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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

July 25, 2024 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

In-Person/Hybrid Meeting

Attending Officers	Attending Sub-Regional Delegates
Chairperson: Howard N. Drobner, Boylston	North: Otto Lies, Holden*
Vice Chair: Robert Hassinger, Grafton*	Northeast: Julianne Hirsh, Northborough*
Treasurer: Daniel Schur, Westborough*	Southeast: Walter Baker, Sutton*
Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin*	Southwest: William Trifone, Dudley*
Asst. Clerk, Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston	Central City: David Quiroa, Worcester*
	West: Jared Grigg, Spencer
Staff:	
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	
Trish Settles, Deputy Dir., RCCP	Not In Attendance:
Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Dir., Transportation	Asst. Treasurer: Andrew Coles, Auburn
Anthony Senesi, Communications Coordinator*	
Stephanie Toupin, Human Resources Manager	
Dara Griswold, Finance Manager	
Kerrie Salwa, Dir. Economic Development*	*indicates remote participation

Call to Order:

Chairperson Drobner called the July 25, 2024, Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. with a roll call to establish a quorum. Introductions were made of new Executive Committee members and staff.

1. Approval of Minutes:

Motion: to accept the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from April 25, 2024 and June 13, 2024.

Moved by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Wheeler. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

2. Public Comment:

None.

3. Executive Director's Report:

I. Staffing and Administration:

- Ms. Pierce announced the hiring of Dara Griswold as Finance Manager, she introduced herself and was welcomed by Chair Drobner.

- a. **Motion:** To accept the appointment of Dara Griswold as Finance Manager.
Moved by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Wheeler. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

- Sherrie Haber will start part time as the Executive Assistant on June 29th.
- Shannon Sullivan joined on July 1st and will help to administer grants.

Grants Awarded / Signed Contracts

Ms. Pierce shared the Executive Directors Report listing the grants and contracts with amounts. They include:

- Community Development Block Grant – Awarded to Athol, Hardwick, Millbury, North Brookfield and Warren. They are mainly for infrastructure and road projects.
- WRTA contract signed.
- Regional Housing Coordinator contracts – Mendon, Upton, Auburn, Shrewsbury, Berlin
- Interim Town planning contract – Dudley. Bill Scanlon has retired.
- Grant from Community on Health and Healthy Aging – How Happy is the Heart of Massachusetts.

Grant / Contract Submissions

- PARC Grants – for Dudley and Barre. Used to fund projects through Open Space & Recreation
- Three Energy and Environmental Affairs planning grants with MRPC
- Regional Milltown Caucus
- Quaboag River Valley Invasives Study
- Subdivision Regulation Update – Mendon and Millbury

Discussion

- In response to Chair Drobner, Ms. Pierce explained that the Milltown caucus grant is for any town in Central Massachusetts and is not exclusive to a certain group. Although it is geared toward mills, it is for the development of any unused town buildings. Ms. Salwa explained that the goal is to convene the 62 towns in Central Massachusetts along with developers to have a discussion on how to best leverage funding and usage of the buildings and land.
- In response to Mr. Hassinger, Ms. Salwa clarified that it is for mills no longer in use.
- In response to Mr. Grigg, Ms. Salwa said that the group meets quarterly on zoom. They have had good engagement from both Central and Western Massachusetts.

II. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (RCCP):

Director of Economic Development, Kerrie Salwa provided the RCCP report.

Regional Services

- Renewed three most significant DPH contracts – Blackstone Valley Partnership for Public Health, South Central Massachusetts Partnership for Public Health and Training Hub for FY25-FY27
- Held a Legislative Affairs breakfast on the topic of food insecurity
- Received the award for the Happy Factor as Ms. Pierce mentioned. The project will focus on interviewing citizens and removing barriers to civic engagement.

Community Development

- Received the CDBG Grants that Ms. Pierce mentioned
- HUD has released new income data. It is still being determined how it will impact our region
- Closed out fiscal year financials and reporting last week.
- Launched four new construction projects with more in the bidding or rebidding process
- Hired two new staff members, John O’Leary, Principal Planner and Shannon Sullivan, Assistant Planner.
- Resiliency team – EPA funded the Climate Production Reduction Grant. It is moving into the action plan stage
- Hazard mitigation planning has 14 plans underway. Working on 26 towns of green communities. Continuing a number of open space plans. Also working on MVP projects and Heat and Trails planning.
- Applied for EEA Planning Assistance Grants to address invasive species in the Quaboag river area and a Mass DEP US EPA 604B Water Quality grant
- Looking to hire a Program Manager

Economic development – Many projects ended on June 30th. Looking forward to working on the December 30th deadlines.

- Dudley Gateway project has been presented
- Submitted two Park grants for Dudley and for South Barre
- Blackstone project from our submission last year will be breaking ground next month
- Will collaborate with MAPC on a trail committee called the Charles Headwaters Greenway Group focusing on regional efforts to piece together trails of the CMRPC and MAPC region.

