

# New Hampshire Association of Regional Planning Commissions

## Summary Minutes

Meeting of June 18, 2020

### I. Call to Order

Chairman Steve Buckley announced that today's meeting would be conducted using a Zoom format and read a document entitled *Authority for Conducting a Meeting Electronically (copy attached)*. He announced that all votes would be conducted by roll call and that Rich Clough of SWRPC would assist by moderating today's meeting.

Chairman Buckley called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and asked members identify themselves, explain why they are attending today's meeting remotely, note where they are, and state if anyone is in the room with them. Members introduced themselves as follows.

Tim Moore, Barbara Kravitz, Tim Roache (RPC); Peter Griffin, Sylvia von Aulock (SNHPC); Steve Buckley, Mike Tardiff (CNHRPC); Larry Robinson, Tim Murphy (SWRPC); Donald Hamann, Jen Czysz (SRPC); Michelle Moren-Grey, (NCC); Robert Snelling (LRPC); Patricia Higgins, Meghan Butts (UVLSRPC); Becky Baldwin (staff).

Guests: Robin LeBlanc, Plan NH

### II. Minutes of March 12, 2020 Meeting

**Motion: To approve the minutes of March 12, 2020 as submitted.**

Motion by Larry Robinson, seconded by Barbara Kravitz. Approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Chairman Buckley explained that Robin LeBlanc would be joining us later in the meeting and we would continue with other agenda items until she arrives.

### IV. NHARPC - NHMA Partnership

#### A. Town & City Articles and Webinars

Chairman Buckley asked Tim Murphy for an update on the status of our partnership with NHMA in providing articles for their Town & City publication. Tim Murphy reported that an article on Rail Trail Planning had been jointly prepared by RPC, CNHRPC and SWRPC for the May/June edition of Town and City. For the July/August issue, an article was prepared by SRPC and NCC entitled *Regional Planning in a Time of Crisis*, which is relevant to the special COVID-19 edition. SWRPC and LRPC are currently collaborating on an article dedicated to Broadband for the September/October edition and an article on outreach and education is being prepared by SNHPC and SRPC for the November/December issue.

Sylvia von Aulock noted that she is pleased to know that an article will be done on broadband since the current situation with conducting meetings remotely has raised concern with some of her Commissioners regarding their broadband capabilities. Tim Murphy noted that the challenge will be in providing as much information on the topic as possible given the space limitations placed on the article. They hope to be able to share models that have been used regarding expansion of infrastructure through municipal

bonding and the formation of communication districts. He added that the current pandemic has exposed many of the connectivity issues experienced in rural NH because of the recent stay-at-home orders. He noted that he was recently asked to sit on a panel that was hosted by Senator Hassan and was able to share our rural challenges with the FCC Commissioner and others.

Chairman Buckley noted that he would like to see a few more of the excellent articles that are being prepared by the RPC's be turned into companion webinars in the future.

## **V. 2020 Legislative Session**

Chairman Buckley asked Tim Moore for a report on what we might expect from the legislature in the coming weeks. Tim Moore reported that last week the Senate laid 80-90 bills on the table. He noted that SB 159 relative to net energy metering limits for customer-generators passed both the House and Senate, was vetoed by the Governor and was overridden by both the House and Senate. SB 152 relative to third party inspections and SB 166 relative to competitive supplier requirements are still alive. Three House Bills carried over from the 2019 session regarding energy; HB 466, HB 496 and HB 715 are still being considered in the House. It is anticipated that action will be taken on them next week to either lay them on the table or pass them and send them to the Senate. Within the next couple of weeks any action on everything except the budget bill will be finalized.

