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**CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
 August 29, 2024 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes  
 Hybrid Meeting

<b>Attending Officers</b>	<b>Attending Sub-Regional Delegates</b>
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*
Asst. Treasurer: Andrew Coles, Auburn*	Southwest: William Trifone, Dudley*
Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin*	West: Jared Grigg, Spencer
Asst. Clerk, Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston	
<b>Staff:</b>	
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	
Trish Settles, Deputy Dir., RCCP	<b>Not In Attendance:</b>
Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Dir., Transportation*	Central City: David Quiroa, Worcester
Anthony Senesi, Communications Coordinator*	
Stephanie Toupin, Human Resources Manager*	
Dara Griswold, Finance Manager	
Sherrie Haber, Executive Assistant*	*indicates remote participation

**Call to Order:**

Chairperson Drobner called the Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with a roll call to establish a quorum.

**1. Approval of Minutes:**

**Motion:** to accept the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from July 25, 2024

Moved by Mr. Schur, seconded by Mr. Hassinger. Roll Call Vote. (Coles abstained) **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

**2. Public Comment:**

None.

**3. Motion:** To recommend to the full commission, the adoption of the Commission Handbook revised August, 2024. Moved by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Lies.

- Mr. Dobner liked that it includes the Population Growth chart.
- Mr. Rajeshkumar asked if the population of West Boylston includes the jail. It does not.

Roll Call Vote. (Grigg abstained) **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

#### **4. Executive Director's Report:**

##### **I. Quarterly Meeting (Ms. Pierce)**

- The quarterly meeting will be held at the Spencer Country Inn on September 12<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. Dinner will be at 6:30 with the meeting beginning at 7pm. Please RSVP. Ms. Pierce will send out the handbook to Delegates and Alternates to be reviewed before the meeting. Sherrie and Anthony have contacted all towns to update the Delegate and Alternate list.
- Ms. Pierce asked if the committee finds the outreach summary helpful, adding that most of the information can be found in Ms. Settles & Ms. Krishnan's reports. Mr. Hassinger and Mr. Trifone said that staff should save that time and the report is not needed. Ms. Pierce said that it can be brought back if it is wanted in the future.

##### **II. Staffing and Administration (Ms. Pierce)**

- Julia Moore and Eric Gemberline will be leaving CMRPC. They will both be missed.
- In response to Mr. Dobner, Ms. Toupin answered that there are 8 total openings and we are currently interviewing. Ms. Settles added that many are new positions.
- Ms. Settles explained that Clark has a planning degree and we have interns from the university and that Uxbridge is interested in high school intern opportunities.
- The employee handbook has a nepotism section saying that we cannot hire "relatives". There was discussion on the degree of relation. Mr. Trifone said we should look to the State Ethics Commission for clarification. Ms. Pierce said that we will schedule a Personnel Committee meeting to discuss this and other employee handbook changes. Mr. Rajeshkumar indicated that we should follow the same guidelines as the state.

##### **III. Transportation**

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan provided the Transportation report.

- Transportation will have its Federal Certification done on September 10<sup>th</sup>. This is done every 4 years to continue our Federal funding. There were three well attended meetings. Ms. Krishnan has been pleasantly surprised with how much growth there has been in the past 4 years. Staff have been doing a lot of work to be ready.
- Met with our partners in Rhode Island. Topics included Blackstone Valley Bikeway, Providence Worcester Rail Trail and Rt 146

- MPO – 2 subregions (West and North East) are up for election. Staff will be present and Select Board members will self elect the representatives. An email will go out and the meeting is about September 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Three grants were awarded – The town of Warren received a grant for \$140,000 for inspection and engineering of 2 culverts. Westborough and Dudley also received grants.
- Hardwick is working on a Complete Streets plan

#### **IV. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (RCCP):**

Deputy Director, Trish Settles provided the RCCP report.

- Northborough – Visioning and Economic Development
- Northbridge – Master Plan
- Hopedale – Received a grant a year ago. Now doing a rescope of the zoning bylaw project
- Dudley – looking for a new town planner. They may be able to share a planner with Spencer.
- The Happy Factor got funding. Increase understanding of how to engage with people, including the aging population.
- Not successful in attaining the Southbridge open space grant or the Shrewsbury grant.
- Community Compact Grants – looking at how to determine eligible projects
- Brownfield application was not successful. We were told we were very close but did not make the cut. We can tweak the application and resubmit and are partnering with UCONN to do that
- Staffing: Will need someone to replace Julia on Green Communities. Interviewed for a Homeland & Cyber Security specialist. Opening for a Resiliency Program manager and a Contract Specialist.
- Participating with RPA's on a Resiliency Playbook
- MARPA conference on October 8<sup>th</sup>. Need to determine how we are participating
- MAPA board meeting – open regional dialogues with town planners and planning boards
- CHAPA – September 10<sup>th</sup>. Expecting good participation – we have 66 signed up so far.
- Regional dialogues – had a meeting to create a comprehensive plan on what and how we present
- Will be hosting two citizen planner training collaborations

- Imagine 2050 – more information will be presented at the quarterly meeting with a bigger presentation in March. Scenario planning with finish June, 2025.
- LPA's – Each town starts with 12 hours and 12 additional hours can be accrued through the year. Now for Executive Committee and committees with standing monthly meetings, the town will get the additional hours at the beginning of the year to help both the town and the CMRPC with scheduling projects.

