

New Hampshire Association of Regional Planning Commissions

Summary Minutes

Meeting of December 22, 2021

I. Call to Order

Chairman Buckley called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and acknowledged that a quorum of the membership was in attendance. He explained that two members have requested that they be allowed to participate remotely due to concerns about Covid. He explained that this was a valid reason for attending remotely and that all votes would need to be conducted by roll call to meet the requirements of RSA 91:A.

Members introduced themselves as follows.

Barbara Kravitz (RPC), remote; Bill Chaisson, Jerry Coogan, Alex Belenz (UVLSRPC); Peter Griffin, Nate Miller, Sylvia von Aulock (SNHPC); Steve Buckley, Mike Tardiff (CNHRPC); Larry Robinson, remote, Tim Murphy (SWRPC); Dave Landry, Jen Czysz (SRPC); Bob Snelling (LRPC); James Steele (NCC); Becky Baldwin, Megan Taylor-Fetter, Katie Nelson (staff).

Guest: Natch Greyes (NHMA); State Representative Matt Wilhelm.

II. Minutes of October 27, 2021 Meetings

Motion: To approve the minutes of October 27, 2021 as submitted.

Motion by Peter Griffin, seconded by Jerry Coogan. Approved by unanimous roll call vote with Dave Landry, Bob Snelling, James Steele, and Sylvia von Aulock abstaining.

III. NHARPC - NHMA Partnership

A. Town and City Articles for 2022

Chairman Buckley noted that at the October 27th NHARPC meeting a list of potential topics for Town and City Articles was identified and the executive directors were charged with developing a proposed schedule for 2022 to be considered by the membership. Tim Murphy referred to a proposal that was attached to today's agenda packet noting that the January/February article on Community Power was previously approved by the membership and has been submitted for publication. He explained that more topics were identified than needed which allows room for revising the list at today's meeting. Following discussion it was agreed that Municipal Capital Improvement Programming should be moved to the July/August edition and Municipal Natural Resource Inventories should be moved to the section under additional topics for consideration. This will leave both the September/October and the November/December spots vacant at present.

Motion: To endorse the proposal subject to the adjustments as discussed.

Motion by Mike Tardiff, seconded by Jen Czysz. Approved by unanimous roll call vote with Dave Landry abstaining.

Tim Murphy clarified that the RPC directors feel that an article on the Regional Housing Needs Assessment is important when the timing is right and our schedule of articles needs to be flexible enough to accommodate that.

Motion: To approve the proposed schedule of articles for the 2022 editions of Town and City with the understanding that there needs to be flexibility with both the topics and schedule during the year.

Motion by Tim Murphy, seconded by Peter Griffin. Approved by unanimous roll call vote with Dave Landry abstaining.

IV. 2022 Legislative Session

Chairman Buckley noted that Representative Wilhelm will be joining us remotely to discuss HB 1275 but since he has not yet arrived we will continue with agenda item IV. B on the agenda.

B. Partner Updates

Chairman Buckley introduced Natch Greyes who is the new Legislative Affairs Counsel for NHMA. Natch Greyes provided a handout that contains information on various 2022 land use bills of interest. (copy attached) In his review of the bills on the list, Natch Greyes noted that NHMA has not yet taken a position on HB 1389 or HB 1216. NHMA is supporting HB 1307.

Representative Wilhelm joined the meeting and Chairman Buckley explained that we would proceed with agenda item IV. A. and return to this item after that.

A. HB 1275 - Discussion with Representative Wilhelm

Chairman Buckley welcomed Representative Wilhelm to the meeting and invited him to provide more information on HB 1275 that he introduced for legislation that will have an impact on the state's regional planning commissions. Representative Wilhelm stated that he represents Manchester Wards I, II and III in the NH House and serves on the House State and Federal Relations Committee as well as House Redistricting Committee. He explained that he filed the bill to bring more equitable representation to the cities of Manchester and Nashua and doesn't feel that current law that has their membership capped at 25,000 is fair to them. His bill proposes one representative on a regional planning commission for each municipality with an additional representative for every 10,000 residents. He admitted that although it is a simple change in theory he realizes there may be some unintended consequences and values the opportunity to speak with the membership today to gain our perspective as well as any amendments we'd like to propose for his consideration.

Chairman Buckley asked those present to pose any questions they might have on the proposed legislation. Bob Snelling questioned the base line that is used for the initial representative. Representative Wilhelm explained that one representative would be the limit for municipalities with a population up to 10,000 and another would be added for each 10,000 persons after that. For example if a community had 10,001 for a population they would be allowed two representatives.

