

**New Hampshire Association of Regional Planning Commissions**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, September 27, 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; Don Hamann, SRPC; Steve Buckley, CNHRP; Jerry Coogan, UVLSRPC; Sylvia Von Aulock, SNHPC; Mike Tardiff, CNHPC; Bill Chaison, UVLSRPC;

**Members attending remotely:** Tim Murphy, SWRPC; Barbara Kravitz, SNHPC; Tim Roache, RPC; Meghan Butts, UVLSRPC;

**Staff present:** Megan Taylor-Fetter, SRPC

**Guests attending on Zoom:** Noah Hodgetts, NHOPD; Ben Frost, New Hampshire Housing attended on Zoom

Due to lack of a quorum, the meeting proceeded for discussion purposes only. No action items could be acted upon.

**2. Review and Approval of the June 28, 2023 meeting minutes**

The minutes were tabled due to lack of a quorum.

**3. New Hampshire Housing Champions Program Presentation.**

Noah Hodgetts, Office of Planning and Development and Ben Frost, New Hampshire Housing presented.

N. Hodgetts stated there are 4 “buckets” of qualifications that must be met in order for a municipality to be eligible to apply for the New Hampshire Housing Champion Designation and Grant Program. He stated there is a \$5,000,000.00 appropriation for the program and listed the qualifications:

- Adoption of Land Use Regulations
- Training of planning board and zoning board members
- Implementation of sewer and water infrastructure improvements
- Implementation of public transportation, sidewalks or other walkability infrastructure

There is a fifth bucket which may include adoption of financial incentives to encourage the development of workforce housing.

Eligible communities become Housing Champion Communities and are eligible for 2 pots of funding: Housing production municipal grant program and housing infrastructure grants or loans.

N. Hodgetts stated that the rules are currently being drafted and will be presented to BEA for review and then will be brought before the advisory committee for review and recommendations. The timeline aims for completion is the end of December or early January.

B. Frost discussed the HOP grants, and if they will transition into this program, he stated that it will not be fully possible due to the administrative procedure act.

Some members expressed concern that this program may negate rural communities that do not meet the criteria and also some may not have the staffing to complete the application process. N. Hodgetts stated there are different criteria for the application depending on population. B. Frost explained that there could be a broad interpretation of the rules.

B. Frost stated that he does not see a scenario, where communities that submitted HOP grant applications after the funds were expunged would get preferential treatment for planning and regulation grants.

This first go around is seen as a pilot with future funding opportunities.

There will be an opportunity for advocacy in the next biannual budget.

**Appointment of an NHARPC representative to the Program Advisory Committee:** The Advisory Committee consists of 10 organizations. NHARPC is allowed one representative which J. Czysz has agreed to fill.

#### **4. Discussion Items**

##### **a. Staffing capacity and building degree and certificate planning programs.**

S. Von Aulock began the discussion by stating that Charlie French of UNH Cooperative Extension is interested in future discussions on developing a planning certificate program.

J. Czysz added that there are not enough planners in New Hampshire; we now have to recruit from out of state. UNH has a community environment planning program that is not accredited. She asked how can we better grow our own future planners. Land Use administration might be an avenue for professional development and become a recognized job option.

J. Czysz and N. Hodgetts recently had a preliminary conversation with Saint Anslem's Collage on pursuing an accredited planning program, this would be years in the future. Colleges and Universities want to see the data for the demand and expected salaries for planners.

The members discussed the value of internships and that accredited courses could be developed for both Land Use Administration and Planning. How do we make planning sound exciting?

More discussion on this topic will be planned for future meetings.

##### **b. Funding Opportunities**

S. Buckley stated that US DOT has a Thriving Communities Program and is currently accepting applications.

T. Murphy stated the two topics, the need for planners and funding opportunities, tie together. This is a period of unprecedented opportunity, but we don't have the staff to do the work.

RPC directors have become aware of a recent statewide digital equity plan partnership. There is lucrative funding but also the challenge of having the staff to serve as a digital equity navigator.

S. Buckley stated that the NHMA Technical Assistance Program has started. The program is open to 10 communities and has been fully subscribed.

S. Buckley stated that he would like to invite NHMA Municipal Finance Advisor Katherine Heck to the October RPC Directors meeting to discuss funding for the RPC's,

**c. Speakers for the upcoming year.**

The group discussed ideas for speakers for the upcoming year.

Suggestions offered:

- State agency commissioners and staff to show interest in partnerships: Donna McKenna, Rick Seranko, Beth Malcolme.
- Taylor Caswell, CDFA: Economic Development,
- Source protection staff
- Forest Society, NH Timber Harvest Council,
- Rebecca Sky, Commission on Aging
- NH Council on Arts
- Library Association
- Water Infrastructure
- Robert McGloulin, Charlie French: Digital Equity Program
- Jennifer Gilbert: Environmental sustainability planning

The members were in consensus to have a specific theme for each upcoming quarterly meeting:

- Economic development,
- Environmental sustainability Coastal
- Equity

J. Czysz tasked the RPC directors with making an effort to attend meetings and to encourage their commissioners to attend.

J. Coogan stated he would like to keep a discussion about the fall 2024 convening on the back burner.

**d. NH Planning Caucus**

J. Czysz stated she is not willing to touch that.

**5. NHARPC NHMA Partnership**

**a. Articles**

J. Czysz reported that SRPC staff has started the December article, The Importance of Planning, which has been emailed to the directors. All nine regions should be represented and were asked to contribute to the article.

Suggestions for future articles:

- NH Seacoast Infrastructure resilience issues and opportunities
- The Downeaster and the benefits of passenger service and its effect on economic development and transit-oriented development and tourism.
- Complete Streets NH - how it affects residence and business owners.
- Accessibility Audit: what you can do now.
- Hazmit plans: The process, flood smart, home elevations, and how it all relates.

**b. NHMA Annual Conference**

SNPC will be presenting on the RHNA at the upcoming Annual NHMA conference. SRPC in partnership with Clean Energy NH will present on EV charging.

**6. Community Updates**

M. Tardiff stated that CNHRPC has started to train the younger staff on how to prepare if presented with a visit from the group Agenda 21.

**7. Other matters and next meeting.**

The members were presented with a draft letter of support from Sam Evans-Brown of Clean Energy NH. T. Murphy stated that he feels the letter was overly generous in to buy-in to a proposal of an entity we know little about. He would be more comfortable to support a more generic letter. He added that he thinks the letter should be signed by the Chair on behalf of the NHARPC not the directors. S. Von Aulock responded that she edited the letter to remove the sections that Tim was referring to.

S. Buckley stated that this group cannot decide without a quorum. The directors can review the letter and decide at their upcoming meeting.

The group agreed to hold the next NHARPC meeting on December 20, 2023.

**8. Adjournment**

The meeting ended at 3:00 PM.