

SWRPC

Commission Highlights

May 2023

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2023 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 and the program will begin at 5:00 p.m. Our featured speaker is Don Kreis, NH's Consumer Advocate who will present: *Why Towns Should Plan for Their Energy Future*. 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 addressing 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 go to: <https://bit.ly/Jun13SWRPCAnn>.

NHARPC Convening

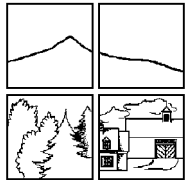
On May 24th, Assistant Director J. B. Mack was joined by SWRPC Commissioners Larry Robinson from Marlborough, Christine Robidoux from Temple and Joe Levesque from Alstead for the New Hampshire Association of Regional Planning Commission's (NHARPC) 2023 Convening. SWRPC's representatives joined staff and commissioners from other NH regional planning commissions to discuss findings and next steps associated with the recently completed Regional Housing Needs Assessments. J. B. Mack explained why the regional housing supply has become more constrained despite a slight decrease in the Region's population, citing factors including migration patterns, decreasing household sizes, and an increase in seasonal home ownership. He also reported on a finding that, when compared to other parts of NH and the United States, the Region has a higher share of pre-1940s housing stock, a challenge that will require creative strategies to insulate, maintain and remodel housing units that are in increased demand from renter and aging households. For more information about the NHARPC Convening or the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, please contact J. B. Mack of SWRPC staff at jbmack@swrpc.org.

MRCC and Mobility Management Updates

With increased support, the Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council (MRCC) reached a number of landmark achievements during the first quarter of calendar year 2023. Nearly \$380,000 in Transportation Equity project funds have been distributed to launch new and sustain existing community transportation and mobility management services in the Region. These projects contributed to a 70% increase in the number of public transportation trips provided during the period April 2022 to March 2023 as compared to the same period the previous year. Significant gains in volunteer driver program services occurred with increases in the number of volunteer drivers from 32 to 60 and number of unique riders from 222 to 324. Over 50 outreach activities and events have been conducted to increase public awareness of MRCC's efforts to expand community transportation services contributing to a 78% increase in MRCC membership. Outreach to municipalities resulted in the adoption of a resolution by the Town of Jaffrey in support efforts to increase funding for transit services in the State budget for the two-year biennium beginning July 1, 2023. During the quarter, MRCC established a Community Transportation Collaborative advisory workgroup to explore creating a transportation service, the management and cost of which would be shared by multiple organizations. The purpose is to reduce the costs of providing transportation services to youth and other transit-dependent groups. For more information, please contact Terry Johnson of SWRPC staff at tjohnson@swrpc.org.

Broadband Roundtable

On May 2nd, Henry Underwood participated in a roundtable discussion focused on broadband hosted by Congresswoman Kuster and Executive Councilor Warmington. In addition to SWRPC, others represented included New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs, Consolidated Communications, AARP, NH Electric Co-op, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development. Some of the most important opportunities for continued broadband improvement in New Hampshire include the development of a Digital Equity Plan, a forthcoming Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program Grant and Broadband Matching Grant Initiative, and an ongoing broadband mapping initiative being led by the University of New Hampshire (nhbroadbandmapping.unh.edu). Each have a role to play in communities working toward effective broadband solutions. For more information about the roundtable or broadband-related matters, please contact Henry Underwood of SWRPC staff at hunderwood@swrpc.org.



2023 Microenterprise Award

On May 19th, the Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) awarded \$562,240 to Cheshire County through the federal Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) to continue two microenterprise programs run in the state of New Hampshire. Through the County as Grantee, funds will be sub-granted to University of New Hampshire's Small Business Development Center and the Hannah Grimes Center Microenterprise programs. Funds are used to help new enterprises and businesses of fewer than five employees to develop their business with technical assistance, workspaces and marketplaces. In partnership with Cheshire County, SWRPC will be assisting in administering these funds, as well as overseeing direct-grants of \$5,000 or less to help small businesses purchase equipment and technology. For more information about the CDBG program or microenterprise assistance programs, please contact Ben Gradert of SWRPC staff at bgradert@swrpc.org.