Tim Murphy thanked Representative Wilhelm for attending the meeting today and for his service in the Legislature. He noted that regional planning has a fundamental role of trying to level the playing field among municipalities. The concept is that we are all in this together and a concern with this proposed legislation creating the scenario of some big fish in a small pond resulting in rural communities feeling that their voice is not important. Representative Wilhelm noted that his intent was to get more proportionate representation for Manchester and Nashua.

Representative Wilhelm asked if anyone present was concerned that the current legislation caps representation at a population of 25,000. Jen Czysz responded that for the majority of the planning commissions the current cap of 25,000 doesn't impact us and it really only applies to the SNHPC and NRPC regions. She is concerned about reducing representation to one Commissioner per community and the message that will send and suggested consideration of additional brackets to accommodate populations that exceed 25,000. Representative Wilhelm expressed appreciation for that suggestion and noted he has been thinking about re-working the formula to provide an additional representative for populations over 25,000 and leaving the base formula as it currently exists.

Mike Tardiff noted that if the current formula is changed as proposed in the bill, nineteen of CNHRPC's twenty communities would lose a representative. Dave Landry noted that he agrees with the sentiments being shared by other planning commissions and added that if membership is reduced to one person, you could quickly have a community go from one to zero representatives due to a number of factors and we all know how hard it is to recruit members as it is. It could take weeks or months to replace a volunteer representative.

Bill Chaisson noted that it seems unfair to reduce membership for smaller communities that rely heavily on planning commissions because they don't have a planning department where the cities have full-time departments looking out for their interests.

Peter Griffin stated that the current formula for representation on planning commissions has been in place for over fifty years. He asked Representative Wilhelm he has heard from any of the communities that they feel under represented. Representative Wilhelm responded that he has not and this is simply a proactive measure in anticipation of the millions of federal dollars that will be coming available. He added it isn't because anything has been done wrong and he was surprised to learn there was a cap regarding representation.

Barbara Kravitz noted that the Rockingham Planning Commission has looked at the legislation and wants to study it further prior to making comments. Her personal opinion is that she agrees with the concerns that have been expressed regarding smaller communities. She noted it would be helpful to see a chart showing the number of representatives per planning commission for both the current and proposed legislation. She further noted that if the legislation is changed it would require the planning commissions to make changes to their bylaws and advisory committee regulations.

Sylvia von Aulock noted that the proposed legislation would be more palatable if it addressed changing the cap in the existing legislation rather than reducing membership. She noted that when this was discussed at a meeting of her Executive Committee, those from Manchester supported the existing formula. Nate Miller noted that they have considered what their membership would look like if the proposed bill passes and seven or eight of their members would go from two to one member, Manchester would go from four to twelve and most of the mid-sized communities would stay roughly the same. The Executive Committee felt this would be going too far and would transform their organization to a Manchester-centered Commission with more rural areas having a diminished voice at the table. Concern was also expressed that the smaller communities may choose not to maintain membership under these circumstances.

Chairman Buckley thanked Representative Wilhelm for speaking with us today and Representative Wilhelm thanked those in attendance for their thoughtful feedback and noted he looks forward to staying in touch as this bill makes its way through the legislative process.

At this point Representative Wilhelm left the meeting and Chairman Buckley noted that as a body we need to decide what we would like to see happen regarding this proposed bill and acknowledged that we may not reach a decision on it at today's meeting. Tim Murphy noted that we agreed to hold a special meeting today when we learned about this bill and we should get organized in case the bill gets scheduled for a public hearing prior to our next scheduled meeting. Nate Miller observed that Representative

Wilhelm recognizes that this bill will not get a lot of support outside of Manchester and Nashua and might be receptive to changing the current formula to allow for increased representation for larger populations.

Chairman Buckley asked if we are prepared to craft a proposal today to be shared with Representative Wilhelm regarding amending his proposed bill. Mike Tardiff noted that Representative Wilhelm seemed receptive to remove the reduction in membership from the bill and noted it is important to see where NRPC stands on the issue (Note: NRPC is not represented at today's meeting). Nate Miller noted that he is not aware of Nashua's position but the meeting with SNHPC Executive Committee was very clear that they do not support this legislation and fully support the existing formula with no changes. He noted they could go back to their Executive Committee to discuss a proposed change to the formula, but as it stands today, they do not support making any changes.

