



Catherine Dimitruk, NRPC
Chair
Dave Snedeker, NVDA
Vice-Chair
Charlie Baker, CCRPC
Secretary/Treasurer

MINUTES
February 2, 2023
Calvin Coolidge Room
National Life

Present: Adam Lougee, Tasha Wallis, Charlie Baker, Chris Campany, Jason Rasmussen, Peter Gregory, Catherine Dimitruk, Bill Colvin, Devon Neary, Christian Meyers

Guests and Associates: Jacob Hemmerick, Amy Bell, Jens Hilke, Mathew Anrancio, John Adams, Elise Schindler, Eric Forand

Meeting called to order by the Chair, Catherine Dimitruk, at 9:32 AM.

Minutes: Chris Campany moved to approve the January minutes. Charlie Baker seconded the motion, all approved.

Treasurer's Report: Charlie Baker moved to approve the Treasurer's Report; Second by Tasha Wallis. Passed unanimously.

Sponsorship Request

Charlie Baker moved to give \$500 in sponsorship to the Working Lands Initiative. Peter Gregory second the motion, which passed unanimously.

America the Beautiful Natural Resources Planning: Jens Hilke of the Agency of Natural Resources presented a plan to apply for an America the Beautiful program on behalf of the State of Vermont. The funding would be used to house a natural resources planner at each RPC over the period of three years. After some discussion, **Chris Company moved that VAPDA approve Jens Hilke's proposal to seek an America the Beautiful grant to house a natural resources planner in each RPC. Peter Gregory seconded the motion, all approved.**

Urban and Community forestry: Elise Schindler noted that her program had recently received a significant amount of money that will allow it to launch more grants and support more urban forestry programs and planning. She chose to speak to VAPDA because she is interested in using a portion of the funding to support regional planning for urban and community forests through the RPCs. The funding, \$7,000,000 over five years, would be used to support disadvantaged communities first, then other communities. The focus on disadvantaged communities will make the grant eligible for full match waiver. The grant will have 3 focuses: Tree planting, Planning for urban trees and educational outreach to educational institutions around forestry. Elise invited VAPDA to participate with \$600,000 for regional planning over a 3-5 year period. **Catherine will supply a letter of support (model from CCRPC).**

Committee and Associate Reports:

Emergency Management: Eric Forand noted that EMPG grants are going out soon. They are planning a large exercise at the beginning of March, but not involving RPCs.

Strengthening the Capability of Governments

Chris Campany noted that the spring flood seminar went well.

Catherine asked about how the Regional Emergency Committees are progressing. Eric responded that the meetings have been going well. VEM is working on changing the quorum requirements in the legislation so the committees can work together. VAPDA offered to help support that work in the legislature. **Eric will send Chris the bill in which the EM language is located.**

Lauren Oates, Director of Policy at the Nature Conservancy: Lauren is advocating for H.29 a bill to expand the river corridor and make it a state issue, rather than a local issue. A significant discussion ensued. Most directors were supportive of river corridor protection, but also expressed concern that the maps that will be used for regulatory effect need to be tied to the substantive life/safety measures that the corridors are intended to protect. RPC's also want to understand the impacts on existing settlement and on complementary uses, like bike paths, sewer easements and other necessary infrastructure.

Transportation: Amy Bell and Mathew Arancio came to discuss the indirect rate certification that the VTrans Audit section does for the RPCS. The current MOU is expired, but it also has a continuing resolution that allows it to move forward. It is a good time to renew the MOU now. VAPDA discussed the MOU with VTrans. VAPDA appreciates having an indirect rate set by one agency for all programs. The parties discussed creating a new 3 year MOU that will work with the same structure of the existing MOU. We discussed making sure the voluntary adjustments remain available so RPCs and VTrans can work together to adjust individual indirect rates to avoid swings in the rate that could negatively impact operations. **Jason and the Transportation Committee will work with Mathew and VTrans staff to redraft the MOU.** Charlie also wanted to make sure that extensions are available upon request when necessary.

Amy Bell noted that the Senate Transportation Committee asked about RPC's budgets. She also noted that every year Senator Kitchell asks about participation in the TPI and the reporting that RPCs do provides good information for reporting to the legislature.

Agriculture: Ari Rockland Miller spoke about the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. Catherine asked about the cannabis grower's request to be treated as agriculture. **Ari did not have an answer, but will get back to VAPDA with the answer.**

Chris asked whether the Agency collected data regarding farmland conversion and suggested that the Agency should collect that data. **Ari noted that they could track it through Act 250, but did not have general information. He will send the report to Chris Campany to share with VAPDA.**

Community Affairs: John Adams from VCGI gave an update on imagery collection and lidar information. Both are moving forward and will be available soon.

John also noted that he would like RPC's continued support on uploading zoning data to the VCGI website.

Jacob Hemerick noted Chris Cochran is working on the omnibus housing bill today.

H.5 Regional Land use mapping is in House Energy and Natural Resources and should get taken up shortly.

The RFP to review the State designation program will go out shortly.

The missing middle housing manual should go under contract shortly.

Municipal planning grants should be out shortly, waiting on the budget adjustment act.

Strengthening the Capability of Governments

Bylaw modernization grants are out. Jacob will do some outreach on neighborhood development areas.

The governor's budget appropriated \$500,000 for bylaw modernization. Peter asked if the program would be expanded to work for MPGs. Jacob noted that yes, it should be for both bylaw modernization and for other municipal planning.

Grants Downtown are due, Better Connections grants are due next month.

The Downtown Board approved Middlebury's Neighborhood development Area and Hardwick's downtown designation.

Natural Resources: Jen Mojo will send an email update from ANR.

Tasha reported that ANR will allow towns to contract directly with RPCs to provide assistance for the design phase of creating ww systems. The will also allow towns to hire RPCs for planning and outreach services under the Clean Water revolving loan fund.

ANR would also like to make \$7M of ARPA funding available for small drinking water systems. RPCs could serve as the leads on the project.

Energy: Adam reported that BGS is now working directly with our planners on the Municipal Energy program. Several directors requested that we work to involve all energy planners in coordination, especially in the outreach messaging to towns. Adam volunteered that he would speak with Brian to make sure RPCs have the ability to substantively comment on the messaging going out.

Health: Suzanne Kelley was unable to join, but will send updates via email.

Climate:

Government Affairs: VAPDA discussed different legislative issues.

The Meeting adjourned at 2:00 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Lougee