

New Hampshire Association of Regional Planning Commissions
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 22, 2023
NH Municipal Association
John B. Andrews Room
25 Triangle Drive, Concord, NH

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Jerry Coogan called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and asked for introductions. Members present: Jen Czysz, SRPC; Steve Buckley, CNHRP; Jerry Coogan, Upper Valley, Bill Chaisson, UVLSRPC; Sylvia Von Aulock, SNHPC; Jay Minkarah, NRPC; Mike Tardiff, CNHPC; Meghan Butts, UVLSPC; Tim Moore, RPC; Robert Snelling, LRPC; Tim Murphy, SWRPC; Mike Tardiff, CNHRPC; Michelle Morin-Grey, NCRPC

Guest presenters: Robert Scott, NHDES Commissioner, Noah Hodgetts, NHOPD

Members attending remotely: Matt Baronas, Central; Barbara Kravitz RPC; Leslie Schwartz, SRPC

2. Action Items: Review and Approval of the December 8, 2022, Minutes

T. Moore motioned to approve the December 8, 2022, meeting minutes as written. S. Buckley seconded the motion. All members voted in the affirmative. Motion passed.

3. Discussion: Commissioner Convening

The group discussed plans for the May 24, 2023, Commissioner Convening. The event will be held at the NHMA center from 12:30 P.M. to 4:30 P.M. There is a 60-person maximum capacity so each RPC will invite up to 6 of their staff and commissioners. S. Von Aulock outlined the agenda and stated that John and Maggie Randolph from Harmony Housing will be presenting. RPC's will pay for their guests that attend and should manage the number guests for their region. Staff member M. Taylor Fetter will send the RPC directors information on how to register their guests.

4. Legislative Planning Caucus
Tabled

5. Updates: Member Roundtable

Michelle Morin-Grey reported that NCRPC is kicking off 4 or 5 HOP Grants. They have entered into Northern Borders; the Region is a catalyst.

B. Snelling reported that a number of lakes in the region have been affected by Ciano bacteria which is a toxic natural occurring organism. Lake Winnepesaukee had full ice-in this winter.

M. Tardiff reported on the Key Square Project in Concord, Hop Grants and Working with Southern CEDS on a priority list.

J. Minkarah that Nashua is wrapping up TYP and TIP amendment; there are good projects and competition on congressionally directed projects.

T. Moore stated that Rockingham is working on HOP grants and transportation. This year between CMAQ and TIP programs there was enough money regionally for projects except the traffic circle.

S. Von Aulock asked if there are projects that are so big why are they not state projects? The Association met with DOT and advocated for meeting of the directors and state officials.

SNHRPC is hosting a climate workshop in April with other RPCs involved. At an MPO meeting Eric Zimmerman of the National ARPC attended to talk about specific grants.

The members updates were resumed Revisited after the guest speaker presentation:

M. Butts stated that as a result of the RHNA, APU's have launched a homeowner developer utility. The goal is to have a pilot program to serve as a broker for residents. A Homeowner's Expo will be held on May 6.

T. Moore asked do we support bills or not. It is critical to keep up to date with the legislature. J. Czysz stated that federal contract says we do not lobby; there is a fine line between advocacy and lobbying.

J. Coogan suggested inviting a Commissioner, maybe Taylor Caswell, to a meeting to talk about programing. Or someone involved in these programs like Ted Deers, John Mckenna or Kathy Burbank.

6. Guest Speaker: NHDES Commissioner Robert Scott

J. Coogan introduced Robert Scott to the group and introductions were made around the room. R. Scott gave a brief history of his life and work experience. He spoke about the priorities of NHDES and how RPC's can help move those projects along. Priorities include air and soil contamination, land management, solid waste, and expansion of infrastructure. He stated this is an unprecedented time with the large amount of money available. R. Scott stated he is excited to assist communities.

The group engaged in a question-and-answer session touching on topics such as water treatment technologies, funding for projects, water infrastructure, resources available to homeowners, and PFAS testing.

Discussion ensued on housing development and if the DES has staffing to assist municipalities with the infrastructure process. Mr. Scott said staffing is tight now and standard practice has been to attend pre-application meetings.

Mr. Scott concluded his presentation. The group thanked him for his time and invited him back to a future meeting for more discussion.

7. NHARPC Partnership: Bipartisan Infrastructure Grant Act: Margaret Byrnes, NHMA

J. Coogan welcomed Margaret Byrnes, NHMA Executive Director, to the meeting. M. Byrnes stated that NHMA is in the initial stages of determining whether NHMA can establish a program to provide technical support and assistance to municipalities on accessing federal funding, particularly the competitive grants under the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

M. Byres asked for feedback from the group on this proposed pilot program. She stated the biggest challenge is in the writing and administration of grant applications and how will this program help specifically. M. Byrnes stated this program would not include the grant writing.

The group engaged in discussion. J. Coogan stated that NHMA could act as a broker in the application process and to make municipalities aware of opportunities. Many smaller communities do not qualify for many of the grants, and it would be helpful to somehow pre-determine eligibility and the criteria threshold before putting effort into applying for a grant if ultimately not qualified for. Can NHMA sift through grants and help to match communities with eligible and relevant grants.

Members agreed that Municipalities need a tool to go through the steps of eligibility; to see what grants have been successful in grant applications-case studies. M. Butts stated that North Country funded the creation of an online funding opportunities tool.

M. Byrnes. thanked the group and stated that she will consider the feedback and craft a proposal.

8. Legislative Session

J. Coogan stated that at a recent NHARPC meeting with Jim Majori, there was discussion of forming a planning caucus. He suggested reaching out to Chuck Grasse and David Priest. He suggested forming a caucus of people with planning backgrounds.

Noah highlighted the legislative bills related to planning and zoning and provided the status of each bill. T. Moore reviewed the House Bills and expressed his opinion on which bills should be supported or not.

9. Next Meeting:

10. Public Comment

11. Adjourn

At 3:14 P.M. meeting adjourned with a unanimous vote in favor.