Chairman Buckley noted that it seems to be the general consensus of the membership that we do not want to see a reduction of representation for our smaller communities. He suggested that Sylvia von Aulock and Nate Miller go back to their Executive Committee to see if they are receptive to an adjustment to the formula to accommodate increased membership for larger communities. He added that this may be as far as we can go today. Tim Murphy noted that although this bill seems on the surface to primarily impact SNHPC and NRPC, he reminded everyone that regional planning commissions in NH are only as strong as their weakest link and if SNHPC and NRPC lose members because they feel they no longer have proper representation, it will affect all of us. He added that this is a unique situation for us and we need to determine if we want to take a hard stand, let it play out and hope there will be a compromise or offer a compromise. Chairman Buckley suggested that the best way to proceed would be for SNHPC and NRPC to look at the current formula and decide if there is something that could be proposed that would address the issues. Sylvia von Aulock questioned if we will be meeting in January and if so will there be enough time for this group to create a position on the proposed legislation provided SNHPC and NRPC are able to come up with a proposal to change the formula that is acceptable to the SNHPC Executive Committee. Jen Czysz noted that would depend on when the bill is scheduled to be heard. Tim Murphy questioned if we would want to write a letter or approach the bill sponsors to see if they would consider amending the bill. It was agreed that the bottom line is that we do not want any of our municipalities to lose any of their current representation.

Motion: This body supports the existing formula. SNHPC will discuss with NRPC a recommendation to change the upper tiers of the formula and provide it for consideration.

Motion by Sylvia von Aulock, seconded by Jen Czysz.

Chairman Buckley asked if the recommendation would come back to this group or be given directly to Representative Wilhelm. Sylvia von Aulock noted that the recommendation would be developed by SNHPC and NRPC and she would then bring it to the SNHPC Executive Committee to see if they are in agreement. If so it would then be shared with Representative Wilhelm. Mike Tardiff stated that he would be more comfortable if any proposed changes were brought back to the NHARPC membership prior to being provided to Representative Wilhelm. It was agreed that any proposed changes would be brought back to the membership for endorsement prior to being submitted to Representative Wilhelm.

Approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Chairman Buckley stated that we would resume the discussion under agenda item IV. B.

Natch Greyes reviewed the remaining bills on the list he provided regarding 2022 land use bills of interest. He noted that in addition to the land use bills there are three that pertain to public meetings and the Right to Know Law. One allows for remote meetings without a physical location, another requires a physical location but members do not need to be present and the third requires a physical location with the

majority of members in attendance. He encouraged members to contact their Representatives regarding the importance of conducting remote meetings.

C. NHARPC Representation on Legislative Partner Group

Chairman Buckley reported that CNHRPC is actively trying to recruit a member of their Executive Board to serve as the NHARPC representative to the legislative partner group. He will let us know the status at a future meeting.

V. Other Matters

Jerry Coogan asked if NHARPC has a lobbyist. Chairman Buckley explained that we have not used legislative consultant services for several years. The process was changed when NHARPC decided to focus on an educational approach rather than taking positions on legislation.

VI. Next Meeting

Chairman Buckley noted that should SNHPC and NRPC have anything to share with the NHARPC membership regarding HB 1275, the next meeting will take place on January 20th at 1:00 p.m.

VII. Public Comment

No public comments at this time.

VIII. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca I. Baldwin

Rebecca I. Baldwin
On Behalf of NHARPC

**NHARPC/NHMA
 Planning Education Partnership
 2022 Proposed Schedule for Town & City Articles**

Town/City Edition	Copy Deadline	Topic	RPC
Jan/Feb	December 1, 2021	Community Power/ Electricity Aggregation	UVLSRPC/RPC/NRPC/SWRPC
March/April	February 2, 2022	Data Collection — SADES, etc.	UVLSRPC/NCC/SNHPC
May/June	April 1, 2022	SADES and Data Collection	UPVRP/SNHPC/NRPC
July/August	June 1, 2022	Municipal Capital Improvement Programming	CNHPC, SRPC, SNHPC
Sept/Oct	August 3, 2022	Regional Housing Needs Assessments	SRPC, RPC, NCC, SWRPC, POTENTIALLY ALL 9 RPC
Nov/Dec	October 5, 2022	Economic Resiliency Planning	NCC, NRPC, SRPC, UVLRPC

Additional Topics for Consideration

		Municipal Natural Resource Inventories	UVLSRPC/NRPC/RPC
		Age Focused/Friendly Planning	RPC/SNHPC/SWRPC