

New Hampshire Association of Regional Planning Commissions
Meeting Minutes
September 24, 2025
1:00-3:00PM
John Andrews Room
NH Municipal Association Building
25 Triangle Park Drive
Concord, NH

1. Welcome and Introductions

At 1:00 PM Chair Peter Griffin called the meeting to order and asked for introductions.

In attendance: Peter Griffin, SNHPC; UVLSRPC; Bill Chaisson, UNLSRPC; Tim Moore, RPC; Jerry Coogan, UVLSRPC; Liz Emerson, NCC; Meghan Butts, UVLSRPC; Larry Robinson, SWRPC; Paul Rasmussen, SRPC; Jen Czysz, SRPC; Jay Minkarah, NRPC; Mike Tardiff, CNRPC; Shanna Saunders, LRRPC; Megan Taylor-Fetter, SRPC

Attending on Zoom: Todd Horner, SWRPC

Guests: Jeff Rogers and Paul of the Bike Walk Alliance

2. Action Items

a. Review and Approval of the June 25, 2025 Minutes

Larry Robinson moved to approve the minutes of June 25, 2025 as written. Tim Moore seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote in favor.

b. Sign Bank Signatory

The three officers, Peter Griffin, Chair; Bill Chaisson, Vice Chair; and Sarah Wrightsman, Treasurer signed the signatory paperwork for the NHARPC Checking account at Meredith Village Savings bank.

3. Presentation: Bike Walk Alliance

(BWA) delivered a presentation advocating for safer streets through local control of speed limits. The message emphasized the urgent need to improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians on public roads, calling for legislative changes that would allow municipalities to reduce speed limits—specifically from the state default of 25 mph to 20 mph on certain roads.

Jeff shared a personal connection to the issue, having sustained serious injuries in a crash several years ago while riding his bike. His story underscored the human cost of unsafe streets and the growing crisis: pedestrian deaths in the U.S. rose by a staggering 80% between 2009 and 2023. This alarming trend is driven by multiple factors, including driver inattention, impairment, aggression, and excessive speed.

The BWA stressed that lower speeds save lives, especially for vulnerable road users. While reducing vehicle speeds benefits everyone, pedestrians and cyclists are disproportionately at risk of death or severe injury in crashes.

To effectively reduce traffic speeds, BWA recommends a three-pronged approach:

- Road Design – Narrower lanes and traffic-calming features naturally slow drivers.
- Context – Speed limits should reflect the surrounding environment and road use.
- Speed Limit Adjustments – Legal authority for municipalities to set lower limits where appropriate.

There is some traction within the legislature. Senator Denise Ricciardi has submitted an LSR that would change the floor speed limit from 25 to 20 miles per hour. Still requires some engineering and traffic investigation. This bill would expand local authorities to control speeds. He urged everyone to speak to their local officials to advocate.

The discussion centered on identifying effective design strategies to enhance safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. Key ideas included implementing dedicated bike lanes and making targeted infrastructure improvements. What is the effectiveness on safety of roundabouts? Participants stressed the importance of conducting a thorough needs analysis to guide solutions tailored to specific safety concerns. One proposed initiative was to promote high-visibility awareness for cyclists and pedestrians through community outreach and education. There are currently no guidelines to assist municipalities on setting speed limits.

Additionally, if legislation were amended to give towns more authority over Class 4 roads, local governments could set speed limits within village centers or densely populated areas—without impacting broader town-wide traffic regulations.

4. Legislative Updates

J. Czysz stated there are no specific updates; it's about how regions and communities are fairing with the many land use bills passed this year. NHMA has tackled a few bills with some specific guidance materials that they have published.

S. Von Aulock stated that Rockingham and Southern have done some work. A "lunch and learn" session was held to support communities preparing for zoning ordinance updates due in December.

J. Czysz stated The Rockingham County Commission benefited from a small pool of funding from Southern Maine for a housing initiative. She provided an overview of new laws and processes related to multi-unit housing, ADUs, occupancy limits, parking requirements, and subdivision regulations. Jen stated that small towns we are working with to incorporate these changes don't have staff,

The group agreed to form a sub-committee to collaborate resources. Each RPC will volunteer a staff member and send their email to Sylvia.

5. Discussion Items

a. Legislative Advocacy (breakfast, committee presentation, other)

The group discussed strategies for legislative advocacy with the goal of increasing awareness among legislators about the work of Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs), while minimizing disruption to day-to-day operations. Since there are no existing legislative events to build on, proactive outreach is necessary.

Technical input and expertise would have been beneficial during the last legislative session; guidance from planners, RPCs, the municipal association, and others like the fire marshal's office and building code officials. Although the upcoming legislative season (as of September 24) appears promising, many issues remain unresolved. It sounds like it will be a more productive legislative season this year, but who knows? There are a lot of things that need to be fixed.

Traditional breakfast events may not be effective; instead, sending targeted videos and scheduling educational sessions for legislators in early January may be more impactful. Produce a short video highlighting what RPCs do, which could be hosted on websites and shared via QR codes at relevant times. We need to get the technical savvy staff members to work on the video and the presentation and design aspect of production.