#### **Discussion**

- In response to Mr. Grigg, Ms. Settles said that some of the types of projects for compact grants are as follows: Historic preservation, master planning, housing production plans, Capital Improvement plans, ADA plans. The grants focus on meeting the needs of the communities. Ms. Pierce added that it also includes implementation strategies
- In response to Mr. Grigg on the criteria for scenario building for Imagine 2050, Ms. Settles said that it will focus on Environment, Economy and Equity and will be developed by the steering committee.

#### **V. Human Resources**

HR Manager, Stephanie Toupin provided the Human Resources report.

- We will be installing a new payroll / human capital management system. After reviewing 3 systems, Harpers Payroll was chosen and meets all the needs of CMRPC. It will be effective October 1<sup>st</sup> and the first payroll will be October 3<sup>rd</sup>. It is an online, cloud-based employee system for paystubs, w-2's etc. It has timesheet functionality, and tracking for applicants, training, licensures, EEO/AA. It will cut the time currently spent on these tasks in half.
- Personnel Committee needs to meet to review the Employee Handbook.

#### **Discussion**

- In response to Mr. Dobner – It will track vacation, leave etc.
- In response to Mr. Rajeshkumar – Ms. Pierce replied that it will cost \$10,000/year. Ms. Toupin added that there would not be significant savings by going to biweekly payroll.
- In response to Mr. Dobner – Training will be at held mid / end of September. Ms. Pierce added that there is a strong onboarding program

#### **5. Approval of Warrant for Payment of Bills and Review of Financial Statements:**

Ms. Pierce presented Warrant 24-12a 2 for the month of June. This warrant is all regarding public health. CMRPC gets grant money up front and it expires June 30<sup>th</sup>. Anything not used goes back to the state.

**Discussion:**

- In response to Mr. Dobner – the amounts are the same for FY25. We have spent over \$1 million this year (over 2/3 of the grant)
- In response to Mr. Hassinger – The executive committee did vote on this last year, but later in the year
- In response to Mr. Grigg – The plan to spend the FY25 grants is dependent on staffing and projects. Ms. Settles added that sometimes all the money cannot be spent in accordance with the grant.
- Ms. Pierce added that the state is pleased with how the grants are being handled. The state has subcontracted CMRPC to help others get their programs in line.
- In response to Mr. Rajeshkumar – Anyone who participates in the regional health program is eligible.
- **Motion:** to approve Warrant 24-12a 2 for the month of June in the amount of \$533,374.36. Moved by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Mr. Hassinger. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

Ms. Griswold presented Warrant 25-02 for the month of August. It includes staff travel, subcontractors and business cards.

- Ms. Krishnan pointed out that item #3 MDOT is a CMRPC expenditure. Ms. Pierce said that it is okay in this case because it is 100% paid by MDOT
- **Motion:** to approve Warrant 25-02 for the month of August in the amount of \$77,764.03. Moved by Mr. Grigg, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

**6. Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:**

- a. Transportation** – Ms. Pierce reported that they did not meet
- b. Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Trifone reported that they did not meet
- c. Physical Development Committee-** Mr. Wheeler reported that they met last week in Grafton in person. Main topic was the opportunity to use DLTA funds to match grant opportunities. This leverages that money and they agree to use CMRPC. Looking at an equitable distribution protocol.
- d. Rural Caucus**– Ms. Settles reported that they have not met.
- e. Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization** – Ms. Pierce said there is nothing to report.
- f. Sub-regions**–

- West: Mr. Grigg reported that there is potential for a regional fiber optic project.
- East: Ms. Settles met with Boylston about the gravel pit in Shrewsbury that will affect Boylston and to make sure MEPA is hearing Boylston's concerns. Mr. Drobner added that the School Superintendent resigned.
- South West: Mr. Trifone reported that the state is spraying for EEE. Mr. Drobner added that municipalities can also become part of the Central Mass Mosquito Spray Program
- South East: Mr. Baker reported that the state is moving the Boston Road traffic light
- North East: Ms. Hirsh reported that they are searching for a Town Administrator
- North: Mr. Lies reported that Main Street in Holden is not drivable due to construction.

#### 7. New Business:

- Ms. Pierce is sad to report that two delegates have passed away. Mary Walter from North Brookfield and Jean Vincent from Charlton
- Ms. Pierce discussed considering moving the October 31<sup>st</sup> Executive Committee meeting due to Halloween. Mr. Dobner said it will be considered at the September meeting.
- Ms. Pierce stated that her contract renews August 1<sup>st</sup> and she still needs to be reviewed. Mr. Dobner said that he is responsible and will do it this month. He will send a survey to the executive committee.
- Ms. Pierce thanked Mr. Senesi for stepping in to assist with meetings while the Commission was without an Executive Assistant. Mr. Senesi said that he will continue attending as the information helps in his current position.

#### 8. Adjournment:

- **Motion:** to adjourn. Made by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Rajeshkumar. **Motion Unanimously Approved.** Chair Dobner adjourned the meeting at 8:43pm.

#### Documents:

ED Monthly Report August 2024  
 June 2024 Warrant  
 August 2024 Warrant

Community Outreach Summary  
 Commission Handbook Draft  
 Draft Minutes July 25, 2024

Respectfully submitted by Sherrie Haber, CMRPC.