

# **SOUTHWEST REGION PLANNING COMMISSION**

## ***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE***

### **MINUTES**

**July 27, 2023**

**Members Present:** Keith Thibault, Chairman, *Southwestern Community Services*; Steve Dalessio, *Town of Walpole*; Steve Fortier, *NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs*; Kathryn Lynch, *Town of Hinsdale*; Cody Morrison, *Monadnock Economic Development Corporation*; Sara Powell, *Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship*; Mike Remy, *C&S Wholesale Grocers*; Ron Rzasa, *Town of Chesterfield*; Bruce Smith, *Town of Westmoreland*; Scott Young, *Mascoma Bank*.

**Staff:** Todd Horner, *Assistant Director*, J. B. Mack, *Assistant Director*.

**Guests:** Sarah Carbonneau, *SWRPC Board of Directors*; Ted Diers, *NHDES*; Bernadette Farmer, *Office of Senator Maggie Hassan*; Rik Ekstrom, *Community Housing Navigator*; Taryn Fisher, *NH Small Business Development Center*; Robert Graham, *Office of Senator Hassan*; Julie Glosner, *NH SBDC*; Josh Green, *Town of Hinsdale*; Karey Miner, *Town of Winchester*; Ernie Smalley, *Town of Hinsdale*; Jed Toohey, *RP Masiello*; Monica Truesdell, *Town of Winchester*; Raisa West, *Town of Hancock*. Jack White, *Town of Hinsdale*.

### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Chairman Thibault called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and introductions were made.

### **II. Minutes of April 12, 2023**

Approval of the minutes was tabled until the next meeting.

### **III. Public Water and Sewer Resources Available via NHDES**

The meeting featured a presentation by Ted Diers, Assistant Director of the Water Division at NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). The presentation focused on challenges related to municipal water and sewer infrastructure and funding opportunities available to address those challenges. Recent federal legislation such as the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) increased funding available through existing programs and created new programs to meet emerging needs, such as PFAS contamination. A recording of Mr. Dier's presentation can be found at the following link: <https://youtu.be/cwelYiJIUW8?t=410>. Presentation slides and a matrix of available funding sources are attached.

A primary takeaway from the presentation is that the current moment offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to seek federal funding for municipal water and sewer projects. It should be noted that, in addition to implementation funds, NHDES awards planning grants for predevelopment activities.

### **IV. Update: Our Economy, A Strategy for Southwest NH**

During two previous meetings of the EDAC, attendees participated in a simplified SWOT analysis, identifying opportunities for regional economic development as well as challenges. Building on those previous exercises, meeting attendees discussed "what's next," projects that their communities or organizations are conceptualizing,

planning, or implementing to advance regional economic prosperity. Todd Horner provided an overview of projects incorporated into previous iterations of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and identified those that are known to be complete. He then prompted attendees to share projects or initiatives aligned with the goals and objectives drafted as part of *Our Economy: A Strategy for Southwest NH*, the latest version of the CEDS, currently under development. The following are projects identified during the discussion, organized by goal and objective topic. (In the case of some goals and objectives, no associated projects were referenced during the discussion.)

- Sustain our rural population.
  - Attract and retain young people.
    - Keene Young Professional Network.
  - Tourism.
  - Welcome people of diverse backgrounds.
    - New Americans program/refugee resettlement.
- Physical infrastructure & transportation.
  - Broadband.
  - Energy.
  - Housing.
    - RSA 79E for residential development in Keene.
    - 21 in 21 housing rehab project in Keene.
    - Vose Farm Road and Mercer Avenue workforce housing projects in Peterborough.
    - Regional housing rehabilitation project.
    - Housing development fund championed by the Monadnock Interfaith Project
  - Main street and village centers.
    - Downtown revitalization project in Spofford Village.
  - Water and sewer.
    - Stormwater and wastewater work in Swanzey.
  - Transportation
    - Collaborative discussion with retirement communities in Peterborough re: transportation service in Peterborough and surrounding areas.
  - Social infrastructure.
- Childcare.
  - Education.
  - Public health.
  - Arts, culture, & recreation.
    - Market analysis for new and improved space for ArtsAlive!
    - Improvements at Robin Hood Park and Pat Russell Park in Keene.
  - Economic mobility.
  - Civic engagement.
- Business Infrastructure.
  - Business support services.
  - Workforce
    - Keene State Colleges childcare workforce development program.
    - Regional workforce development program under discussion at MEDC.
  - Business recruitment, retention, and expansion.
    - Expansion of RSA 72:81 in region communities.
    - Business transition work at Hannah Grimes
  - Entrepreneurship and small business.
  - Development of regional economic specializations (clusters).
    - Regional advanced manufacturing center.

- BioNest initiative at Hannah Grimes Center.
- Sustainability.
  - Agriculture and food systems.
    - Walpole Food Coop.
    - MFCC Food System Strategy Workgroup.
  - Climate mitigation and adaptation.
    - BlocPower initiative in Peterborough and partner communities.
    - Community power.
- Collective capacity & regional coordination.
  - Systems for sharing resources (people, equipment, services, facilities).
  - Rural advocacy.

Input from participants can be reviewed on the Google Jamboard used to facilitate the exercise:  
[https://jamboard.google.com/d/1hLYesH9ZScKhyYEkH-15Ot7HIRlff\\_UcxfMo8Bw5oos/edit?usp=sharing](https://jamboard.google.com/d/1hLYesH9ZScKhyYEkH-15Ot7HIRlff_UcxfMo8Bw5oos/edit?usp=sharing)

## **V. Partner Updates**

Partner updates were incorporated into the previous agenda item focused on upcoming and ongoing projects related to draft goals and objectives in *Our Economy*.

## **VI. Other Matters**

There were no other matters.

## **VII. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for October 11, 2023.

## **VIII. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Horner  
 Assistant Director