

New Hampshire Association of Regional Planning Commissions

Summary Minutes

Meeting of January 10, 2019

I. Call to Order

Chairman Steve Buckley called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Members introduced themselves as follows.

Tim Moore, Barbara Kravitz, Tim Roache (Rockingham RPC); Peter Griffin, Sylvia von Aulock (Southern NH RPC); Steve Buckley, Mike Tardiff (Central RPC); Tim Murphy (Southwest RPC); Steve Schneider (Upper Valley Lake Sunapee RPC); Jen Czysz (Strafford RPC); Mike Fimbel, Jay Minkarah (Nashua RPC); Jeff Hayes (Lakes RPC).

Guests: Dave Danielson, State Representative; Tim Fortier and Cordell Johnston, NH Municipal Association (NHMA).

II. Minutes of October 11, 2018 Meeting

The minutes of October 11, 2018 were approved as submitted by unanimous vote with Mike Fimbel and Barbara Kravitz abstaining.

III. NHMA Conference - Follow-up

Chairman Buckley asked for feedback from those who conducted sessions on behalf of NHARPC at the November 14-15, 2018 NHMA conference.

Sylvia von Aulock reported on the *NH Communities Becoming Age-Friendly through Regional Planning Efforts* session noting that there were approximately 25 participants representing the continuum of the political spectrum. The presentation focused on transportation, housing, economic development and social engagement. Housing was of particular interest to the group focusing on the dynamic that seniors are competing for the same housing stock as millennials. The question was asked how the 2018 presentation differed from the one conducted in 2017. Sylvia von Aulock responded that in 2017 they were conducting phase one of the project, whereas in 2018 they were able to share their prior work through phase two activities. It was asked if there were any controversial issues and Sylvia von Aulock replied that one participant accused this effort of promoting subsidized housing.

Tim Roache reported that approximately 25 people attended the *Protecting Groundwater* session that Rockingham RPC conducted with staff from NH Department of Environmental Services. They provided background information on applicable laws, the work of the RPCs in this subject matter and reviewed three case studies including an award winning project conducted by Rockingham RPC, a sourcewater protection grant and the Freemont project. MS4 was also discussed in general. Jen Czysz noted that she attended this session and was impressed with the “commercial” of the services offered by RPCs that was a part of the presentation. She suggested that we might want to consider including this type of RPC promotion being made a part of future NHARPC-sponsored sessions.

Jay Minkarah reported on the *Outdoor Recreation: Planning for Play* session that was conducted by Nashua and North Country Council. He noted that although this session was not as well attended as the others, those that were there had a real interest in the presentation.

IV. NHARPC-NHMA Partnership for Planning - Related Education

Tim Fortier from NHMA reported that he is currently working with Strafford RPC to finalize the GIS article that is scheduled for the March/April edition of Town and City magazine. The May/June article on the Agricultural Toolkit is being coordinated by Rockingham RPC to meet the March 16, 2019 deadline. An article on Growing Younger will be featured in the July/August edition and has a deadline of May 8, 2019. It was suggested that in addition to Strafford and Southern that Central contribute to this article. In reviewing the articles for the remainder of the year it was suggested that the Planning for Recovery article scheduled for November/December be re-visited. It was unclear if this is the right time for this topic and who will be the author of the article.

Regarding webinars, Tim Fortier asked that we consider which of the article topics for Town and City magazine would best lend themselves to corresponding webinars. He suggested that three webinars per year would be appropriate and appreciated.

V. 2019 Legislative Session

A. LSR 2019-0581 relative to the number of regional planning commissions

Chairman Buckley introduced Representative Dave Danielson who would like to speak to LSR 2019-0581 that he has filed for this year's legislative session. Representative Danielson mentioned that RPCs seem to be attacked each legislative session and it would be good for us to be proactive about the future of RPCs rather than being pushed around by these legislative initiatives. He noted that the RPC boundaries could be aligned with NH's Executive Councilors which would coincide well with the 10-Year Transportation Plan update and improve economic efficiencies. He explained that there is high growth in the southeast part of the State which represents 64% of the State's overall growth and by changing RPC boundaries some of this growth would be spread to other parts of the State. Dave Danielson stated that in the end we should make this about what works best for the RPCs.