Sylvia von Aulock questioned what happens when the State of Emergency declarations end and people still want to meet remotely which is not allowed in RSA 91:A. Chairman Buckley explained that the ability to meet virtually was a product of Emergency Order #12 and the Governor only has the authority to issue emergency orders after he's declared a State of Emergency which can only last 21 days. We are currently in State of Emergency #4 and should that not be extended we would need to revert back to holding meetings according to RSA 91:A. It would take an act of the Legislature to make any kind of permanent change to the provisions of RSA 91:A. Tim Murphy observed that we have learned through this process that remote meetings are an effective and efficient way to reduce expenditure of time and resources.

Tim Murphy mentioned Senate Bill 457 relative to establishing communication districts for municipalities to join together to create broadband connectivity solutions. In addition, SB 459 and SB 559 are being merged into a single bill to address lack of response for information from broadband providers to municipalities. These bills provide that, if sixty days expire prior to a municipality receiving a response from a provider, it will be assumed that adequate broadband service is not available and the municipality will be able to move forward.

## **VI. Annual Meeting Business Items**

### **A. Financial Report**

Becky Baldwin presented the NHARPC financial report as of June 18, 2020. She noted that we began the fiscal year with a balance of \$4,646.51 and during the year we had income from dues, the Commissioners Convening and interest for a total of \$19,149.04. Expenses during the year totaled \$12,503.30 including administrative contracts, the Commissioners Convening and support of affiliate groups. Taking the above into account we ended the fiscal year with a bank balance of \$5,545.74. Chairman Buckley asked if the support for NHPA in the amount of \$500.00 was for the virtual conference they are currently conducting and Becky Baldwin explained that it was for the conference they held earlier this year.

**Motion: To accept the NHARPC financial report as presented:**

Motion by Larry Robinson, seconded by Tim Moore. Approved by unanimous roll call vote.

## **B. FY 2020/2021 Budget**

Becky Baldwin reviewed the proposed FY 2020/2021 Budget. She noted the bank balance as reported on the financial report and suggested membership dues totaling \$9,000 would bring income to a total of \$15,645.74. On the expense side of the budget level funding is being proposed for staff support, communications, outreach and conferences/support of affiliate activities, and incidental expenses. A modest increase was added to the legislative breakfast line to accommodate annual increases by the caterer. Proposed expenses deducted from anticipated income would leave us with a positive bank balance of \$3,745.74 at year end.

Chairman Buckley suggested that we address the dues assessment and contract services prior to voting on adopting the proposed budget. Tim Murphy agreed that this would be proper procedure regarding the assessment of dues since that has a direct effect on the budget but suggested adopting the budget prior to taking action on administrative services.

## **C. Annual Dues Assessment**

Chairman Buckley asked if there were any comments regarding the staff proposal to assess NHARPC dues for the upcoming year at \$1,000 per RPC. Tim Murphy explained that the appropriation for dues in past years has sometimes been in excess of \$1,500 per RPC. He noted that in the year we are ending on June 30<sup>th</sup>, dues were assessed at \$1,333 per RPC. Based on proposed expenses the reduction of dues would still leave us in a good financial position at year end.

**Motion: To assess the annual dues at \$1,000 per RPC for the year beginning July 1, 2020.**

Motion by Larry Robinson, seconded by Tim Moore.

Barbara Kravitz asked what we won't be doing this year that we have in the past by reducing the dues. Tim Murphy indicated that in the past we had needed additional funds for marketing such as creating a brochure. He added that in the past there had been discussion about procuring the services of a professional grant writer and noted that should that become necessary we can always address it during the year. Becky Baldwin noted that at the last NHARPC meeting we had agreed not to conduct another Commissioners Convening until sometime after June of 2021.

Sylvia von Aulock questioned if there would be a savings on the amount needed for staff support since we are having virtual meetings and if it includes updating the website. Tim Murphy noted that it is a fair question but unclear at present. He noted that website updates fall under the website and social media services as a separate contract in the budget. Sylvia von Aulock noted that the \$8,000 for administrative support services is the highest item on the budget and noted that if two people are attending a meeting in person, perhaps in the future one could be in person and the other could attend virtually from their office. She stated that she supports updating the website and asked if the amount allocated for that sufficiently covers the cost. She added that she is looking for ways to save money.

