

SWRPC

Commission Highlights

November 2021

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Age-Focused Planning Activities Gain Momentum

The Age-Focused Planning (AFP) project is in its third year of addressing trends in Southwest New Hampshire of an aging population and a decline in younger workers and school enrollment. The Region's population of those aged 65 and over is growing faster than any other age group and Census data indicates that over 80% of our municipalities have a median age exceeding that of the State. Hinsdale, Jaffrey, Swanzey, Walpole, Westmoreland, and Winchester are rising to the challenge by taking action to make their communities more age-friendly. With support from SWRPC, these communities are collectively targeting activities to improve transportation alternatives, increase housing options, provide opportunities for social engagement, and enhance economic opportunities for residents of all ages. These actions directly align with the overall aims of the AFP project which is supported by the Tufts Health Plan Foundation and Cheshire Medical Center. For more information or to learn about how your community can get involved, contact Terry Johnson of SWRPC staff at tjohnson@swrpc.org.

Community Power: Developing Local Resources

Community Power, enabled by NH RSA 53-E, allows local governments to have access to competitive electricity markets, negotiate for lower costs and more price stability, and explore options in purchasing local and renewable energy. Several communities in the Monadnock Region have enacted Community Power plans and submitted them to the NH Public Utilities Commission, and many others are creating committees or developing plans. In most cases, municipal staff works with experienced electricity market service providers to form plans and start programs. However, before engaging in Community Power, there is a lot to learn. SWRPC has been partnering with the Monadnock Sustainability Hub to develop resources about Community Power assess interest in forming a group where municipal officials can share experience and knowledge with others. For more information, please contact J. B. Mack of SWRPC staff at jbmack@swrpc.org.

Proven Safety Countermeasures Initiative

During November, SWRPC staff attended a webinar on the *Proven Safety Countermeasures Initiative* sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration. The Initiative was launched in 2008, and the recent webinar focused on the addition of nine new countermeasures including rectangular rapid flashing beacons, bicycling lanes and enhanced lighting. The total of twenty-eight countermeasures have all proven to be effective through research and address one or more safety focus areas including speed management, intersections, roadway departures and people walking or biking. Planners, officials and highway maintainers are encouraged to consult the information as they work to improve safety in their own communities. For more information, please visit safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures or contact Henry Underwood of SWRPC staff at hunderwood@swrpc.org.

Road Surface Management Assessment

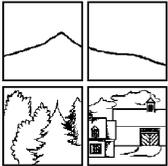
During November, SWRPC conducted preparations to conduct a Road Surface Management System (RSMS) assessment for the Town of New Ipswich. The RSMS is a two-phased project with SWRPC staff performing an assessment of the condition of all paved town-maintained roads in phase one. In the second phase of the project, SWRPC's staff will use computer software to model future pavement conditions and estimate the cost of future pavement repairs. The final product of the project will be a 10-year paving plan that will allow the Town to analyze the current and future conditions of their roads while planning for future repairs. For more information, please contact Andrew Smeltz of SWRPC staff at asmeltz@swrpc.org.

Community Projects Receive Support

During its meeting of November 4th, the NH Community Development Finance Authority's Community Development Advisory Committee awarded a total of \$1,000,000 to benefit two projects in Southwest NH. Through the federal Community Development Block Grant program, Cheshire County will utilize funds to support Hundred Nights in constructing a new homeless shelter located at 122-124 Water Street in Keene. In addition, the City of Keene will use funds to support Monadnock Family Service's move to a centralized home at 40 Avon Street in Keene. For more information, please contact James Weatherly of SWRPC staff at jweatherly@swrpc.org.

Watershed Assistance Grant Awarded

During November, SWRPC was notified of an award of a watershed assistance grant by the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) through the US EPA Clean Water Act to make improvements in the Spofford Lake watershed in Chesterfield. The funding will help continue efforts to implement best management practices in areas identified in the Spofford Lake Watershed Management Plan to reduce the amount of unfiltered stormwater from entering the Lake. The project will include improvements to the public boat launch and parking lot. Three smaller sites within the watershed will also be addressed. For more information, please contact Lisa Murphy of SWRPC staff at lmurphy@swrpc.org.



Community Meeting on Housing Challenges and Opportunities

On November 17th, SWRPC staff attended a meeting of the Monadnock Interfaith Project (MIP), a coalition of congregations, organizations, and individuals working together to foster interfaith community, understanding, and systemic change that benefits the Monadnock Region. The meeting explored the region's need for housing opportunities, especially for households at the lower end of income spectrum. It also examined a particular strategy for financing affordable housing projects: an affordable housing trust fund. To help provide some context to the conversation, SWRPC staff offered five reasons why the creation of more housing options is critical for protecting the rural way of life in the Monadnock Region which can be found at www.swrpc.org/housing-rural-character/. To learn more, visit www.mipnh.org or contact Todd Horner of SWRPC staff at thorner@swrpc.org.