Tim Moore pointed out that we are working effectively today. Tim Roache referred to a UNH study that was relied on to establish the original RPC regions. Mike Tardiff said that we emphasize how we can best provide services to our members effectively. Tim Murphy raised the importance of RPC districts serving as "functional" regions including watershed, labor-sheds, housing-sheds. etc. Jen Czysz raised the point that RPCs are membership organizations formed by the municipalities and it will be critical to respect this in any on-going discussion. Mike Fimbel expressed concern that if RPC districts become too large, some municipalities will not see the value in participating due to the distance. Sylvia von Aulock noted that we are all good about understanding problems and working toward solutions. She observed that consolidating RPCs would not in and of itself insulate us from future attacks, however, the issue of efficiency is something that we should all be interested in.

It was asked if it would be possible to withdraw this LSR and work with NHARPC, the RPC directors, or some other group on this matter. Representative Danielson indicated that he could pull the LSR but expressed that if RPCs were attacked in the future, he would find it difficult to come to our aid.

Jeff Hayes stated that this is a great opportunity to have this discussion with Representative Danielson and indicated that we need legislators like him to help us be as effective as we can be and hopes that we can continue to work together. Representative Danielson stated that he appreciates this sentiment but he is concerned that if we don't give this issue serious consideration it would be an oversight that we might regret.

Barbara Kravitz expressed concern that this LSR could be perceived as an act from an arm of state government. Jay Minkarah indicated that he would support withdrawing the LSR, but that what Representative Danielson has done is stimulate discussion about RPC efficiency and effectiveness and he appreciates that.

Representative Danielson said that, based on the consensus he is hearing, he would offer to withdraw the LSR.

Chairman Buckley said that he would like to get a sense from the group on how we would like to proceed.

Motion: To respectfully request that Representative Danielson pull LSR 2019-0581 and use this to jump-start discussion among us.

Motion by Mike Fimbel, seconded by Mike Tardiff.

Tim Roache expressed concern about losing Representative Danielson's support of RPCs.

Motion approved by unanimous vote with Sylvia von Aulock abstaining.

B. Partner updates

Chairman Buckley called on Cordell Johnston from NHMA who identified several pieces of legislation that might be of interest to the membership as follows:

- HB 104 - *Establishing a housing appeals board within the attorney general's office.* It was noted that this bill would create an alternative appeal process on planning and zoning decisions. Cordell Johnston added that there was a hearing scheduled on this bill today and that NHMA is not supportive of it.
- HB 136 - *Increasing the maximum period for the zoning board of adjustment to hold a public hearing.* This bill would increase the time to hold a public hearing from the current 30 to 45 days.
- HB 143 - *Relative to incompatibility of offices.* Cordell Johnston explained that this bill would prohibit any person from serving on two boards or committees at the same time if decisions of one board or committee are appealable to the other. He added that NHMA is likely to oppose this bill.
- HB 247 - *Relative to the definition of the state building code.* This bill would update the state building code from the 2009 to the 2015 edition.
- HB 259 - *Relative to building code violations.*
- HB 303 - *Relative to certification of building code compliance inspectors.*
- HB 311 - *Regulating sober living facilities.* Cordell Johnston noted that there is a lack of information available as to what the intent of this bill is.
- HB 312 - *Relative to municipal regulation of tiny houses.*

Cordell Johnston reported that there is bill text available for approximately 380 LSRs at this time and it is anticipated there will be over 1,000 for this legislative session. Although there are a number of LSRs which sound like they might be of interest we need to wait on the actual bill text to be sure.

C. Legislation of interest

Tim Moore who serves as NHARPC's representative on the legislative coordination group reported that their first meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2019. The group is comprised of NH OSI, NHMA, NHPA, and NHARPC.

D. Legislative breakfast

Chairman Buckley asked if NHARPC is interested in sponsoring a legislative breakfast again this year and if so when would be a good time to schedule it. Cordell Johnston noted that Thursday's are the best day for attendance and we would be wise to avoid the last week in February. Sylvia von Aulock asked if

there might be another way of interacting with the Legislature. Cordell Johnston indicated that NHMA meets with the House and Senate leadership at the beginning of each session.

Motion: To schedule a Thursday in April for the 2019 NHARPC Legislative Breakfast.

Motion by Peter Griffin, seconded by Barbara Kravitz. Approved by unanimous vote.

VI. Other Matters

Peter Griffin reported that he has heard there is a proposal by the Laconia City Council to conduct a feasibility study to remove an existing section of railroad track for the purpose of building and maintaining a recreational trail. It was noted that the Lincoln Line has been in existence since the mid-1900's and this proposal seems to diminish the importance of rail for future freight and passenger service. The question was asked if NHARPC should consider taking a position on this at some point. Jeff Hayes provided additional context and local knowledge indicating that this is a complicated matter.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for February 14, 2019 at 1:00 p.m.

VIII. Public Comment

No public comments were made at this time.

IX. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Murphy
On behalf of NHARPC