10/Winchester Street project listed in the current TYP; and a request from the Town of Walpole to fully fund the Vilas Bridge project. TAC established criteria weights for the list of 15 different criteria that were used to rank projects and also asked NHDOT to conduct a screening of the Keene and Swanzey proposals.

J. B. Mack reviewed the Route 10/Winchester Street project noting that TAC did not rank this project because it is already in the TYP and funding for the initial project has already been programmed. NHDOT has agreed to implement an extension of this project by approximately 665 linear feet to the Market Basket plaza at no cost to our regional budget.

TAC met on March 1, 2021 and considered three projects including the NH 101 corridor improvement project that is included in the current TYP but is underfunded, the Keene West Street corridor improvement project and the Vilas Bridge rehabilitation project which is partially funded in the current TYP. He provided a detailed presentation on each of the projects. TAC ranked the full funding of the Route 101 corridor improvements as their top ranked project followed by the Keene West St. corridor improvements project. Since these two projects will use all of the funds allocated to our region, no funding remains for the Vilas Bridge project. These recommendations should be considered for endorsement by the Board of Directors and submitted to NHDOT by March 31, 2021.

TAC has asked that additional recommendations/comments be submitted to NHDOT along with their priority project rankings. Since the Vilas Bridge project continues to be underfunded and there are concerns regarding potential damage that could be caused to the wastewater system by the deteriorating bridge. TAC is recommending risk assessment of the wastewater conveyance along the underside of the bridge deck. TAC is also encouraging improved dialogue and collaboration on this project between the States of NH and Vermont in efforts to achieve full funding for bridge rehabilitation. We will also draw attention, as in the past, to the fact that there continues to be inadequate revenue available to meet our transportation infrastructure needs. We will also address the importance of enhanced transit services in our comments to NHDOT.

Director Lerandeanu noted that the ranking made by TAC represented a unanimous decision. Director MacDonald pointed out that the reason for the Route 101 project being underfunded is due to a change in procedure and hopes it will not become a problem in the future with other projects already in the TYP. Director Mayberry thanked both Mr. Murphy and J. B. Mack for their efforts to secure funding for the Vilas Bridge project. Chairman Mullins noted that we are all in the same boat with regards to lack of funding for infrastructure and need to figure out a way to address all projects.

Motion: To accept the recommendation of the Transportation Advisory Committee for priority projects to be submitted for consideration in the NH 2023-2032 10-Year Transportation Improvement Plan update.

Motion by Director Lerandeanu, seconded by Director MacDonald. Approved by unanimous roll call vote.

VI. Next Meeting

Chairman Mullins announced that the next meeting of the SWRPC Board of Directors is scheduled for April 13, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. and will be a remote meeting.

VII. Other Matters

No other matters were brought before the Board at this time.

VIII. Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

IX. Adjourn

Meeting Adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca I. Baldwin
Office Manager