

New Hampshire Association of Regional Planning Commissions

Summary Minutes

Meeting of December 8, 2016

I. Call to Order

Chairman Glenn Coppelman called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Members introduced themselves as follows.

Glenn Coppelman, Tim Moore, Cliff Sinnott (Rockingham RPC); Peter Griffin, Sylvia von Aulock (Southern NH RPC); Bob Snelling, Jeff Hayes (Lakes RPC); Steve Buckley, Mike Tardiff (Central RPC); Jonathan Edwards (Upper Valley Lake Sunapee RPC); Victoria Parmele (Strafford RPC); Barbara Robinson (North Country Council); Tim Roache (Nashua RPC); Larry Robinson, Tim Murphy (Southwest RPC); Becky Baldwin (staff).

Guests: Cordell Johnston, NH Municipal Association; Ben Frost and Shanna Saunders, NH Planners Association.

II. Minutes of October 13, 2016 Meeting

The minutes of October 13, 2016 were approved as submitted by unanimous vote with Tim Roache and Tim Moore abstaining.

III. Legislative Tracking - Discussion with Representatives from NHMA and NHPA

Chairman Coppelman announced that we have representatives from both NHMA and NHPA with us today to discuss how they conduct their legislative tracking activities. He introduced Cordell Johnston from NHMA and Ben Frost and Shanna Saunders from NHPA.

Tim Murphy provided content by explaining that, after several years of NHARPC's overall focus being put toward legislative tracking, questions began to be raised regarding whether NHARPC's limited resources could be used more effectively. This past year a strategic direction for the Association was adopted that identified marketing, education, and capacity building as our main areas of focus. Although legislative initiatives are still important to us, we are looking for ways to more efficiently track bills and still be effective. At the last Association meeting it was suggested that we invite both NHMA and NHPA to today's meeting to explain how their process works and see if there is a chance to partner with them regarding legislative tracking.

Cordell Johnston noted that he is one of four lobbyists that work for NHMA and they primarily focus on bills that directly relate to municipal issues. Of the 700 – 1,000 bills that will be filed in any given session, they typically track 250 – 300 of them. He noted that NHMA does work with other organizations regarding legislative initiatives and pointed out that several years ago representatives from NHMA, NHPA, OEP, and the RPCs would meet monthly to discuss the bills each of them were following and the action they planned to take. Bob Snelling asked how NHMA reaches a consensus on the positions they take on various pieces of legislation. Cordell Johnston explained that every two years they develop a set of about 60 policies with the assistance of the communities they represent. They also have legislative principles related to items such as unfunded mandates that help guide their decisions. Jeff Hayes asked if the RPCs as affiliate members of NHMA can go to them for assistance with bill tracking. Cordell

Johnston explained that the RPCs might have a different set of bills they want to focus on than the ones NHMA decides to track through their process. Tim Murphy pointed out that the RPCs are often given an opportunity to participate in NHMA's legislative prioritization process. Jeff Hayes noted that a recent NHMA bulletin identified about a dozen issues we might have in common that we would be interested in tracking. Cordell Johnston explained that NHMA might not necessarily choose to take action on all of the issues that were identified. He offered to share his legislative tracking spreadsheet but cautioned it will contain a lot of bills we won't be interested in.

Shanna Saunders explained that NHPA is comprised of volunteers that represent professional planners rather than towns and cities. She noted that Ben Frost is on their executive board and reviews proposed legislation as it is released to identify bills of interest. Their legislative sub-committee meets to decide if NHPA will support, oppose, or watch the identified bills and they employ a legislative consultant to bring letters to the legislature regarding bills they want to take a position on. Ben Frost noted that from a legislative perspective, NHPA is a reactive organization rather than one that proposes legislation. He noted that all nine of the RPCs are organizational members of NHPA and have representation on their legislative sub-committee. He added that copies of the legislative tracking sheet that he prepares are shared with the RPC executive directors and if they have a particular bill they want followed he will add it to his list for them. Cliff Sinnott noted that if we take advantage of that offer we could then continue with our usual process of writing letters and testifying on specific bills. Jonathan Edwards questioned if that would be taking advantage of NHPA and Shanna Saunders responded that to the contrary, NHPA would like to see more collaboration between the two organizations. Cliff Sinnott asked if we should appoint a representative to attend the NHPA legislative sub-committee meetings and it was agreed that this would be a good idea.

Tim Murphy thanked both groups for coming to explain their individual legislative processes to us and asked if they would be willing to come to future Association meetings during the session. Both were willing but Cordell Johnston noted it might be hard for him to attend if we held the meeting on a Thursday since he would probably be at the State House.

