

SOUTHWEST REGION PLANNING COMMISSION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MINUTES

September 15, 2020

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 (copy attached)*. He announced that all votes would be conducted by roll call.

Present: Gus Lerandeau, Vice-Chairman, *Swanzy*; Larry Robinson, Secretary, *Marlborough*; Brian Barden, *Dublin*; Sara Carbonneau, *Winchester*; Camilla Lockwood, *Temple*; Leandra MacDonald, *Peterborough (joined meeting at 3:30 p.m.)*; Cheryl Mayberry, *Walpole (joined meeting at 4:05 p.m.)*; Butch Morin, *Richmond*; John Snowdon, *Westmoreland*.

Staff members present include Tim Murphy, Executive Director; Rebecca Baldwin, Office Manager; Rich Clough, Office Support Specialist; Terry Johnson, Senior Project Manager; J. B. Mack, Principal Planner; Lisa Murphy, Senior Planner; Henry Underwood, GIS Technician/Planner; James Weatherly, Planning Technician.

Guest: Christine Robideaux, Temple resident.

Absent: Tom Mullins, Chairman, *Peterborough*; Jill Collins, Treasurer, *Hinsdale*; Chris Coates, *Cheshire County*; Jay Jacobs, *Harrisville*; Ed Merrell, *Jaffrey*; Gary Spykman, *Keene*.

I. Welcome

Vice-Chairman Lerandeau called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

II. Committee Reports

a. Transportation Advisory Committee

J. B. Mack reported that the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) met on August 3, 2020 and September 14, 2020. At the August 3rd meeting TAC members assigned weights to criteria that will be used to rank projects being considered for inclusion in the 2023-2032 Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TYP) update. During the summer months, staff solicited project nominations from member communities and the NH Department of Transportation's Maintenance Division for District IV. September 4th was set as the deadline for submitting nominations.

At the September 14th meeting TAC members continued to develop weights for criteria that will be used to rank projects for the TYP update. It was noted that one new project nomination was received from the City

of Keene to perform updates to West Street. In addition, staff provided a presentation on the recently completed *Greater Keene Intermodal Transportation Center Feasibility Study*.

The next meeting of TAC is scheduled for October 5, 2020.

b. Energy and Natural Resources Advisory Committee

Lisa Murphy reported that the Energy and Natural Resources Advisory Committee (ENRAC) has not met since the Board was updated on their activities at the SWRPC Annual Commission meeting. The next meeting of ENRAC is scheduled for September 29, 2020 and will include a presentation on Community Power in NH which through recent legislation enables municipalities and residents to group purchase electricity at reduced rates.

c. Economic Development Advisory Committee

Mr. Murphy reported that the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) has not met since the Board was updated on their activities at the SWRPC Annual Commission meeting. Since that time, it has been announced that both the Town of Jaffrey and the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation have each been selected for awards from the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) to assist with the Cold Stone Springs water expansion project and the formation of a technology hub at Keene State College, respectively. Both projects were recently designated as priorities by EDAC in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Southwest New Hampshire.

The next meeting of EDAC is scheduled to take place on October 14, 2020. The agenda will include an update on the activities of the Monadnock Housing Roundtable.

d. Brownfields Advisory Committee

J. B. Mack reported that the Brownfields Advisory Committee (BrAC) met on August 26, 2020. At that meeting the BrAC approved a nomination and Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) on the portion of Keene State property in the area of Randall and Monadnock Halls to facilitate the development of a technology hub. The cost of performing the Phase I ESA will be shared with the University System of NH. A supplemental Phase II ESA scope of work was also approved for the former Greenfield Auto property located in Greenfield to further explore groundwater contamination concerns. The cost for the Phase II ESA will be shared with the property owner.

Mr. Murphy advised that staff has taken action to close the current Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Site-Specific Grant for the Kingsbury property in Keene and return the unused funds to the EPA. He noted that this is the first time since the program began in 2003 that we have not been able to fully utilize program funding. He explained that the property owner has been unwilling to participate which is a requirement of the grant. Mr. Murphy acknowledged the frustration shared by the City of Keene, BrAC and staff in trying to make this happen as well as additional efforts on the part of EPA, NHDES and our environmental consultant. He added that if the funds were not relinquished it would render SWRPC ineligible in applying for additional assessment funding for other properties in the Region. Director Snowdon asked if assessment work on the Kingsbury site could be revisited in the future. Mr. Murphy replied that the chances for that are not very high if the current owner of the property is still involved. Director Snowdon asked if it was correct that the current owner is limited by what he can do with the property as long as certain environmental issues exist and it was confirmed that this is likely the case.

The next meeting of BrAC will be scheduled in the coming weeks.

III. Consent Agenda

- a. Minutes of July 28, 2020 Meeting**
- b. Highlights of Commission Activities - July and August 2020**
- c. Agreement with Cheshire County - Grant Administration Services**
- d. Agreement with Keene State College - Technical Assistance and Outreach**
- e. Financial Reports - July and August 2020**

Vice-Chairman Lerandeau noted that the financial report for August had been distributed separate from the agenda packet prior to today's meeting.