Chairman Buckley reminded members that what we are discussing right now is the dues assessment of \$1,000 for each RPC. He asked if anyone wanted to put forth a proposal to change the amount of dues and asked Mike Tardiff to address Sylvia von Aulock's question about funding for the website maintenance. Mike Tardiff responded that the level of funding is appropriate for the work being done. No proposals were made to change the recommended dues assessment.

Chairman Buckley called for a vote on the motion made by Larry Robinson and seconded by Tim Moore. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Chairman Buckley noted that Robin LeBlanc has joined the meeting and asked if we wanted to stop and hear her presentation now and continue with the business portion of the meeting after. Tim Murphy suggested that we finish taking action on the budget prior to the presentation.

## **B. FY 2020/2021 Budget (Continued)**

Chairman Buckley noted that the intent is to adopt the NHARC budget and then take up other Annual Meeting Business following the presentation from our guest.

**Motion: To approve the FY 20/21 NHARPC budget as proposed.**

Motion by Larry Robinson, seconded by Tim Moore. Approved by unanimous roll call vote.

## **III. NH Municipal Technical Assistance Grant (MTAG) Program**

Chairman Buckley introduced Robin LeBlanc of Plan NH who provided a presentation on the NH Municipal Technical Assistance Grant (MTAG) program. She explained that the program began in 2015 with funding from NH Housing and is administered by Plan NH. An advisory board comprised of 10-12 people meets approximately three times a year to review the program. MTAG provides funding in amounts of \$5,000 - \$20,000 to communities that want to expand their housing options through zoning changes. Funds are used to hire a consultant, which can be an RPC, to help the community identify what their housing needs are, review their current zoning ordinances and determine if those ordinances support their needs or need to be modified. Plan NH works closely with UNH Cooperative Extension who assists the communities in making sure the public is involved in the process. In addition to community involvement, a 25% cash match is required for any funds that are awarded to communities through the MTAG program. There is currently a proposal being considered by NH Housing to increase the amount of grants to \$25,000 and decrease the amount of match to 15% which would include in-kind as well as cash. To date twelve communities have participated in the MTAG program which takes 12-18 months to complete the process. She urged those in attendance to share information on the MTAG program with those communities that might benefit from it. She noted that the MTAG application does not have a deadline attached to it and any communities that require assistance in completing it should contact Plan NH. Chairman Buckley thanked Robin LeBlanc for her presentation and asked her to provide information on the MTAG program that can be posted on the NHARPC website once updates have been completed.

## **VI. Annual Meeting Business Items (Continued)**

### **D. Contracts for Services**

- **Administrative Support Services**

Chairman Buckley explained that staff support has been provided by SWRPC for several years and they are willing to continue in that capacity unless another RPC has interest in stepping-up. Tim Murphy noted that he would be an advocate for another RPC taking over the responsibility of staff support and if so it probably should be identified mid-year to facilitate a smooth transition.

**Motion: To enter into a contract with SWRPC to provide administrative support services for NHARPC for the upcoming year in the amount of \$8,000.**

Motion by Tim Moore, seconded by Larry Robinson. Approved by unanimous roll call vote with Tim Murphy abstaining.

- **Website and Social Media Services**

Chairman Buckley asked if CNHRPC was willing to continue to provide website and social media services for NHARPC for the budgeted amount of \$1,500. Mike Tardiff replied that they were noting that they do have some hard costs involved such as renewing the website hosting account each year.

**Motion: To enter into a contract with CNHRPC to provide website and social media services for NHARPC for the upcoming year in the amount of \$1,500.**

Motion by Tim Moore, seconded by Larry Robinson. Approved by unanimous roll call vote with Chairman Buckley and Mike Tardiff abstaining.

- **Other**

No other contract services were brought before the Association at this time.

