

VAPDA Meeting Minutes (via Zoom) – December 2, 2021

Present: Tasha Wallis, Chair; Chris Company (minute taker), Charlie Baker, Ed Bove, Catherine Dimitruk, Peter Gregory, Tom Kennedy, Jason Rasumssen, Dave Snedeker, Jim Sullivan, Bonnie Waninger, Clay Purvis, Corey Chase, Jen Mojo, Lee Dorf, Amy Bell, Chris Cochran, Jacob Hemmerick, Bronwyn Cooke, Adam Lougee, Ari Rockland Miller

November minutes and treasurer's report approved by unanimous vote on motion by Charlie, seconded by Catherine.

DPS - Clay Purvis explained possible cell service identification project (recognizing high-speed broadband is also a need). Demand along Vermont's major roads. AT&T emergency communications project hasn't covered every area. AT&T and Verizon are the major carriers. Everyone else constitute about 10 percent. Proposal to deploy 100 cell towers to reach unserved areas in VT for \$50M. 71% of calls to E-911 in VT in 2020 were from mobile phones. 48% of Vermont adults live in a wireless-only household. 12% of Vermonters live in a landline only household. 100 towers would represent a 25% increase in cell service. New towers can cost over \$500K. Because of revenue profile a public subsidy is needed to ensure deployment in rural areas. Proposal involves a drive test that would involve RPCs and towns. Some funding would be available. State would test all federal aid highways. State identifies priority areas with stakeholder involvement (RPCs, towns, public safety, possibly farmers, etc.). Experts identify tower sites. Carrier interest secured for towers, and towers deployed. Clay stated that equity would be addressed in the first step of the project. Catherine noted the difficulty and expense of abutter and local stakeholder engagement in tower permitting and relative ineffectiveness.

Charlie discussed ANR forest protection proposals and whether the Natural Resources Committee should work to develop a VAPDA position. Jim Sullivan and Chris Company agreed to participate. Charlie will convene the committee.

ANR - Jen Mojo was asked about wastewater and water proposals under ARPA. Concerns about state money being the last in, and the assertion of what ratepayers should be able to afford. Also concern that it will only fund new projects and not existing systems. Jen will connect with Charlie about RPC engagement going forward, likely with ACCD engagement as well.

ACCD – Jacob reviewed MPG applications and demand. About half will be able to be funded. Bylaw modernization grants got 31 applications. Scoring underway. Missing middle workshop development also underway for small developers. Kevin Geiger is participating in this effort. NDA applications approved in Randolph and Putney. Middlebury is now actively working on application. Jackie Cassino is now with the department. Reminder that RPC mid-year reports are due mid-January. Chris thanked Chris and Catherine for service on Climate Council. Noted that statewide land use policy plan is unlikely given Governor's opposition; asked if there might be interest among RPCs to develop common mapping strategy. There was broad interest. VAPDA will get back to Chris with point person; possibly Adam. Catherine asked if ACCD would be willing to convene staff from across state agencies for RPCs to explain what their plans are and what they do. External review of state designation program is coming. S101 – Serotkin housing bill – is still active. Proposal for 5-year pilot program for tax, wastewater. Possible flood-proofing bill. Another Act 250 bill is likely. Baumgard bill also likely. Not sure how they'll "co-mingle." Proposing increase in MPG funding. New downtown coalition formed; they have a preliminary position paper. Includes asks from VT Arts Council. Vermont Bankers are interested in seeing a land

record modernization commission. Comprehensive Energy Plan – opportunity to make some small but meaningful changes to it. Bronwyn working on electrical vehicle charging infrastructure project for affordable housing. If housing groups in our regions are interested let Bronwyn know. Downtown Transportation Fund eligibility was enlarged; RFP issued yesterday. Not ARPA (federal) funding – just state. Better Places Grants to be announced in January and will be substantially different than prior program. 2:1 match; small donations.

VEM – Reminded us about public service inventory. That’s being coordinated by CVRPC. Day of Learning pushed back until later due to COVID concerns. Emily Harris will be enforcing training policies; those who don’t have requirements won’t be able to sit at SEOC. Lee is leaving VEM and going over to Mental Health (Director of Operations, Planning & Management) in mid-December.

VTrans – Amy will be discussing with Contract Admin why it took so long to get agreements in place. Might be change in how we apply for funding. Process for FY2023 guidance starts in February. Good time for RPCs to plug in to projects in regions that have not yet been scoped and will need local public engagement. New position for rail trail project manager being hired; Amy is overseeing LVRT for time being. Transportation Equity Framework – VTrans will be hiring a consultant and publishing the scope of work within weeks; trying to get it under contract before end of year.

Energy – Working with DPS on updating data for our regional energy plans. Will be asking for updates on how we’re using new climate coordinator funding. Jim is reviewing CEP. Will work with Tasha on a get together among RPC planners to discuss CEP provisions. Chris noted that Act 174 is included in Climate Action Plan and how regional and municipal plans address conserved lands. NRPC is working on data analysis associated with environmental justice impacts in a community.

Health – Ed explained that scope of proposed healthy communities project should be sent around by January. Funding is \$500K to RPCs; direct work with towns, \$10K for stipends for regions to support stakeholder engagement, 12 community grants to implement projects. Term is from January until June, 2023. Reimbursement grant. Hopeful that it can be done in next fiscal year (SFY2022).

Climate Action Plan – Initial plan; work remains to be done. Community Resilience Index yet to be developed. Lots of work ahead, especially regarding engagement.

Government Affairs – Brownfield Assessment Funding going to subset of RPCs; \$50K. Need Admin folk to move on it quickly. Legislature: Try to get increase in base funding; try to get increase in ARPA; seek additional \$1 million for climate and energy funding; additional \$500K batch of funding for bylaw modernization program; additional \$1 million for Brownfields assessment. Act 250, Bumgard bill, Sheldon bill on governance. Continued efforts on Housing. S148 Environmental Justice Bill anticipated to pass. House Energy – three areas of focus: weatherization for all, clean heat standard, \$ for municipalities for retrofits. Ed will send around ARPA summary for legislature for directors.

Agriculture – No update.

Retreat Follow-Up – Tom Kennedy lead; had to leave meeting.

Court Decision on 1 Acre Lots in Act 250 – Looks like legislature will correct language in statute.

Adjournment – motion by Chris, seconded by Charlie at 11:54 a.m.

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