Motion: To accept the consent agenda as presented.

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

IV. Executive Director's Report

a. Fall 2020 Commission Meeting

Mr. Murphy reported that the Fall 2020 Commission Meeting is scheduled to take place on October 13, 2020 and will be conducted using a Zoom format. Following an abbreviated meeting of the Board, staff will open the Fall Commission Meeting which will join a live meeting of the Monadnock Broadband Group (MBG). The MBG is an informal coalition comprised of municipal officials and other stakeholders interested in collaborating on broadband issues and is currently staffed by SWRPC staff members Henry Underwood and Todd Horner. MBG meets several times throughout the year and focuses on topics related to broadband connectivity in Southwest NH. Henry Underwood noted that the agenda for the upcoming meeting will include an overview of a municipal broadband implementation guide designed to assist with broadband expansion efforts as well as a presentation and discussion on communication districts.

Director Carbonneau referred to a recent article in the Keene Sentinel that reported on both Hinsdale and Stoddard receiving CARES Act funding for broadband and asked if SWRPC had been involved and why Winchester didn't file an application. Mr. Murphy responded that funding through the CARES Act was channeled through the Connect NH Emergency Broadband Expansion program. Review of the program requirements revealed that a lot of risk was involved on behalf of applicants which limited the number of proposals ultimately submitted. MBG wrote a letter pointing out the drawbacks including the requirement to fully expend all grant funds prior to the end of the calendar year which would not be attainable for many potential projects. Henry Underwood noted that in the cases of Hinsdale and Stoddard, it was service providers rather than the Towns that applied for the funding.

Board members concurred with the plans staff have made for the Fall 2020 Commission Meeting. Mr. Murphy encouraged Board members to reach out to their respective municipalities to suggest they consider attending.

V. Discussion Topic - Community Development Block Grant Program Update

Mr. Murphy reported that SWRPC has been active in the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG) for over thirty years. The federal program, currently administered in the State by the NH Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA), has assisted with municipal economic development, infrastructure and housing projects since the 1960's. SWRPC administers approximately \$2 million in

program funds per year that benefit low- to moderate-income households in the Region. He noted that James Weatherly, who joined SWRPC a year ago currently administers the program.

James Weatherly provided an overview of the CDBG program and highlighted several current projects including:

Central Square Terrace: A project that involves two buildings in downtown Keene for the rehabilitation of 90 housing units. A CDBG grant in the amount of \$500,000 was awarded for the \$1.5 million project sponsored by Cheshire County and overseen by Keene Housing. Construction began in May of 2019 and will wrap up later this year.

603 OPTX: A CDBG grant for \$200,000 was awarded to a start-up precision optical business in Keene to help with the purchase of equipment that has resulted in the creation of ten jobs to-date. The grant is sponsored by the City of Keene and overseen by Monadnock Economic Development Corporation.

Monadnock Food Co-op: Sponsored by the City of Keene and with oversight provided by Monadnock Economic Development Corporation, CDBG funds in the amount of \$500,000 were awarded to the Co-op located in Keene that resulted in the creation of 25 new jobs.

Community Kitchen: Sponsored by the City of Keene, this project includes the award of \$500,000 in CDBG funds towards the \$625,000 project to install a solar array on the roof of the Keene facility.

Micro-Enterprise Program: Sponsored by Cheshire County SWRPC administers CDBG funds that have been awarded to the Hannah Grimes Center in Keene, the Regional Economic Development Center in Raymond and the UNH Small Business Development Center in Durham to provide technical assistance to microenterprises which have five or less full-time employees. Businesses that are owned by low- to moderate-income individuals are the recipients of this assistance.

James Weatherly noted that these represent just a few of the many grants that SWRPC administers in the Region through the CDBG program in addition to several projects that are currently in the application phase.

Director Snowdon asked if the U.S. Census plays a role in the CDBG program and James Weatherly responded that it helps to identify the low- to moderate-income component of the program.

Mr. Murphy noted that, through master plans and other on-going activities, our member communities spend a lot of time developing their goals and objectives, vision statements and dreams and the CDBG program helps to implement them.

VI. Next Meeting

It was acknowledged that the next meeting of the SWRPC Board of Directors is scheduled for October 13, 2020 at 3:00 p.m., just prior to the Fall 2020 Commission Meeting.

VII. Other Matters

U.S. Census: Director Snowdon noted that in a recent report, NH was ranked as 24th in responding to the U.S. Census. He asked if, given the importance of responding, there was anything SWRPC could do to promote municipal participation. Mr. Murphy responded that in addition to dedicating one of our Commission Meetings to the subject, we have been actively promoting participation through SWRPC's

newsletters. Christine Robideau noted that a group called the Monadnock Region Complete Count Committee features the importance of the Census on their website. Director Snowdon urged Board members to encourage their respective communities to post an article on the importance of the census on their websites.

VIII. Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

IX. Adjourn

Meeting Adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca I. Baldwin
Office Manager