Victoria Parmele expressed concern that legislators might perceive our actions as an indication that NHARPC has stopped following legislation. Cordell Johnston encouraged each of the RPCs to interact with their legislators and get to know them. Chairman Coppelman noted that Rockingham RPC has a meeting with their legislators each year that is well attended. Shanna Saunders referred to the legislative breakfast that the Association hosts each year and expressed interest in having NHPA participate as they have in the past. Ben Frost suggested that the Association find a way to accelerate the process we have for weighing-in on legislation noting that legislators are not fond of organizations waiting until crossover to state their positions.

Chairman Coppelman asked how members wanted to proceed at this point. Steve Buckley suggested that we have someone be a direct liaison between Cordell Johnston and Ben Frost to gather and share information with the membership. Tim Murphy suggested that our legislative tracking process could, in part, be an administrative function. Cliff Sinnott suggested that as a starting point we review Ben Frost's legislative spreadsheet when it becomes available and identify any bills that we want to take a position on as a starting point. Tim Moore noted that he would be willing to develop a legislative tracking sheet for NHARPC use. Larry Robinson asked how many bills NHPA tracks and was told more than NHARPC typically does. Tim Murphy reminded those in attendance that in adopting our strategic direction we agreed to limit our legislative focus to a small number of initiatives that are core to NHARPC. Jeff Hayes agreed and noted that instead of taking positions on bills we should concentrate on education and making people aware of concerns regarding specific pieces of legislation. Sylvia von Aulock stated that rather than be concerned with the number of bills we track, we should watch out for any drastic changes that might come our way. She suggested that we appoint someone to represent us at the NHPA legislative meetings to gather information and share it with the membership at future Association meetings. Victoria Parmele noted that she would be willing to serve in this capacity.

Motion: To appoint Victoria Parmele as our representative to the NHPA legislative sub-committee to attend meetings and report legislative activities to the Association membership at future meetings.

Motion by Steve Buckley, seconded by Barbara Robinson. Approved by unanimous vote.

IV. 2017 Legislative Breakfast

Becky Baldwin reported that she has been in contact with a legislative operations representative at the State House to coordinate the 2017 legislative breakfast. She noted that there are currently several dates available and asked members to provide a couple of options so she can move forward with scheduling the event. It was asked if we could pick a date close to crossover and Becky Baldwin responded that the date changes each session and it is not possible to identify when that will take place at this time. Members agreed that they would like to hold the event the first part of April if possible.

Motion: To have staff proceed with scheduling the 2017 legislative breakfast for April 6, 2017 if available, with March 16, 2017 as the backup date.

Motion by Steve Buckley, seconded by Larry Robinson. Approved by unanimous vote.

V. 2016 NHMA Annual Conference

Chairman Coppelman noted that he and several others assisted in staffing the booth at the 2016 NHMA Annual Conference and asked if anyone had any comments they'd like to share. Steve Buckley noted that we had an excellent display at our booth. Chairman Coppelman suggested that it would be nice to have a banner to display at future exhibits and asked that staff assist in researching the cost to obtain one. Tim Murphy noted that the Association sponsored and conducted several educational sessions at the conference and the presenters received positive feedback from attendees. Steve Buckley suggested that NHMA staff might be able to provide us with copies of any feedback they received.

VI. Communications and Marketing Update

Mike Tardiff reported that Jenn Mock from his office is working on creating a template for the NHARPC website. He asked that those in attendance respond to a recent request to provide pictures from their respective regions that can be used on the site. It was agreed that once the site was ready, it would be presented at a future meeting. Tim Murphy pointed out that the contract with CNHRPC was to assist with communications and marketing which includes the restructuring and updating our current website. He added that the Association will still need to determine how the site will be maintained and what content will be placed on it such as periodic technical bulletins, newsletters, upcoming events, etc. provided by each RPC. It was noted that the use of Constant Contact and social media to conduct further outreach should be discussed at a future meeting.

VII. NADO Best Practices

Jeff Hayes explained that he had asked that the NADO Best Practices document, which was distributed with the agenda packet, be placed on the agenda to bring it to our attention. He suggested that no further action be taken at today's meeting and noted the document could serve as a basis for future discussions.

VIII. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Association would take place on January 12, 2017 at 1:00 p.m.

IX. Other Matters

No other matters were brought before the Association at this time.

X. Public Comment

No public comments were made at this time.

XI. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca I. Baldwin
On behalf of NHARPC