

SWRPC

Commission Highlights

April 2023

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Annual Meeting

The SWRPC Annual Meeting will be held on June 13, 2023 at Heberton Hall in the Keene Public Library Annex, 60 Winter Street, Keene, NH. The meeting starts at 4:30 p.m. with a social gathering. Don Kreis, NH's Consumer Advocate will present: *Why Towns Should Plan for Their Energy Future* at 5:00 p.m. Energy has become an increasingly important topic having a bearing on everything from the cost of living to climate change to energy security. Experts increasingly see electricity, in conjunction with clean and domestic energy sources, as the path forward for meeting many of these challenges. Yet electricity is expensive in NH - with the residential sector paying the second highest average retail price of all 50 states. Attendees will learn more about why electricity is expensive in NH and what is being done about it at the State, regional and local levels. We will also discuss how municipalities in the Region are starting community power/electricity aggregation programs to address their needs. To register, please click here: <https://bit.ly/Jun13SWRPCAnn>.

Brownfields Update

On April 21st, the Brownfields Advisory Committee authorized several scopes of work which will result in environmental assessment activities at four different brownfields sites in Greenville, New Ipswich and Winchester. Analyses of soil and groundwater are part of a scope of work that will help Greenville better understand potential contamination on two vacant parcels for use as parking and greenspace in its downtown. Environmental records analyses, interviews with people familiar with the properties and site visits will result in reports to assist New Ipswich to better understand possible contamination on two parcels that have a potential to host a new local employer and community center. Similar work is slated for Winchester with respect to a privately-owned parcel, formerly used as a car repair facility and gas station being considered for a new community/welcome center and town common. For more information about SWRPC's Brownfields Assessment Program, please contact J. B. Mack of SWRPC staff at jbmack@swrpc.org.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

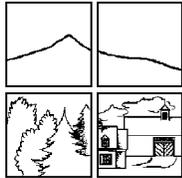
SWRPC is accepting public comments on its recently released draft of the *Southwest NH Regional Housing Needs Assessment* (RHNA). The public comment period is open through May 12, 2023. The RHNA is available for download at <https://www.swrpc.org/housing/>. Please submit comments and questions to J. B. Mack of SWRPC staff at jbmack@swrpc.org or by sending written comments by mail to SWRPC, 37 Ashuelot Street, Keene, NH 03431.

New Hampshire Zoning Atlas

On April 13th, staff attended a meeting as part of a series leading up to the release of the NH Zoning Atlas, a collaborative effort to map and create comparable data about New Hampshire's 2,000+ zoning districts. Sponsors of the project include Saint Anselm and the New Hampshire Office of Planning and Development. The release of the Atlas will coincide with a hybrid event featuring a presentation and panel discussion scheduled for May 9, 2023, from 8:00 to 10:15 a.m. To register for the in-person session, please click here: bit.ly/41OdanB. To register to attend virtually, please click here: bit.ly/3NkEcyj. More information about the project is available at zoningatlas.org/new-hampshire

Support for Community Transportation

On April 24th, the Town of Jaffrey adopted a Resolution in support of the NH Public Transportation Coalition's efforts to increase the State's share of operating costs of public transit. The Town joins other municipalities in the state that have adopted similar resolutions. The NH Public Transportation Coalition is spearheading efforts to secure annual funding in support of transit and community transportation services statewide. The increase would leverage between \$2.75 million and \$4.125 million of Federal Transit Administration funds already allocated and ready for use in New Hampshire. SWRPC recently completed a *Microtransit Feasibility and Fixed Route Transit Study* which provides a roadmap for expanding transit services in the Monadnock Region. The Study recommends multiple alternatives for expanding service in Greater Keene, Winchester, Eastern Monadnock, and other areas in the Region where transit is currently unavailable. The ability to expand services in the Region would benefit from increased State funding in NH which currently ranks 49th in the nation in per capita transit operations funding. For more information, please contact Terry Johnson of SWRPC staff at tjohnson@swrpc.org.



Energy and Natural Resources Committee Update

On April 26th, SWRPC's Energy and Natural Resources Advisory Committee (ENRAC) met to learn about the U.S. Department of Energy funded SolSmart program presented by Deborah Perry from the International City/County Management Association. SolSmart is a free national designation and technical assistance program that has helped over 450 local governments make it faster, easier and more affordable for residents and businesses to go solar. In the presentation, it was noted that 65% of the cost of a solar PV system is not related to hardware. These "soft costs" can be reduced by actions taken at the local level, including streamlining permitting and inspection, supporting consumer education, leading by example, facilitating group purchasing, and other strategies. The SolSmart program helps municipalities implement these activities and provides free assistance in reviewing local solar regulations. This session was recorded and can be reviewed at https://youtu.be/xz_KFuxs3ig. For more information, please contact J. B. Mack of SWRPC staff at jbmack@swrpc.org.

