



## MINUTES

September 23-24, 2021  
Hill Farm Inn - Sunderland, Vermont

Present: Bonnie Waninger, Ed Bove, Dave Snedeker, Catherine Dimitruk, Charlie Baker, Chris Campany, Tom Kennedy, Jim Sullivan, Adam Lougee

Rebecca Ramos and Adam Necrason present for Thursday afternoon session

Minutes of July Meeting: Motion to approve by Baker, second by Campany. Passed unanimously.

FY 2022 Budget: Discussion of Government Relations line. Possible payment to Rights and Democracy to work with them on environmental justice logistics. Request is \$2,500 from VAPDA – suggested that it be added to the consultant line. Consensus to add this amount to the budgeted expenditures. Motion to adopt the budget with the addition as noted made by Campany. Second by Kennedy. Passed unanimously.

RPC Operations: Directors all reviewed the status of in-person and remote work at their offices as well as meeting protocols and procedures. Some discussion of staffing levels and compensation; note made of difficult labor market and high housing costs. New workload has necessitated prioritization of projects.

Working with State Agencies and Director Conduct: Discussion of appropriate conduct by directors in dealings with each other, at meetings, and with state agency staff. Noted importance of maintaining good relationships with each other and being positive with state agencies when discussing other RPCs and directors. Special need to pay attention to mutual respect, avoidance of sexism, and related behavioral issues.

Committee Chair Roundtable – Highlights:

- Energy (Sullivan) – New energy program and funding, coordination amongst RPCs, and participation in development of new state comprehensive energy plan and climate action plan. Discussed how RPCs could participate in implementation of various measures related to energy conservation, efficiency, renewables, and related resilience and adaptation initiatives.

- Natural Resources (Baker) – Clean Water Service Provider role, agreement with ANR (and associated issues and challenges). On the forestry front, working with FPR, especially with regard to working landscapes in addition to conservation initiatives. Need to get/deliver consistent message regarding use of local ARPA funds and state funding programs – DEC water and wastewater infrastructure programs.
- Transportation (Campany) – Equity work will be addressed in TPI work program; RPC collaboration with VTRans. Need for further policy discussion regarding input on Act 250 projects. Prioritization of (recognition of?) Complete Streets opportunities still needs some attention.
- Planning and Economic Development (Lougee) – Working to maintain status quo with agreements. Kennedy discussed new Brownfields funding and development of application process; working on subgrant process. Reviewed DED/RDC project priority lists; questions raised regarding process and coordination with CEDS, need for better communication.

Each director shared information about RPC activities related to diversity, equity, inclusiveness, and justice. Also, an interesting/innovative project from each region.

Necrason Group Report: Adam Necrason and Rebecca Ramos led a discussion and Q&A. Reviewed current legislative issues, electoral partisan political issues on the horizon. Huge influx of federal dollars is being addressed in various quarters, including concern about potential growth in general fund. Housing programs are well-positioned for new development. Reviewed status of broadband deployment projects and CUDS – seems to be a range of experience and success levels around the state. Climate change programs and projects not yet well-defined; awaiting Climate Council plan and proposals. Noted new funding for clean water initiatives. Pension remains a major issue to be dealt with and redistricting will consume a lot of legislative attention.

Discussion of legislative committees, hearings, and the way that remote meeting technology has affected who and what is heard. Possible changes in Senate in a couple of years. Noted many of the newer legislators have a strong climate/energy agenda.

Other committee insights dealt with Act 250 reform in Natural Resources; telecommunication and energy efficiency (clean heat standard) initiatives, and programs to support energy efficiency in municipal buildings and vehicles. General overview of challenges associated with rural housing development – especially water and wastewater for villages (estimating magnitude of statewide issue, Baker will reach out to collect information from each RPC about needs in their regions).

RPC Funding – need to report on positive outcomes resulting from newly funded programs. Potential additional funding for things like housing, downtowns, and other economic development initiatives around designated areas. Reviewed importance of RPCs helping to effectively use implementation funds are coming through ARPA/state programs.

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EDA Planning \$ to address Covid Issues: Potential RPC involvement in economic recovery planning work and community development assistance, including grant support. VAPDA will follow up to indicate strong interest.

Vermont Health Department Grants: Healthy Community Design and Planning for Hot Weather (esp, identifying needs, etc. around cooling centers). All directors expressed interest and enthusiasm for pursuing these public health tasks.

ESRI Hub: Proposal for VTrans and RPCs to share the cost of a new ESRI product that would facilitate data management for a number of programs (need to check to see if TPI funds can be used for this cost). Full support based on strong interest from GIS staff.

ARPA Technical Assistance: VLCT and RPC roles reviewed. Online portals and dashboards are being developed.

Climate Council: Reviewed process and public/stakeholder involvement. All agreed that RPCs should meet in December to review and discuss the Climate Action Plan (Sullivan to coordinate). Also noted that an initial draft of the new state comprehensive energy plan, being prepared by the Department of Public Service, is expected out within a few weeks.

Committee Assignments:

- Transportation - Company, Chair + Lougee, Waninger, and Eleni Churchill
- Energy - Sullivan, Chair + Waninger, Lougee, Company
- Planning and Economic Development - Snedeker, Chair, + Lougee, Company, Baker
- Emergency Management - Dimitruk, Chair + Waninger, Company, Bove
- Water Quality - Baker, Chair + Wallis, Snedeker, Lougee
- Public Health - Bove, Chair + Baker, Wallis, Waninger
- Government Relations - Kennedy, Chair + Gregory, Baker, Wallis, Dimitruk
- Natural Resources (Forest and Habitats focus) - Waninger, Chair + Company, Sullivan, Snedeker

Liaisons:

<<Need list from Catherine>>

VPIC website: Discussed utility as well as need for some updates. Potential for moving to VAPDA site as well as drawbacks; consensus to keep VPCI as a distinct site for now, removing “about us” reference. Planning and Economic Development Committee will contact ACCD regarding strategy for updates.

Organizational Issues / General Discussion

- Shared strategies for staff in each office getting together in person, especially new staff who may be having a hard time feeling like they are part of the team.
- Reviewed open meeting law status and ways of handling physical and virtual meetings.
- Concern expressed about business offices/financial managers being stretched thin with all of the new programs. Ideas for addressing: hiring pt bookkeepers, some way of sharing amongst RPCs....

- Management structure, personnel issues, upcoming retirement of some directors.
- BRIC grant and projects being pursued by several RPCs.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Sullivan