- Princeton Eco-tourism plan presented to select board last night. It will post for two weeks for public comment and then they will vote at their next meeting
- Worcester Digital Equity Plan was presented to the City Council last Tuesday. We will attend and facilitate a community forum on September 25th at the Worcester Public Library.
- Ms. Salwa was invited by the Worcester Mayor to join the Brownfields task force to leverage funding for economic development. She was also invited by the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments in Waterbury CT to collaborate on panel proposal for SNIPA.
- Hosted a tour for Deborah Bevin our EDA Representative on July 15th
- Assisted on the public works application that will be submitted next week for the Saint Gobain project.
- Notified that we will be recognized by the International City/County Management Association in September
- Submitted 10 EEA applications this round.
- Sent out notices to towns regarding Community Compact Funding which will open in mid-August.

Discussion

- Chair Dobner offered congratulation on awards. Asked that they are kept track of so we can list them in the annual report
- Member Trifone offered thanks from the town of Dudley for the work on the gateway plan
- Member Quiroa commented that the staff have been amazing through the Digital Equity Planning. Offered thanks to Kerrie, Ethan and the rest of the staff.

III. Transportation

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan provided the Transportation report.

- Staffing – Two members have resigned so there are two positions open.
- Gardner received the Race Grant last month.
- On Monday, State Senator Fatman's office will meet regarding reenergizing the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor project.
- EDA visit / St. Gobain – talked with Chamber to discuss freight because of existing rail infrastructure
- Attended Union Station Central Platform ribbon cutting. Discussed Lincoln Square redesign project.

4. Approval of Warrant for Payment of Bills and Review of Financial Statements:

Ms. Pierce presented Warrant 24-12 for the month of June.

- **Motion:** to approve Warrant 24-12 for the month of June in the amount of \$170,631.47. Moved by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Mr. Trifone. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

Ms. Pierce presented Warrant 24-12a for the month of June.

- **Motion:** to approve Warrant 24-12a for the month of June in the amount of \$256,534.96. Moved by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

Ms. Pierce presented Warrant 25-01 for the month of July.

- **Motion:** to approve Warrant 25-01 for the month of July in the amount of \$16,934.61. Moved by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Mr. Grigg. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

5. Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

- a. Transportation** – Mr. Hassinger reported that they heard a presentation on the Title VI program. Transportation recommends adoption. They heard a report on access to housing in the Central Mass region scope of work.
- b. Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Trifone reported on the legislative breakfast on food insecurity and the need for long range planning. Efforts are being made to tie in local farmers. Mr. Quiroa added that it highlighted this important work. Ms. Pierce added that she was not familiar with more than half of the attendees and was impressed with the group that was brought in by the topic.
- c. Physical Development Committee-** Mr. Wheeler reported that they will meet on August 20th in person. They will review programs and discuss DLTA funding.
- d. Rural Caucus–** Ms. Pierce noted that they have not met.
- e. Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization** – Ms. Pierce reported that having Deb Bevin come out was great. She was able to see the difference the investment makes. Ms. Salwa added that the board has been minimized and they are looking forward to working on the goals. They will partner with Discover Central Mass. They finalized the Responsible Development committee. The Business Support committee meets monthly as the Worcester Regional Business Alliance. The Workforce subcommittee is going to work with the maintenance department of WRTA to backfill this program. They are currently in need of funding.
- f. Sub-regional–**
 - Chairperson Drobner asked two sub-region representatives to provide updates for their respective sub-regions.
 - i. West Sub-Region: Mr. Grigg reported that Spencer is still working on the High School project and sewer plan project. North Brookfield and

Brookfield had a joint meeting about combining the sewer system. Transportation is working on route 9. There are also dam removal projects in Hardwick and New Braintree. Hardwick is also looking to build a new police station.

- ii. Central City: Mr. Quiroa reported that they opened the center platform for MBTA. They also opened the 311 municipal survey in East City Hall. They hope to have smaller municipal service centers in the 5 districts. They received 100,000 grant funding through MBI for Digital Equity implementation. There is a new Street redesign committee. The city closed the R&D overflow shelter which was open from December to June

6. New Business:

- Ms. Pierce said that \$1621 was paid to NLC Translation for a survey to be done in the primary second languages for our region.
- On Tuesday Ms. Pierce presented Dick Williams with the Service Award at the Rutland planning board meeting.
- Ms. Pierce discussed that Stephanie Toupin will be revising the Employee Handbook. Mr. Wheeler suggested the Personnel committee meet and report back to the Executive Committee every 3-4 months. Mr. Rajeshkumar asked Ms. Pierce to send the handbook to the Personnel Committee. Chair Dobner will appoint Mr. Grigg as a member and Mr. Quiroa as an alternate.
- Ms. Pierce said that a save the date will be sent to the Delegates and Alternates for the open house on September 12th at 6pm. The Commission handbook will be updated by the end of August.

7. Adjournment:

- **Motion:** to adjourn. Made by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Mr. Grigg. **Motion Unanimously Approved**
- Chair Dobner adjourned the meeting at 8:38pm.

Documents:

ED Monthly Report July 2024
June 2024 Warrant
July 2024 Warrant

Respectfully submitted by Sherrie Haber, CMRPC.