### **E. Election of Officers**

Chairman Buckley read the proposed slate of officers for NHARPC for the year beginning July 1, 2020 as follows:

Steve Buckley - Chairman  
Tim Moore - Vice-Chairman  
Larry Robinson - Secretary/Treasurer

**Motion: To approve the proposed slate of officers for NHARPC for the year beginning July 1, 2020.**

Motion by Barbara Kravitz, seconded by Peter Griffin. Approved by unanimous roll call vote with Chairman Buckley abstaining.

### **VII. Other Matters**

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

### **VIII. Next Meeting**

Chairman Buckley asked if the next meeting should be scheduled to take place in September or October. Tim Murphy suggested that a meeting be scheduled but also reserve the right to meet sooner at the call of the Chair should one be needed. If being held in conjunction with the Executive Directors meeting the date would be September 10<sup>th</sup>. Not knowing what the situation with the pandemic will be at that time he further suggested that we might want to plan to meet remotely.

Sylvia von Aulock expressed that in her opinion having the ability to meet remotely is a critical issue for the RPCs. She noted that some of the issues that need to be considered are the health of Commissioners and the resources that are saved by meeting virtually. Chairman Buckley noted that he will communicate with Cordell Johnston regarding our concerns and the problems that are being experienced by our municipalities as it might relate to proposed legislation. He asked if there was anything that this group might want to consider in preparation for our next meeting. Tim Roache noted that this might be an opportunity for the RPCs to provide assistance to our communities regarding conducting remote meetings during these difficult times. Chairman Buckley noted that options would be for the Governor to continue to extend his Emergency Orders for the present and for the legislature to consider changing the requirements of RSA 91:A as it pertains to meetings. Sylvia von Aulock suggested that NHARPC could write a letter to the Governor expressing our concerns. Barbara Kravitz suggested that we plan to hold the next meeting of NHARPC remotely and consider sending a letter to the Governor. Tim Murphy agreed this is an important issue and asked if we should consult with NHMA as affiliate members to seek advice on how to proceed by writing a letter or contacting legislators regarding the drafting of a bill to change the requirements of RSA 91:A. Chairman Buckley suggested that a representative of NHARPC contact Cordell Johnston and Margaret Brynes at NHMA to seek advice on the best way to proceed. Tim Roache, Barbara Kravitz and Sylvia von Aulock volunteered to connect with NHMA and begin to draft a letter to be sent to the Governor on this issue. Tim Murphy suggested that any letter that is drafted be

sent to staff to format and forward to Chairman Buckley for his signature. Chairman Buckley suggested that Tim Roache, Barbara Kravitz and Sylvia von Aulock be allowed and encouraged to draft a letter addressed to the Governor urging the continuation of virtual meetings as a way to efficiently deliver municipal services notwithstanding the Right-to-Know Law. It was the consensus of the group to proceed in this manner. As a point of order Tim Murphy noted that any correspondence that is sent should refer to the business that is being conducted by NHARPC and the RPCs not that of our municipalities and how they should be conducting their business. Chairman Buckley noted through our membership we represent the things our members want to do and our members are the municipalities. Tim Murphy asked for clarification from Tim Roache and Sylvia von Aulock as to their intent because he didn't feel we would be speaking on behalf of 234 municipalities at this point. Tim Roache noted that his intent was to give his RPC the option to not have a meeting that required a physical presence for the foreseeable future and by extension that option should be given to our municipalities as well. Sylvia von Aulock stated that she is talking about her own RPC meetings and the NHARPC meetings.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Association would be conducted as a virtual meeting. Tim Murphy pointed out that if we are meeting virtually it might be good to have the meeting on a different day than the RPC directors meeting. What was a convenience when meeting in person is not so desirable when we are conducting our meetings remotely. Chairman Buckley asked that staff conduct a poll to determine the best date to hold the next NHARPC meeting so it will accommodate the majority of the membership.

#### **IX. Public Comment**

No public comments at this time.

#### **X. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca I. Baldwin  
On Behalf of NHARPC