Presentations should emphasize RPCs' roles in supporting planning boards, zoning boards, and drafting ordinances and regulations—areas of expertise most relevant to municipalities.

Additional outreach ideas include engaging local media, local TV stations, and ask the a UNH Planning Club to create a podcast. Jen will reach out to the planning club and is willing to co-present on municipal and county government with Bill Chaison, who has radio experience. Shanna will assist with the subcommittee, and Tim Roache has a presentation that can be updated. Cooperative Extension may also be a valuable partner in these efforts.

b. Ten Year Plan Hearings Coordination

J. Czysz stated that SRPC has sent out notices to its commissioners to begin gathering support from local officials. A key part of the discussion centered on potential revenue increases, including a gas tax, higher EV registration fees, and toll increases. However, tolls only affect the turnpike system, which limits their impact across the state.

The group discussed the potential impacts of increasing auto registration fees or allowing municipalities to add their own fees. It was emphasized that legislators need to hear directly from their constituents—select board members and other local officials—because that kind of grassroots input is what truly influences decision-making. Unfortunately, there has been poor attendance at public hearings, even from towns that have projects.

M. Butts stated that she created a three-slide presentation: the first slide explains why RPCs are essential to the process, the second would highlight the lack of adequate funding, and the third would show the impacts of that shortfall.

c. Marketing Plan

P. Griffin suggested that we consider thinking outside the box when it comes to outreach and proposed several media and communication options for discussion:

- **Fred Coker's Business Segment on WMUR** – Jerry will reach out to explore this opportunity.
- **NH Business Review** – Peter will make contact to gauge interest.
- **NH Public Radio** – May be interested in interviewing one of the RPC executive directors; Peter will follow up.
- **Op-Ed Pieces** – Consider submitting to various newspapers, including local outlets.
- **Podcasts** – Explore opportunities to feature RPC-related topics.

Bill Chaison, who has worked in the Newspaper field, noted that many newsrooms are understaffed and unlikely to seek out stories proactively. Instead, we should write and submit complete articles to them. We already have content available, such as articles from NHMA.

The first step is to verify contacts at each media outlet and understand what kind of content they are looking for. Bill Chaison volunteered to serve as a central point for information and will work with Megan to ensure all information and contacts are stored in a central location.

6. NHARPC – NHMA Partnership Town and City Articles and Webinars

S. Von Aulock shared that the Volunteer Planner Resources article is nearly complete and will be sent to Miranda, with Megan copied. This article also served as a springboard for a presentation proposal to NHMA for their November event.

J. Czysz noted that the RPC Directors have not yet finalized a list of upcoming article topics. However, there is a list of suggestions from the June NHARPC meeting that will be reviewed and refined. Please send any additional ideas for next year.

SRPC has recently hosted several webinars, including sessions on housing habitats, hazard mitigation which could be a potential topics; funding opportunities; household hazardous waste; and follow-up on the 10-Year Plan.

Additional topics included alternatives to circuit riders, grant collaboration, and the energy circuit rider program. There was also interest in showcasing success stories—vignettes of how communities are creating their own affordable housing, including the conversion of old or existing buildings.

Miranda provided the upcoming dues deadlines for Town & City submissions:

- January/February – Due November 28
- March/April – Due January 30
- May/June – Due March 27
- July/August – Due May 29

- September/October – Due July 31
- November/December – Due September 25

The group needs to select the January/February article topic before the next meeting.

7. RPC Updates- Please plan to share current activities of interest from your region.

P. Griffin reported on a major proposal in Windham to build 500 apartment units, which has sparked significant local attention. The Planning Board is meeting tonight to discuss the possibility of a building moratorium in response. In Raymond, a meeting is scheduled for October 6 to review recent state-level zoning initiatives.

P. Rasmussen shared that in Durham, when the town began discussing a housing overlay district, they invited the school superintendent to provide insight into school capacity

M. Tardiff noted a similar situation involving a 30-unit development, referencing a recent study showing relatively low student generation—about 0.18 children per unit. He also mentioned a meeting in Canterbury where George Reagan from Manchester Housing effectively addressed misinformation.

Jerry reported that Bedford, like many other towns, is experiencing a decline in school population.

SRPC is partnering with the UNH Planning Club to host a housing discussion at UNH, where commissioners will present housing challenges and solutions from their communities. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions and participate in a facilitated conversation.

S. Von Aulock encouraged everyone to share the statewide survey for the Community Transportation Needs Assessment, coordinated by the State Committee on Aging. Additionally, a Saturday morning program is being planned in partnership with New Hampshire Housing on October 25. Ivy Van will present "*From Plans to Projects: Why Some Ideas Get Built,*" a half-day session aimed at planning board members, staff, and other stakeholders.

There was also mention of a successful Brownfields Roundtable held at Manchester Community College. Seven of the nine RPCs currently have active Brownfields sites.

Lastly, Todd Horner is kicking off a project in Harrisville focused on zoning revisions to support pocket neighborhoods and housing diversity.

8. Public Comment

There was no public Comment

9. Adjourn

1:00 PM: Following a motion and a second, the group voted unanimously to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Megan Taylor-Fetter